



**HUGO
GELLERT**

1892 — 1985

People's Artist



IMMORTALITY

Artists, of all people in the world, are most concerned with life.

They love life in all its manifestations: they love the life-giving sun, the moon that is so potent in the tides of living organisms, the stars and the depths of the heavens toward which the living soul projects itself, spring, summer, autumn, winter.

They are in love with the seasons in the life of mankind's world, in the seven ages of man as they observe them in the generations about them, in all

living creatures, for they are, in a measure, their kindred.

It is by virtue of their insight into the phenomena of life, their instinctive understanding of the significance of the phenomena, their instinctive appraisal of values and proportion, their feeling for the enduring and eternal verities of life, that some of them achieve what we call immortality.

— **Rockwell Kent**, at the *First American Artists' Congress*. *Hugo Gellert was one of its organizers.*

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130 East 16th Street
New York, NY 10003

May 1986



Hugo Gellert

One of the great proletarian artists of the century died last December at the age of 93. Yet hardly an art magazine or a museum in this country will take much notice, in their silent refusal to acknowledge most socially conscious art and the work of politically committed artists.

This was not always so. Art and politics were at the center of attention in the 1930s, when many artists embraced social causes. In those days Hugo Gellert's name was prominent in the world of art. He was one of a group of young, politically conscious artists whose murals adorned public buildings and whose drawings were published in major magazines.

Theirs was an art that reflected the upheaval of the time: the poverty of the Depression, the scourge of racism and fascism, and the great efforts of the working masses to unite and improve their lot. Socially conscious art addressed these issues, often challenging the status quo while advocating a more equitable society.

Artists with such a vision were a threat to the art establishment and to the wealthy patrons who dictate its tastes. In the years following World War II, social art in the U.S. was increasingly suppressed.

Socially conscious artists of the thirties were subjected to the same political repression that gripped all

progressive activists during the McCarthy era — witch hunts, hearings of the Un-American Activities Committee, FBI visits and other forms of harassment and repression.

Along with these came “polite” refusals from galleries and museums. Artists like Hugo Gellert were either scorned or ignored. The art world buried social art in an avalanche of abstract expressionism, a style entirely introspective and devoid of social content.

Today a new generation of artists interested in realism and in raising social issues has emerged. As these artists search for ways to address themes like war and peace, equality and justice in their art, the life and work of Hugo Gellert takes on renewed meaning.



Hugo Gellert was born in Hungary in 1892. He emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 13 with his father and four brothers to escape military conscription in Hungary. The family settled in a Hungarian neighborhood in Yorkville in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where young Gellert grew up. This community was centered around the Hungarian Workers' Home, and there Gellert painted posters and drew illustrations for the socialist paper *Elöre*.

His formal artistic training began at the National Academy of Design. In 1914 Gellert left to study at the Academie Julien in Paris. But in 1914 Europe was on the precipice of war. When he discovered the Academie closed for the summer, Gellert traveled around Europe, then returned home when hostilities began.

Settling in New York City, Gellert became involved with the politically radical artists of Greenwich Village who published the magazine *Masses*. This association solidified his political and artistic direction.

For the next six and a half decades, Hugo Gellert produced a wealth of art works reflecting a commitment to the working class, to the building of a people's art movement and to the cause of socialism.

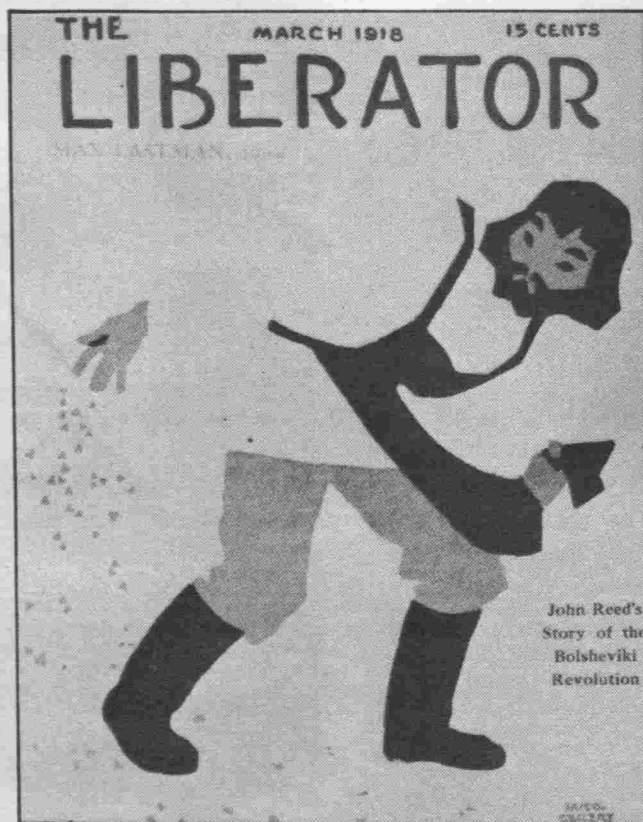
During the 1920s Gellert's drawings appeared in nearly every issue of *Liberator* and *New Masses*, the most important radical cultural journals of the day. In the campaign to save Sacco and Vanzetti from execution, Gellert created a billboard-sized drawing that was used for highway signs. This interest in public art was followed with perhaps the first labor mural done in the U.S., at the Worker's Cafeteria, Union Square, New York.

In 1932 Hugo Gellert and two other artists on the *New Masses* staff were invited to submit mural designs for an exhibit at the newly opened Museum of Modern Art in New York. Gellert's contribution caricatured Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan and President Hoover with Al Capone under the heading "Us Fellas Gotta Stick Together."

The mural was rejected at first in a storm of controversy. While Rockefeller himself defended the mural design, most trustees of the museum wanted to reject it. They finally were forced to change their minds when the other artists invited to submit designs threatened a revolt if the Gellert mural was refused a place in the exhibit.

Gellert's commitment to creating a "people's art" took the form of helping to found the New York John Reed Club in 1929. The club included other artists such as William Gropper, Louis Lozowick, Jacob Burck and Fred Ellis. The Reed Club was an association of radical artists who held exhibitions and published journals, and organized public forums to discuss the direction of art. These artists addressed all of the significant movements of the day: unemployment, the organization of labor unions, campaigns against lynching in the South and in defense of the victims of racism, and the war against fascism at home and abroad.

In Gellert's work as an illustrator and a satirist, he created three books during the 1930s: *Marx's "Capital" in Lithographs* (1934), *Comrade Gulliver* (1935), and *Aesop Said So* (1936). In each of these a page of pertinent text is followed by a full page illustration to accompany the message. In "The Belt" from *Comrade Gulliver*, Gellert showed the worker's position in capitalist production: the machine he is working is the source of his own strangulation. Also from *Comrade*



Cover illustration on the first issue of *The Liberator*, February, 1918

Gulliver is Gellert's depiction of chain gangs in the South, titled "Free Labor." In each of these three books Gellert uses his drawings to capture the current political relevance of the text printed on its opposite page. These drawings encompass war, racism, militarism, exploitation, strikes and demonstrations.

Some of Gellert's best work can be found in his portraits. He depicted many of the most famous people of his time: Lenin, Roosevelt, Tito, Mussolini, Hearst, Rockefeller, Einstein and Martin Luther King as well as notable radical figures: William Z. Foster, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Tom Mooney, John Reed, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson.

His drawings of Mussolini, done in 1930, are a political commentary on the nature of fascism as well as a satire on Mussolini's stature. The drawing of Tom Mooney from "*Capital*" in *Lithographs*, reminiscent of a famous Mooney photo by Otto Hagel, was used for the International Labor Defense campaign for his release from prison.

In both portraits and illustration, Gellert employed a unique and well defined style combining the art nouveau and art deco styles of the time. His figures have massive limbs and necks with squared-off, almost cubist-chiselled faces. The exaggerated muscular strength of his subjects reflects Gellert's lifelong admiration of Michelangelo's work. Michael Gold described it as "a strong sculptural character." Much of the back-



Hugo Gellert on picket line on Fifth Avenue in New York, with Carl Lella of the Mural Artists Guild in mid-1930s.

ground of Gellert's drawings is done in a Southwestern Indian-style geometric motif identified with deco.

In addition to working as a muralist and illustrator, Gellert was a committed political activist. He helped organize one of the first anti-fascist organizations in the U.S.: the Anti-Horthy League in 1928. His battle against fascism continued through the formation of the American Artists' Congress Against War and Fascism in 1936 and the organization of "Artists for Victory" during the Second World War.

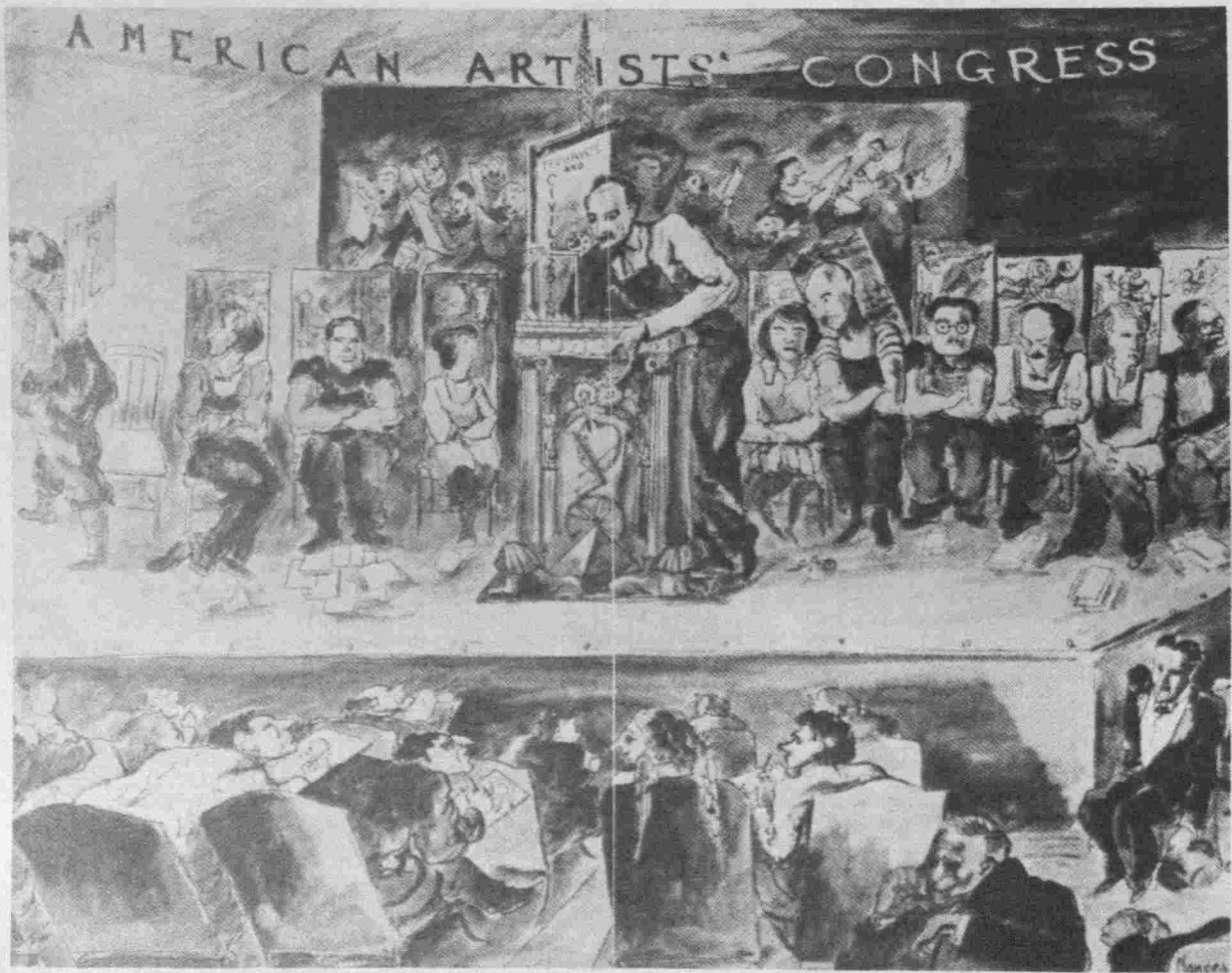
Following the war and throughout the McCarthy era, Gellert continued working as an illustrator in the pages of the magazines *Masses and Mainstream* and later *American Dialog*. His drawings are on the major themes of peace, civil rights and the struggle to end political repression. He did the cover illustration of a peace demonstration for New York's 1952 May Day

Parade booklet. Also during this time Gellert did several murals and government projects in Australia, having lived there for several years. Gellert also did a mural of Afro-American heroes for Hillcrest High School in Jamaica, New York.

The last several years of Gellert's life were spent researching and writing material for his autobiography. He gave a cameo appearance as one of the witnesses in the film *Reds* and did illustrations for the book *Highlights of a Fighting History*, about the Communist Party, USA, in 1979.

Gellert's works are included in the collections of the New York Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum, Pennsylvania Museum of Art in Philadelphia, the Museum of the History of the Working Class in Budapest, and the Marx-Engels Museum in Moscow.

Michael Stephens



Pepino Mangravite's sketch of the First American Artists Congress, in 1936. On stage, left to right: Heywood Broun, George Biddle, Stuart Davis, Julia Codesido of Peru, Lewis Mumford, Margaret Bourke-White, Rockwell Kent, Jose Clemente Orozco of Mexico, Paul Manship, Peter Blume and Aaron Douglas. Gellert played a leading role in convoking and organizing the Congress, which was the forerunner of Artists for Victory in the 1940s.



The six Gellert children just before coming to the United States in 1906. Hugo, then 13½ years old, on the left, followed by brothers Ted, Ernest, Laurence, Otto and sister Billie.

Hugo Gellert Biographical Notes

1892, May 3

Born in Budapest, Hungary

1902-06

Attends gymnasium (high school). Influenced by his art teacher, Professor Keil: "He developed in me an admiration of Michelangelo and for the revolutionary poet Sandor Petöfi."

1906

Family emigrates to the United States.

1909-14

Attends Cooper Union and National Academy of Design.

1914

With three awards from the Academy he visits France and Hungary, intending to study at the Julian Academy of Paris. Outbreak of World War I compels him to return to USA.

1916

First antiwar cartoons published in the New York Hungarian socialist daily, *Elöre*. Sends artwork to the radical literary journal *The Masses*, where he meets and becomes friend of John Reed, Mike Gold, Floyd Dell and others.

1917, Oct. 10

His brother, Ernest, 21, a conscientious objector, is drafted into the army.

1917, Nov.

The government suppresses *The Masses*.

1918, Feb.

First issue of new magazine *The Liberator* appears with John Reed's report on the Russian Revolution and Hugo Gellert's cartoon.

1918, March 10

The body of Ernest is delivered to the Gellert home in New York. Hugo and family view a bullet hole in Ernest's chest. Army claims Ernest committed suicide. Family is convinced that Ernest was the victim of foul play. The tragedy leaves deep wound in Hugo's heart.

1918, April

John Reed returns from Moscow with manuscript of *Ten Days That Shook the World*. Discusses with Gellert his experiences in Russia. Meeting leaves indelible impression in Hugo's mind and leads 15 years later to the publishing of *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*.

1918

Advises his local draft board that he will not serve in the

army in an unjust war. Goes to Mexico, where he works on cotton fields irrigation project. Returns to USA after the armistice.

1919

Teaches art to workers' children in the Modern School in Stelton, N.J.

1922

Liberator ceases publication.

Decorates lobby of New Playwrights Theatre established by Mike Gold.

1923

First one-man exhibition at Keworkian Gallery.

1925

As staff artist starts working for the *New Yorker* [1925-1946], later also for the *New York World*, *New York Times*, *Daily Worker*, and other publications.

In the ensuing 60 years Gellert draws more than one thousand cartoons for various newspapers and journals, criticizing the glaring injustices of society, organizing for resistance against them.

1926

The *New Masses* launched with Gellert on the Editorial Board.

1927

Heads the Anti-Horthy League, the first anti-fascist organization in the United States.

In a rickety single-engine plane, piloted by a wartime flyer, flies over Riverside Drive and throws anti-fascist leaflets upon an outdoor meeting organized by the emissaries of Admiral Horthy.

With his wife, Livia, pickets the White House, where Horthy's representatives were received by the President. They are arrested.

1928

Paints 50-foot mural for Worker's Cafeteria in Union Square, N.Y.C., possibly the first labor mural in USA.

1930

Accompanies Count Károlyi, the first president of the post-World War I Hungarian Republic. Tens of thousands attend meetings called to protest the Horthy government.

1932

Submits mural to the newly opened Museum of Modern Art. Mural depicts John D. Rockefeller, President Hoover and J.P. Morgan in the company of Al Capone. When museum attempts to remove Gellert's mural, other artists, including Gropper and Shahn, threaten to withdraw their paintings.

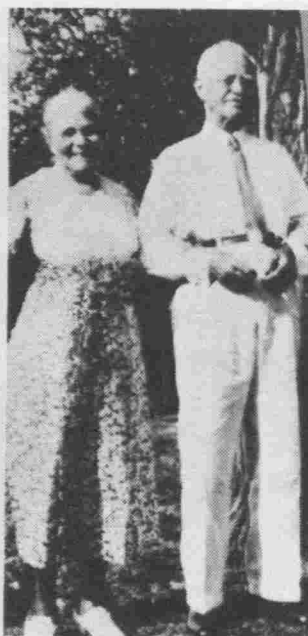
Visits France, Switzerland and the Soviet Union.

1933

Publishes *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*.

1934

John D. Rockefeller orders destruction of Diego Rivera mural in Rockefeller Center. Hugo organizes Artists' Committee for Action and leads demonstration to City Hall, demanding a Municipal Art Gallery.



Hugo's parents.

1935

Publishes *Comrade Gulliver*, a satire on contemporary social conditions. One-man exhibit at ACA Gallery. Exhibit at the Whitney Museum.

1936, Feb.

Municipal Art Gallery opened.

Helps organize and delivers keynote address: "Fascism, War and the Artists" at First American Artists Congress. Publishes and illustrates up-to-date version of *Aesop Said So*.

1937, Dec.

Organizes the Mural Artists Guild of the United Scenic Painters, AFL-CIO.

Addresses second session of Artists Congress.

1938

Paints murals for the Communications Building in the N.Y. World's Fair.

1939

He was chairman of the committee of delegates of sixteen artists' societies which secured the "American Art Today" building at the N.Y. World's Fair for a National Exhibition of 1500 paintings, sculpture and graphic works from every state of the United States. Successfully fights for agreement that the World's Fair accepts only works of organized artists for exhibits.

1940

Serves on the board as chairman of Artists for Defense.

1941

Ten days after Pearl Harbor, starts organizing Artists for Defense into Artists for Victory, which eventually embraces 10,000 American artists.

1942

Draws illustrations for Henry Wallace's speech: "Century of the Common Man."

1943

Exhibition at the Philadelphia Art Alliance.
Exhibition at Hall of Legion of Honor, San Francisco.

1944

Organizes Hungarian Committee for Reelection of President Roosevelt.

1945

Guest at the Inauguration of Roosevelt.

1946

Visits Australia with his wife, Livia.

1950-70

May Day posters for May Day demonstrations. Murals for headquarters of the Seaman's Union. Leads fight to free the great Mexican artist, Siqueiros, from jail.

1953

Paul Robeson is guest speaker at 40th anniversary of his career.

1959

Paints murals for Seward Park Houses in New York City.

1969

Joins editorial board of socialist journal *American Dialog*.

1973

Paints mural for Hillcrest High School in Jamaica, N.Y.

1974

Exhibition of selected works at the Budapest Museum of Labor History. The Hungarian government awards him the highest honor of the republic: the Order of the Banner.

1981

Greeted by friends and admirers throughout the world at anniversary celebration in New York.

1982

Appears in Warren Beatty's film *Reds* as a "witness" to historic events.

1985, Oct. 3

Speaks at *Masses* exhibit at Whitney Museum in New York.

1985, Dec. 6

Hugo Gellert dies in his home in Freehold, N.J.

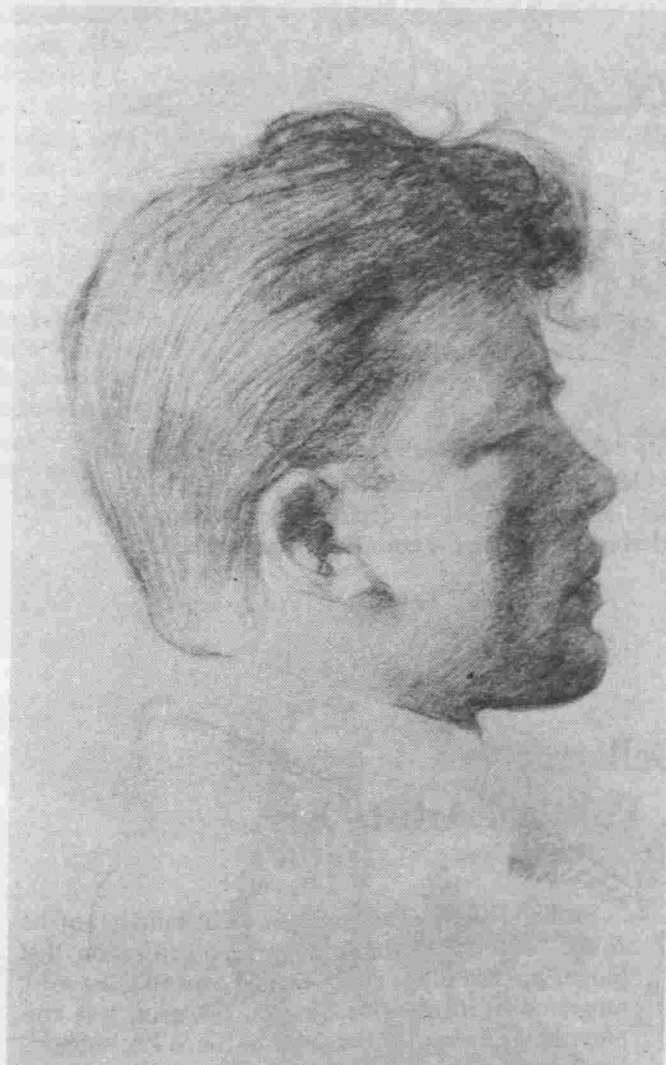


Self portrait by Hugo Gellert, circa 1918.



Hugo Gellert working on a May Day float in early 1950s.

HUGO GELLERT: MY BROTHER ERNEST



Ernest Gellert. Drawing by Hugo Gellert.

Ernest was drafted and on October 10th, 1917, he arrived at Camp Upton. The following is an excerpt from his diary, dated October 12, 1917.

"They requested me to state my views, and ordered a stenographer to take down my words. I was asked if it was on religious grounds that I based my objections. I replied that I was a conscientious objector — that I am opposed to war — that I regard all wars futile as far as settlement of any principles is concerned — that I considered the present war the logical result of the mad ambitions for commercial and territorial expansion on the part of the ruling classes of all of the European nations involved — that wars are possible only through the control of the political machineries, and all channels for forming public opinion by those unscrupulous minorities — that wars will cease when the masses will take an intelligent, active interest in politics — that I deplore our entrance into war. . . ."

On October 20th, Ernest came home on a two-day furlough. Going back he took his violin "to entertain the boys," and a few books "to have something to read, if they put me into the clink."

Shortly after, Ernest was transferred to Camp Mineola, L.I., where I visited him several times.

A good friend, a young girl, asked me to take her autograph book to him. When it was returned to me, this was written in it:

"Fully to believe in a principle and to have the will to abide by that principle at whatever cost — can anything greater fall to the lot of anyone? . . ."

Yours,
Nov. 4, Ernest"

On April 8, 1918, Ernest died at Fort Hancock, N.J., in military confinement. We were informed that he committed suicide, shooting himself with an army rifle.

When his body was sent home, a bullet hole was in the chest. The barrel of an army rifle was so long, that anyone's arm was too short to reach the trigger, when the rifle was directed at one's own chest. Therefore, we were told, he had reached the trigger "by means of a stick."

But he was confined, and he never had a rifle. And going to the mess hall and the lavatory — the two places he was allowed to go — he was always accompanied by a guard. And what is more, the stuff he was made of was not for suicide . . . Ernest was 22 years old.



One of the most celebrated and controversial of Gellert's murals, created for the Museum of Modern Art, in 1932. The mural entitled, *Us Fellas Gotta Stick Together*, depicted J.P. Morgan, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller and President Herbert Hoover in the company of gangster, Al Capone.

Hugo Gellert: Political Activist, Political Artist

By David Shapiro

During his long life Hugo Gellert participated in an astonishing number of important events, both political and artistic. He demonstrated and marched against war during the Woodrow Wilson Administration. He was one of the founders of the *New Masses*, successor to the *Masses* and the *Liberator*, often contributing to it his political drawings and cartoons. In 1927 he visited the Soviet Union, where he created a series of book jackets for the Russian translations of the works of Theodore Dreiser.

Early in the Depression, when the disappearance of art and artists seemed imminent, the first trial run for what eventually became the Fine Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration was begun by the College Art Association in 1932. Funded in part by the Gibson Committee's Emergency Work Relief Bureau in New York State, it created jobs for about one hundred artists and became the model for the Federal Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), which in the winter of 1933-34 employed almost 4000 artists nationwide.

By then Hugo had become one of the founders of the Artists' Committee for Action, an organization that fought successfully to continue and expand these work programs for artists. (He himself, however, was employed only for a brief few weeks by the WPA, supporting himself throughout his life by every variety of fine and commercial art, including a decades-long stint as caricaturist for the *New Yorker*, which knew of but never made any objection to his radical politics.) Once these programs, the Gibson Committee's, PWAP, and the WPA, proved that fine artists could function as employees — creating murals for public spaces, teaching children and adult classes in settlement houses and elsewhere, creating easel paintings and prints destined for wide distribution — Hugo and his colleagues realized that the system of prizes and awards, gallery exhibitions and dealers could be bypassed. No longer need artists be entrepreneurs, competitive with one another. Rather, public projects could free them to participate in efforts for the common good. To this end, he and others in the Artists' Committee for Action joined with the nascent Artists Union in order to build a single strong organization — the first and to this date

the last broadly representative and aggressive union of artists.

The Artists Union had some of the same concerns as any union — hours, wages, and working conditions. In addition it provided leadership by means of exhibitions and cultural programs for improving the relationship between artists and the American public. It sought to remove artists and their work from the isolation into which they had been cast by the nature of art's production, exhibition, and sale in advanced capitalist society. In many ways Hugo served as a model. His mural at the Worker's Cafeteria on Union Square, for instance, one of the first of its kind, exemplified social reality as he saw it. (The mural itself has unfortunately been lost.) Among his many other murals were those on a movie-star theme for the Centre Theater (since destroyed) in Rockefeller Center in the Thirties and a series on the Four Freedoms for the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union in the Forties. Hugo would have seen no contradiction among these projects: he aimed to make his work a part of the life of the people by commenting on their concerns in an easily accessible style.

When the United States entered World War II,

Hugo was one of the founders of Artists for Victory, an organization that brought together some twenty-eight art societies with 10,000 members in every field — graphic arts, painting, sculpture, mural painting, architecture, landscape architecture, and so forth. Today it is best remembered for its exhibitions in which a wide range of American artists participated, many of them with works that commented on the war. Afterward Hugo was instrumental in founding Artists Equity, still in existence, but which for its first decade or so seemed to promise to become a powerful successor to the Artists Union.

Throughout his life Hugo Gellert stood up for his principles, made art that embodied them, never gave up in his fight for progress. Despite the great age he reached his hopeful vision kept him young, so that even shortly before he died his appearance was little different from what it had been three or four decades earlier; he could tell detailed stories about events that occurred seventy years previously; and he continued to condemn vigorously those who would impede the people in whom he believed.





Michelangelo



Sandor Petöfi
(1823-1849)

My Teachers

(Hugo Gellert received many congratulations on the occasion of his 89th birthday in 1981. Following is an acknowledgement by Gellert to a letter received from a high school teacher in Budapest.)

Dear Mr. Mayer,

Thank you for your kind letter.

In the Lovag Street Gymnasium [high school] in Budapest, Professor Keil was my history teacher. He lectured with special enthusiasm about the Renaissance of the 15th Century and about the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49 and its poet, Petöfi.

This is how Michelangelo became my idol, and Petöfi my teacher. At that time, sitting on the school bench, I felt very sorry for myself, that I have to live in an age where nothing interesting ever happens. Whatever else I learned, I was taught by the great teacher. My parents brought us to the United States in 1906, when I was 13 years old.

Gradually it began to dawn on me, and later I became convinced of the fact that the worker is the most indispensable member of society.

“The Earth is the mother, the worker, the father of all material wealth. Without labor, there is no exchange between man and nature; in other words, there could not be life.”

— William Petty, the great English economist, as quoted by Karl Marx

The New York Hungarian labor daily *The Elöre* opposed the First World War, so I contributed antiwar cartoons to that paper. Later, I organized my fellow artists to fight Horthy, Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito. I helped organize the Artists for Victory movement, whose members rendered a great service in helping our country win World War II.

Please convey my greetings to your students.

Sincerely,
Hugo Gellert



John Reed, by Hugo Gellert.

A Meeting With John Reed

One afternoon, during the spring of 1918, I visited a friend at 21 West 8th Street. As I was leaving the house around 4 or 5 o'clock, on the stoop of the building I found myself face to face with John Reed.

Before I could open my mouth, he began to bombard me with questions about Ernest [Hugo's brother, who had died in an Army camp], about his political outlook, his affiliations, his activities, etc.

I did my best to answer him, telling him that my brother was a socialist, an activist, a conscientious objector. I could see, however, that my answers did not satisfy him.

Then he told me that coming home from Russia, as he stepped off the ship upon his arrival in the United States that morning, all his notes (that later became "Ten Days That Shook the World") were confiscated, and he was worried about getting them back.

When he parted, I felt terribly inadequate politically. Then and there I decided to start delving into the works of Marx. I could see that witnessing the revolution was a great school of learning for John Reed, and that he was its star pupil.

This was the start of a mental process that 15 years later culminated in my publishing Karl Marx in lithographs.

The Role of the Artists

I repeat what I had said nearly four decades ago at the First American Artists' Congress:

There is reason for a closer relationship between artist and worker; namely, the realization that while social forms and social classes may rise and disappear, labor remains indispensable as long as life itself exists.

Labor is a necessary condition of human existence. It has been through the ages a necessity imposed by nature itself, for without it there can be no interchange of materials between man and nature — in a word, no life.

To be isolated from workers and their aspirations and struggles is to be isolated from the only vital progressive force in society today.

We artists may fulfill a very important role. We may point a way to the future. But our vision must not be blurred. We must have a clear outlook if we wish to claim the right to call ourselves artists, if we wish to claim a place as creative men and women in the front lines of advancing humanity.

And humanity is advancing in seven league boots.

— Hugo Gellert-excerpts from unpublished manuscripts.

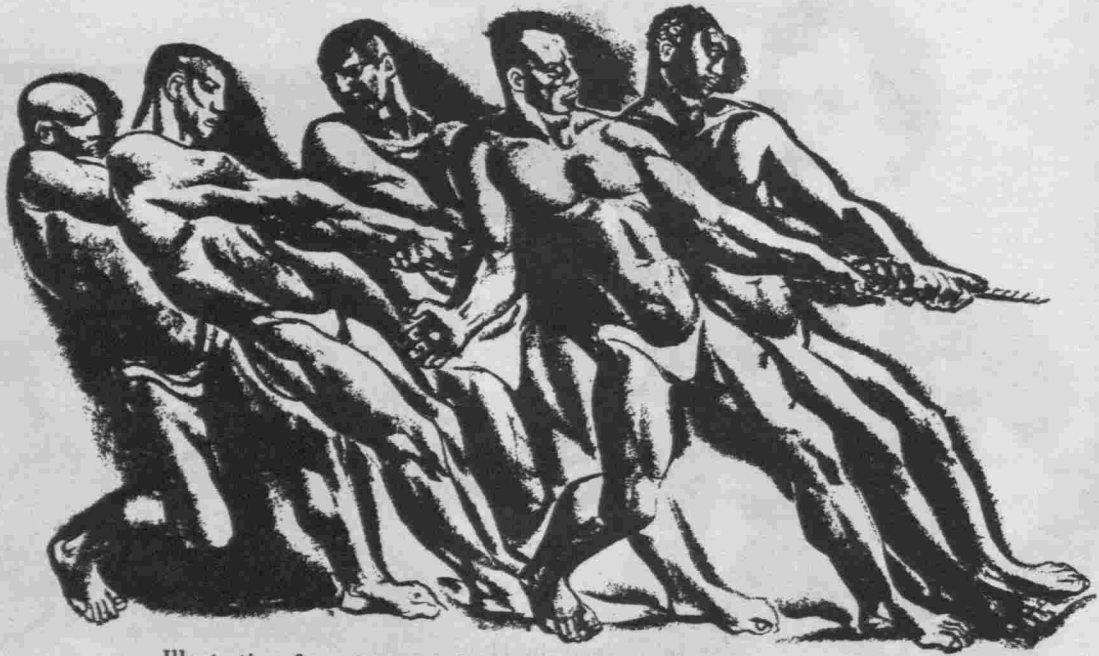


Illustration from Hugo Gellert's *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*.

How Hugo Gellert Illustrated Capital

By Louis Bebrits*

Hugo Gellert took a great step forward in popularizing Marx among workers in a book entitled *Capital in Lithographs*. It contains sixty drawings, in orderly sequence, and opposite each drawing is the corresponding text from Marx's great work. Thus each depiction becomes a graphic interpretation of an important chapter of *Capital*.

When Marx explained, with supreme clarity, what constitutes the value of commodities and what the true meaning of money and surplus value is, mysticism and fetishism were banished forever from the process of labor. The drawings of Gellert too reach their greatest heights here; what seemed to be complicated, confused, elusive parts of the economic totality now become simple and understandable to the observer. Marx, the great surgeon, cut open the malignancy of capital; its pirate economy, its destructive influence upon the masses become evident. The drawings of Gellert are a masterly accompaniment.

Gellert begins his picture book with that chapter of *Capital* which describes "Primary Accumulation." How did the first riches originate? Is it true that, in addition to lazy rascals, men existed who were diligent and thrifty, who saved their pennies and thus became wealthy? Nonsense! It was shameless robbery, ruthlessly crushing the lives of thousands, that created the first riches. In the sixteenth century it was mercenaries, hired by the landowners, who drove the serfs

off the land, for the barons found that wool was more profitable than wheat. Now pasture became desirable, and arable land was no longer prized. The serfs may have become beggars, but antivagrancy laws were passed that took care of derelicts, and, whenever necessary, the executioner was summoned to help force the homeless into factories. This is what Marx said, and what Gellert depicted.

Following in the footsteps of Marx, Gellert pictured the functions of capital. The value of a commodity is determined by the human labor congealed in it — the proletarian hands and fists grasping working tools. How many hands hold the means of production in their grip, and for how long, determines the value of the product. Gellert's drawings make this lesson clear, compelling, unforgettable.

The value of money (gold) is also determined by the labor embodied in it. From the drawings of Gellert we learn how money becomes the means of exchange, exchange value, a mirror of the commodities.

For Gellert, the most difficult problem of all was to find a graphic equivalent for the theory of surplus value. He solved it phenomenally: the face of a clock. The numbers and hands mark the time of labor — let us say, six hours. What the worker produces during that time is just enough value to secure his own existence. On a platter, Gellert has placed milk, eggs, bread, fruit, but this fails to satisfy the employer's greed.

But the worker cannot go home after producing as

much as he needs for his own existence. He must continue to work. The hands of the clock keep moving to seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Six hours longer. A complete circle is made on the face of the clock. But from the continued labor of the worker, from the continued moving of the hands of the clock, the quantity of food on the platter does not increase in the least. All the value produced during this time finds its way to the pocket of the factory owner. But the owner is not yet satisfied. He wants the worker to be content with less than the value of six hours labor. A struggle ensues between capitalist and worker. The capitalist at last succeeds. The worker produces for his own welfare only as long as it takes for the hand of the clock to reach the numbers one, two, three. Thereafter the worker receives the value of three hours' labor. The rest — everything he produces during the remaining nine hours, or the surplus value — goes to the capitalist. The hands of the clock mark this on another drawing and a well-filled bag of money for the capitalist. As you look at the drawings you realize why so many workers become more and more impoverished and how the fortune of big businessmen keeps swelling. The innermost secrets of capitalist production will out.

*Louis Bebrits was editor of the progressive Hungarian-American newspaper, *Uj Elöre*, 1923-32. He was Minister of Transportation in Hungary 1945-56. This review was written in 1933.



Karl Marx, by Hugo Gellert.



Tom Mooney

“A Tower of Strength”

I first met Hugo Gellert when I was managing editor, in fact if not in title, of the monthly *New Masses*. It was the depth of the great economic crisis of the 1930s, and I was inexperienced in fund-raising, which was a major job. Hugo was literally a tower of strength, helpful not only in that but in other ways.

I knew him also in connection with the John Reed Club of New York. He had been actively engaged in its work. He was an artist who did not scorn organization and collectivity in work, discussion and decision making. He had his say in the fierce debates that enlivened the times. He was partisan, yes, on the side of making art serve people and he was a determined foe of concepts which would isolate art, because he knew well that art flowed from life and helped shape life as well as being shaped by life.

I remember his activity in defending the economic interests of artists and other cultural workers. He was there in the demonstrations for WPA and other causes, not only fighting for programs but helping organize and shape the fight, mobilizing other cultural workers.

Friendly, energetic, devoted, he was an outstanding figure in the battles of the '30s, not only on the cultural front but the overall political front.

His magnificent illustrations for Karl Marx's *Capital*

did not just illustrate, but complemented that work. Who else has so masterfully interpreted that masterpiece?

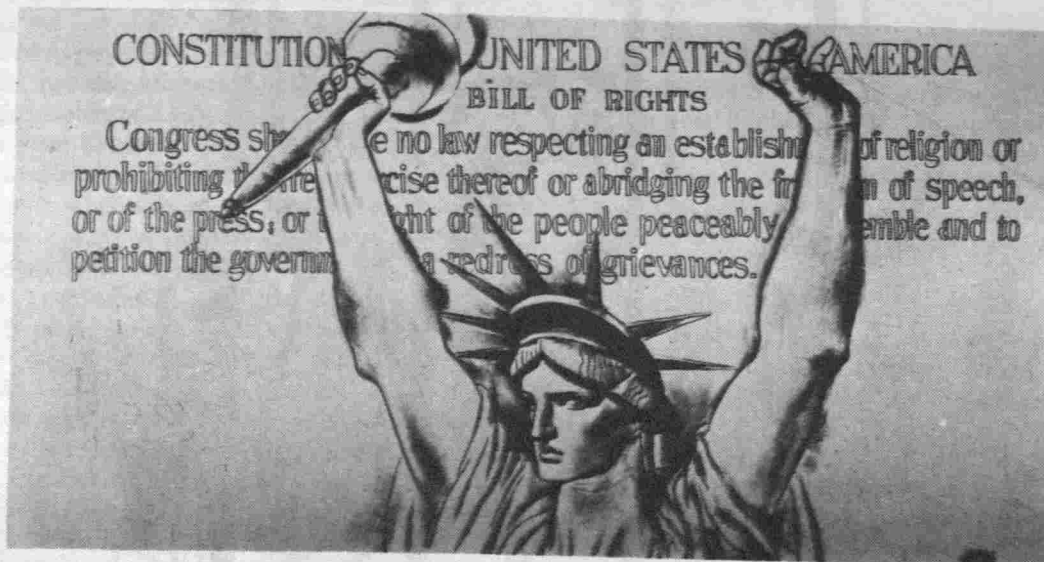
Hugo Gellert found his indomitable strength and coursing energy in the working class and its historic struggles. His strength was drawn from the strength of the people. He shared and added to their vision.

After many years I saw him again when he and Bill Gropper had an exhibit in Detroit. He was as warm, friendly and outreaching as if we had only parted the night before.

Later, in New York again, despite the years of his hard work, I found him still the enthusiast, the hard-worker, the deeply-feeling artist putting his heart and soul and his great artistic ability at the service of the people and a future of democracy, peace and socialism. I have ever honored him because he honored the greatest ideals of our times and made them live in his own life.

Conrad Komorowski

Presently staff member and columnist of the *Daily World*. Founder of the Philadelphia John Reed Club and organizer of the National John Reed Clubs in the 1930s.



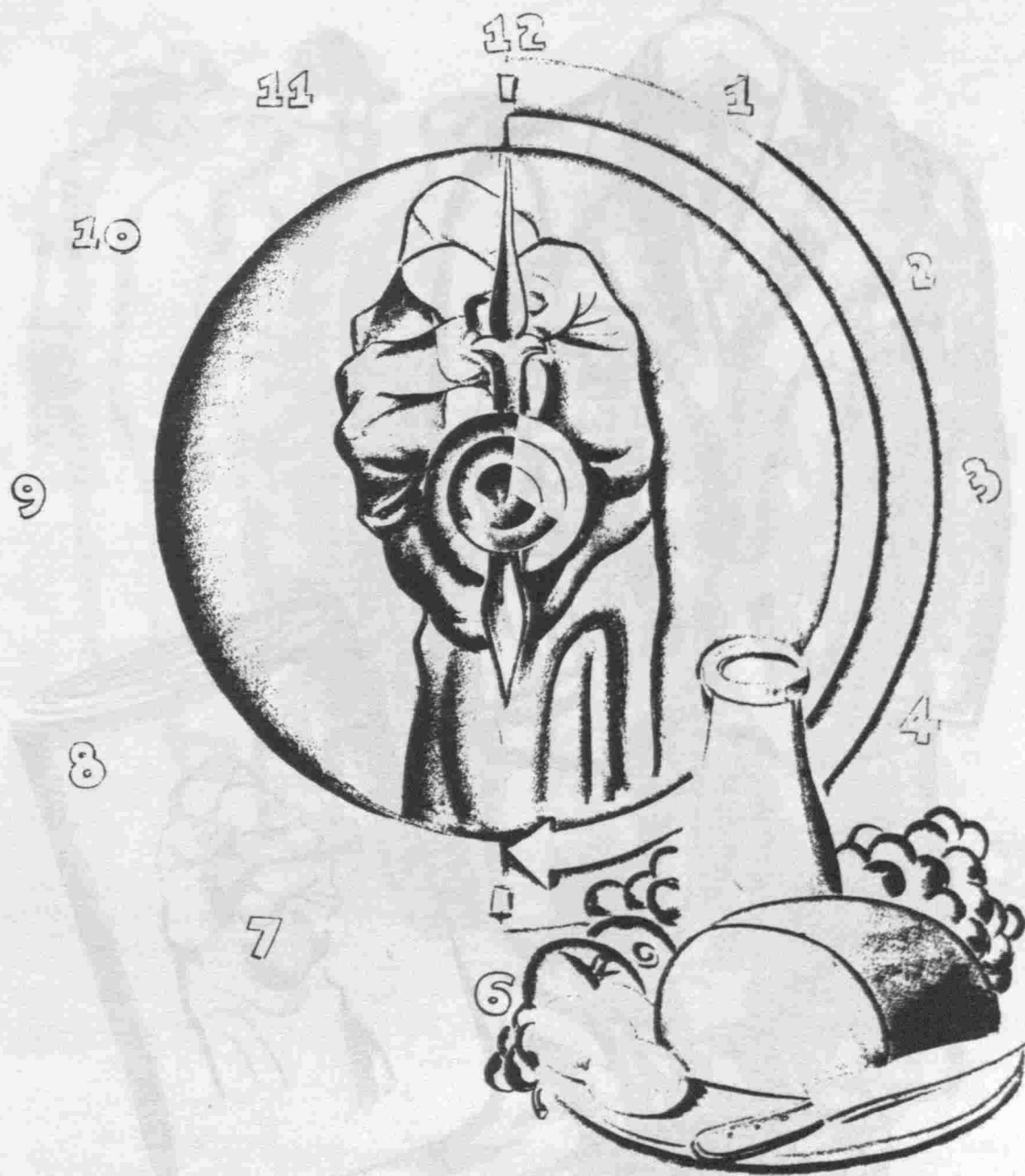
“This country with its institutions belongs to the people who inhabit it.”
Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1861



Frontispiece to *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*, Perseus fighting the dragon. All his life, Gellert, too, fought the dragons — the evils of racism, fascism and greed.



The origins of capitalism. Serfs being driven from the land. From *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*.



The source of surplus value. From Karl Marx's *Capital in Lithographs*.



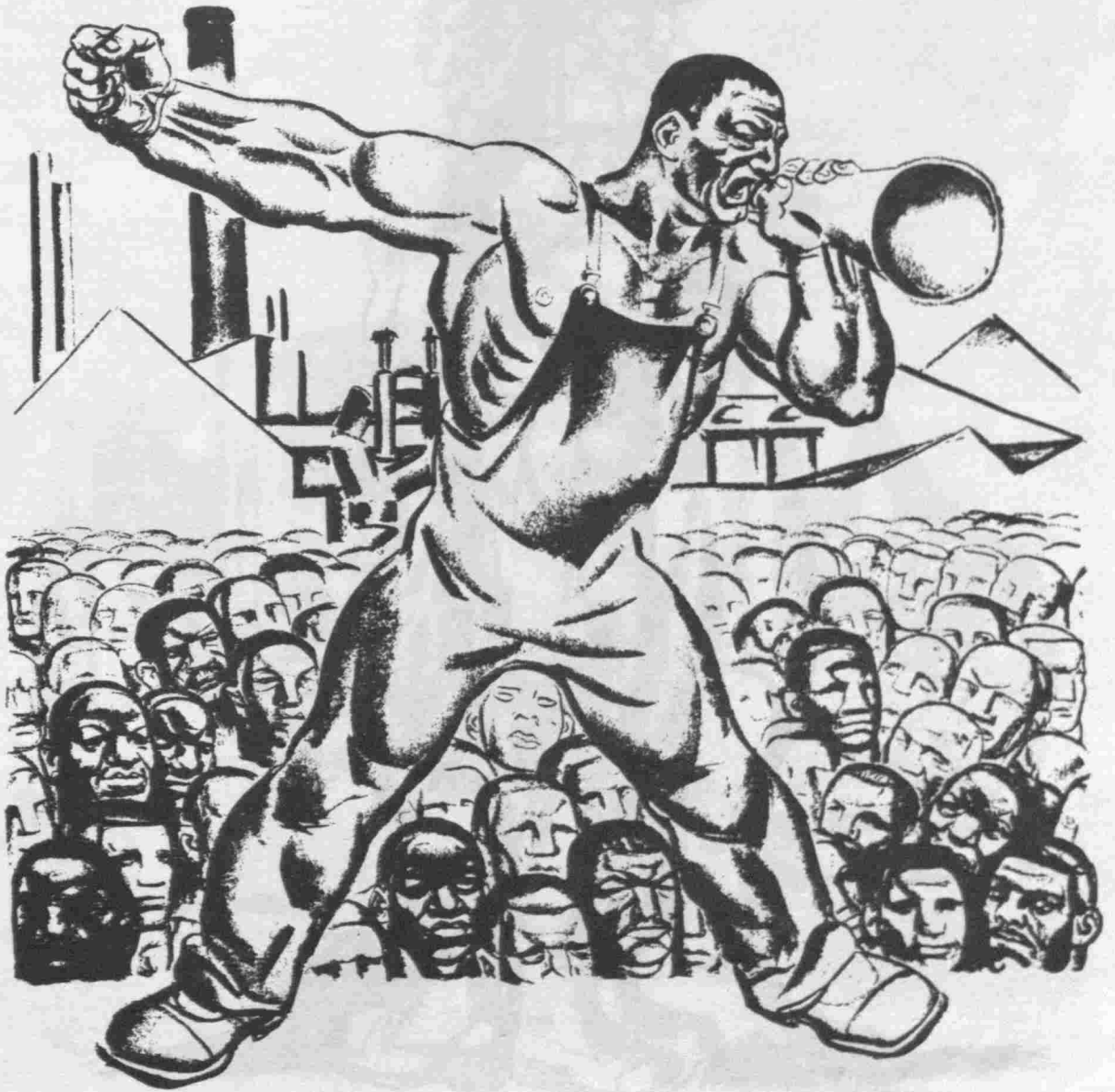
What determines the value of a commodity? The amount of socially necessary labor embodied in it. From *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*.



Unemployed workers.



Lenin, from Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs.



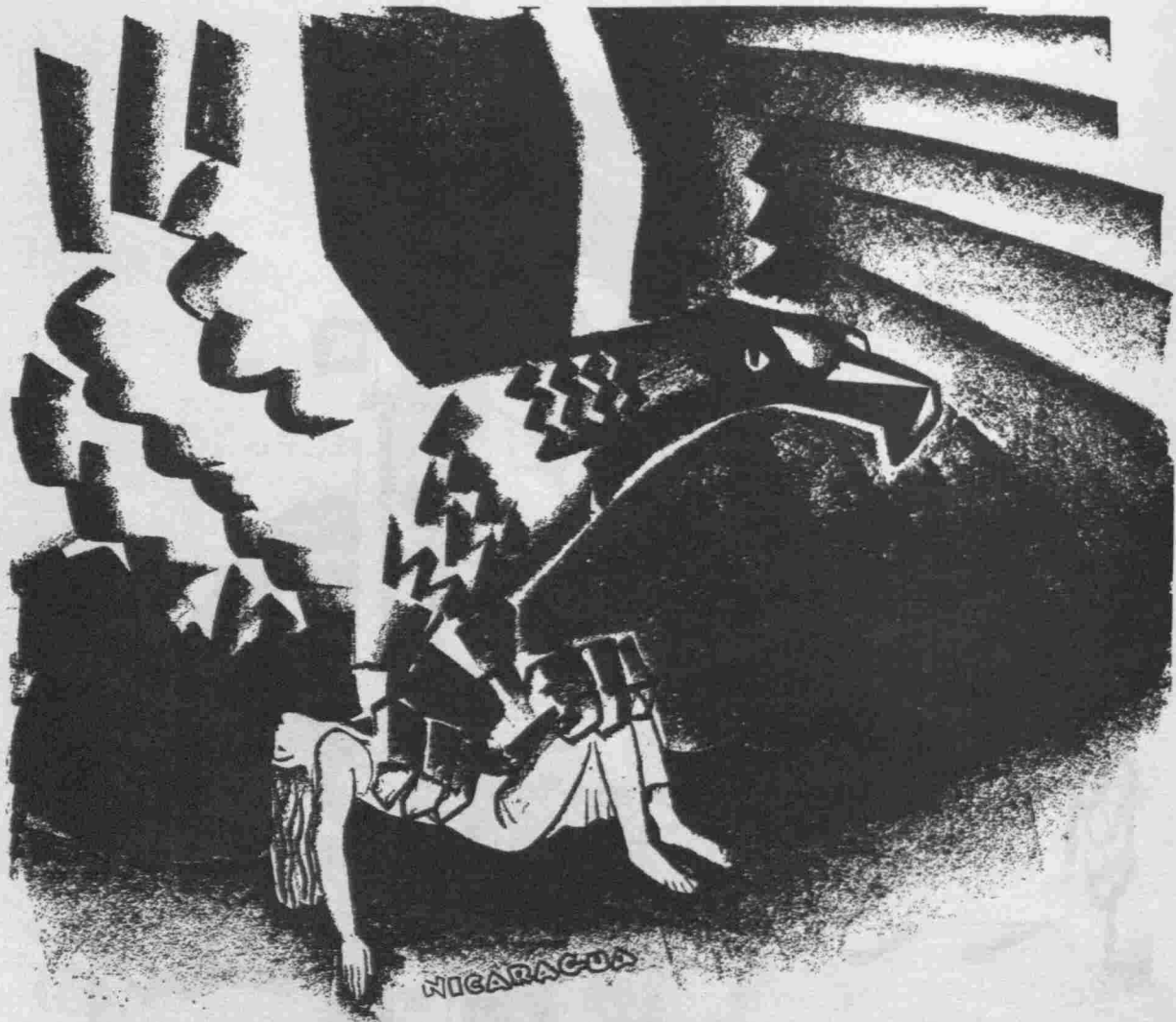
Organize!



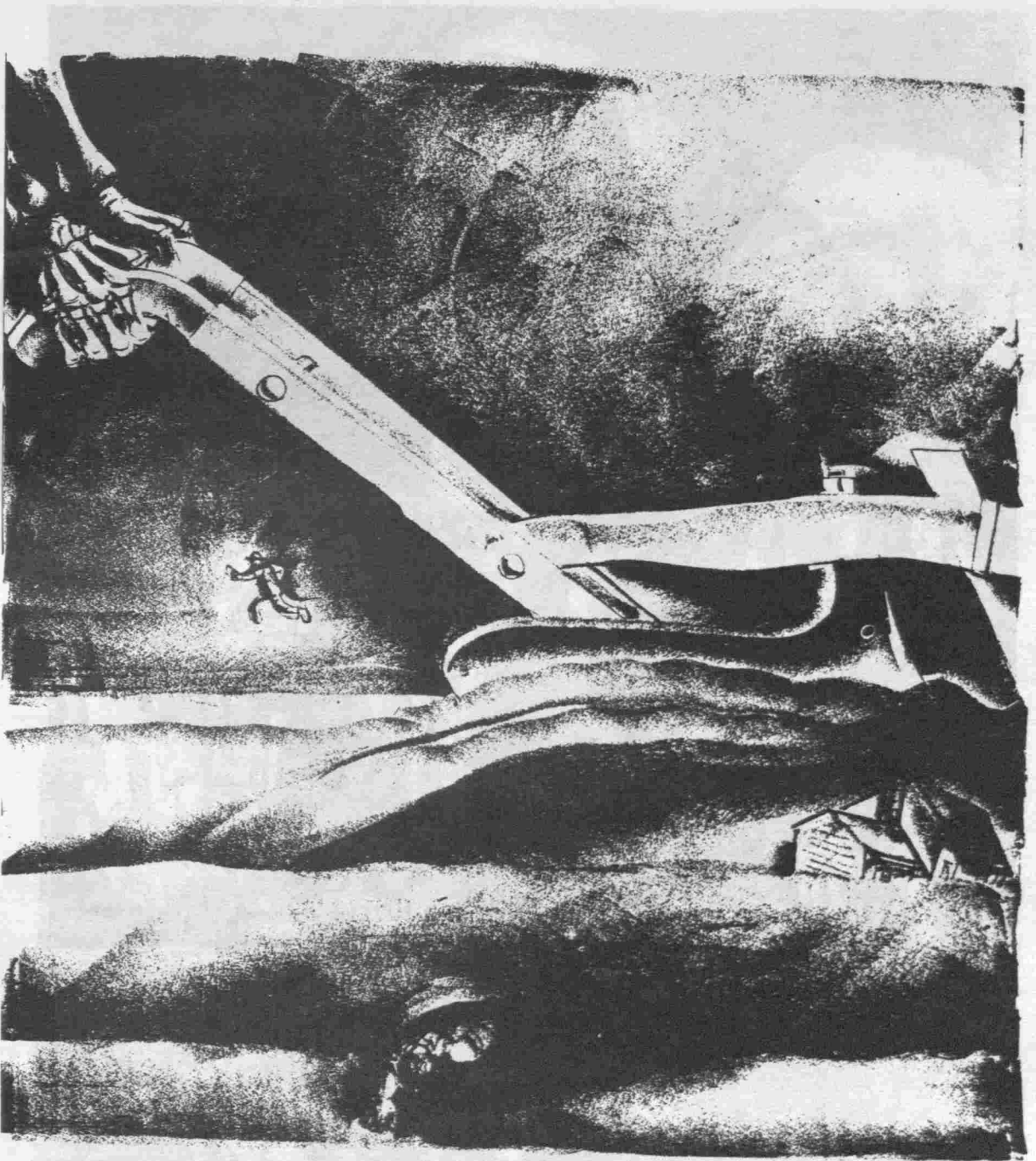
Black and white, unite and fight!



The means of production belong to those who work and put their lives on the line every working day: the workers. From *Karl Marx's Capital in Lithographs*.



Nicaragua in the claws of imperialism. A 60-year old cartoon by Hugo Gellert, as timely today as it was in 1928 when it first appeared in an issue of *The New Masses*.



The plight of the farmers. An illustration from Gellert's *Comrade Gulliver*.



Representative Woodrum's committee "investigating" WPA

In defense of the Works Project Administration (WPA), one of the most advanced social achievements of the Roosevelt administration. The WPA provided jobs for hundreds of thousands of workers, among them thousands of unemployed artists. Congress soon wanted to liquidate the WPA. In this powerful cartoon, Gellert invokes the true spirit of Americanism, symbolized by the American eagle defending the WPA.

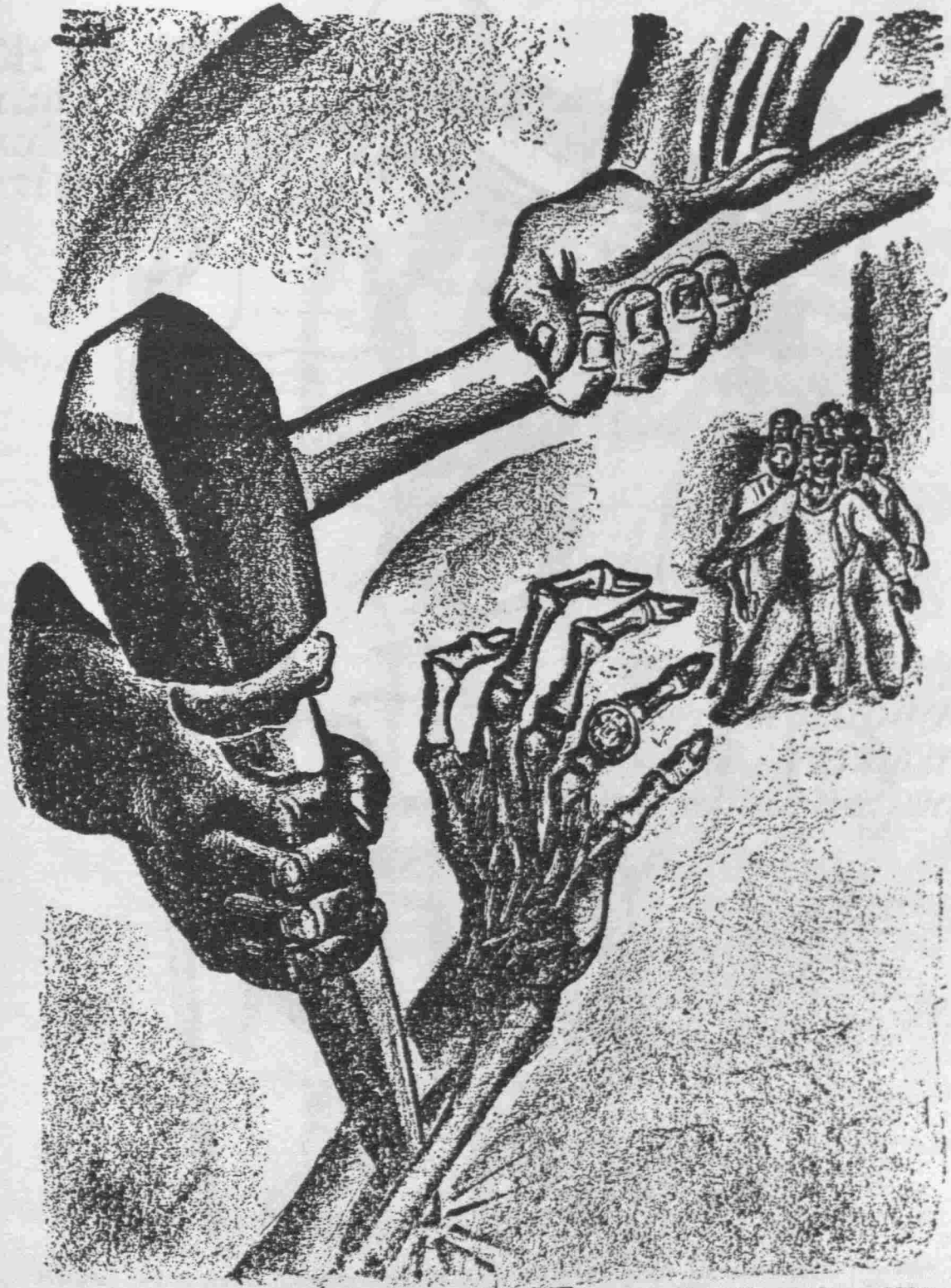


Capitalism's favorite method of disposing of unneeded labor power: War. From Karl Marx's *Capital* in *Lithographs*.



Mounted policemen Riding Down Striking Miners, in Colorado in 1926.

HUGO
GELLEBT



New Masses, June, 1932

In defense of the Scottsboro youths, 1932.



Franklin Delano Roosevelt

*"Az én földem
első érett kalá-
szából fontam
ezt a koszorút..."*

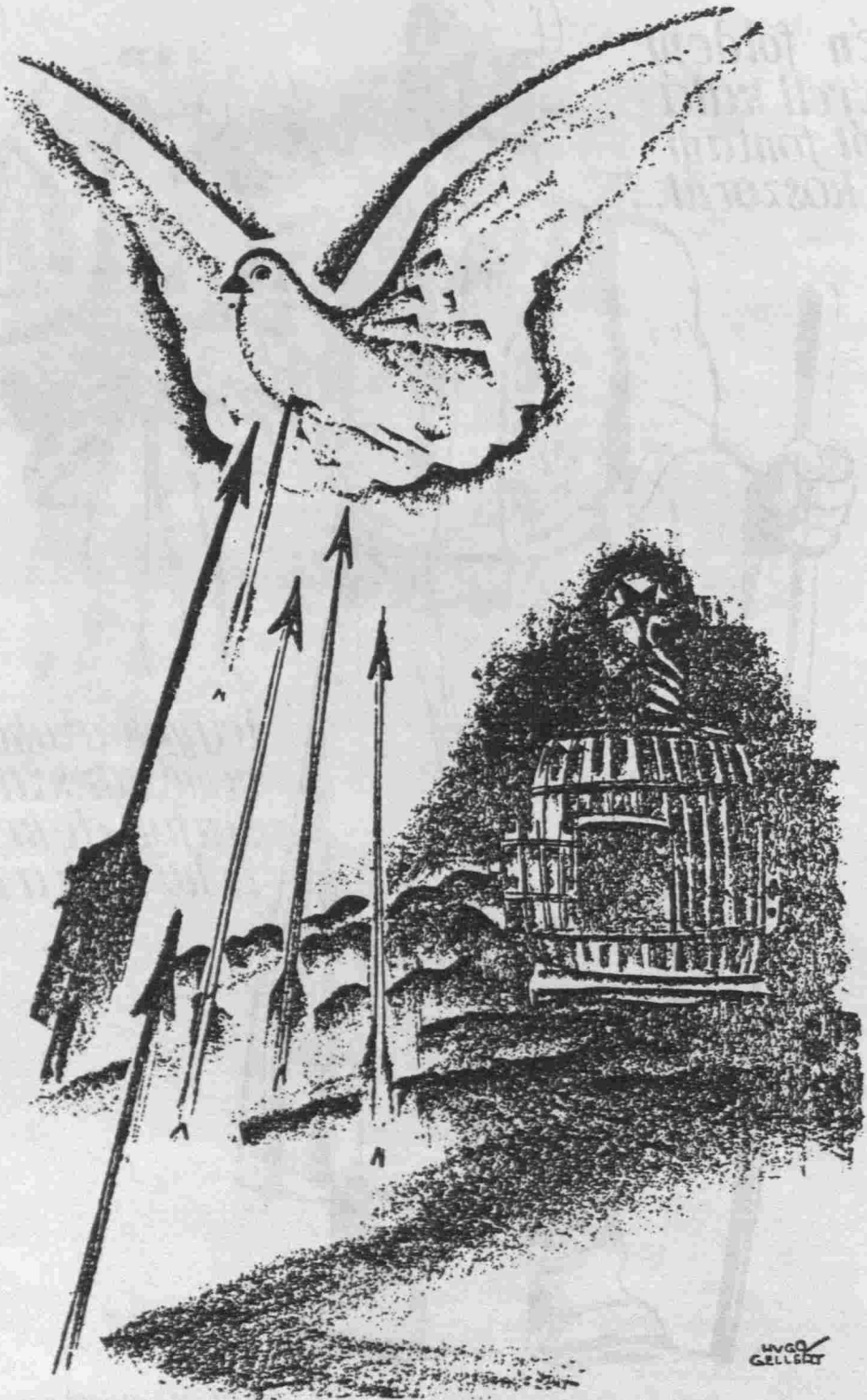


*legyen azoké, akik
nemcsak szabad-
ságot, de kenyeret
is hoztak a népnek."*

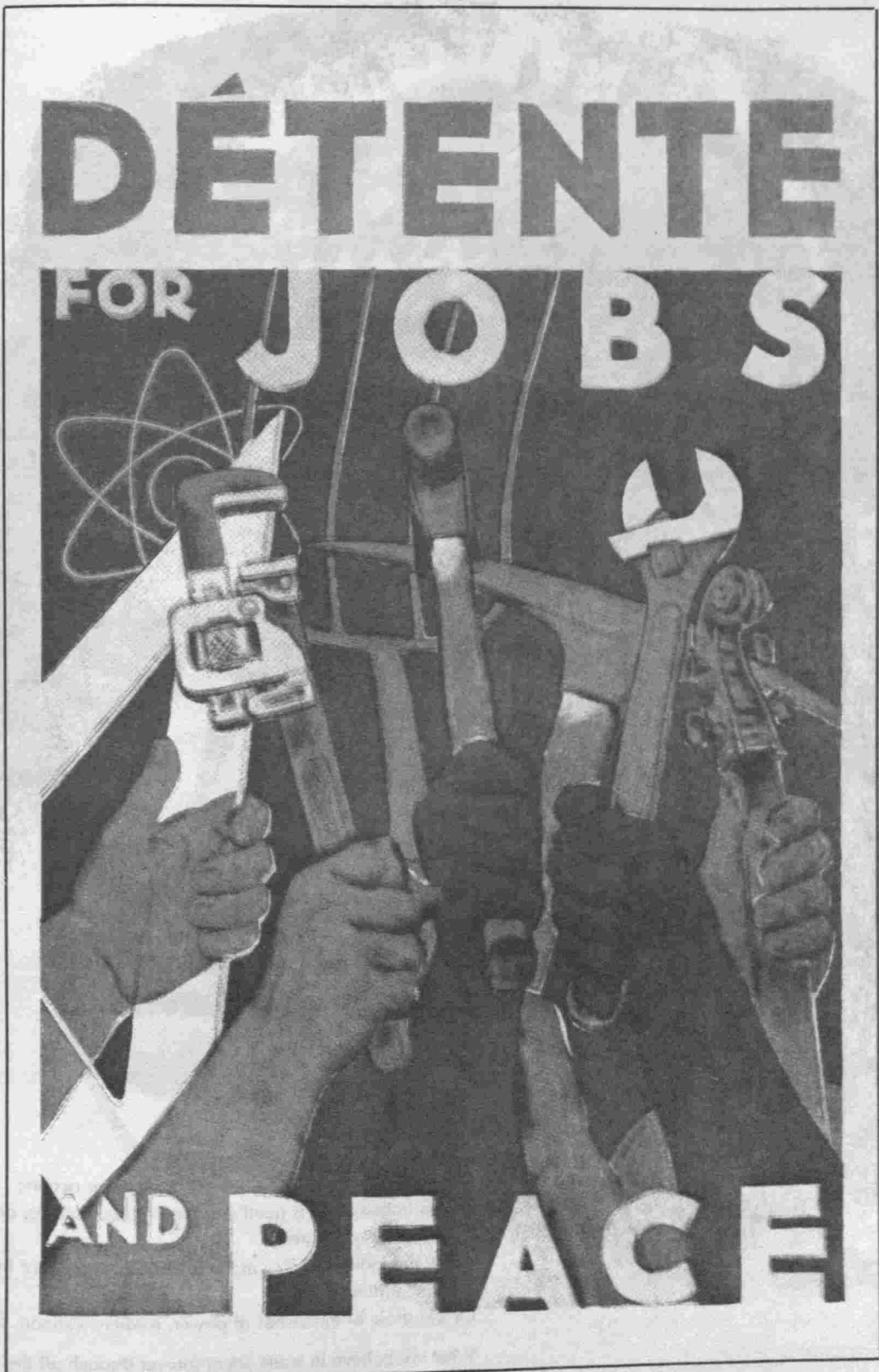
HYGO
GELLERT

Hungary and its people occupied a special place in Gellert's heart. He retained a warm, close friendship and contact with progressive Hungarian Americans and their press (today, the *Magyar Szó*), throughout his long life. The above is a cover for the Yearbook of the *Magyar Szó*, one of the many pieces of art work provided by him for the progressive Hungarian American press. This cover was in commemoration of the liberation of Hungary by the Red Army in 1945. The inscription's translation:

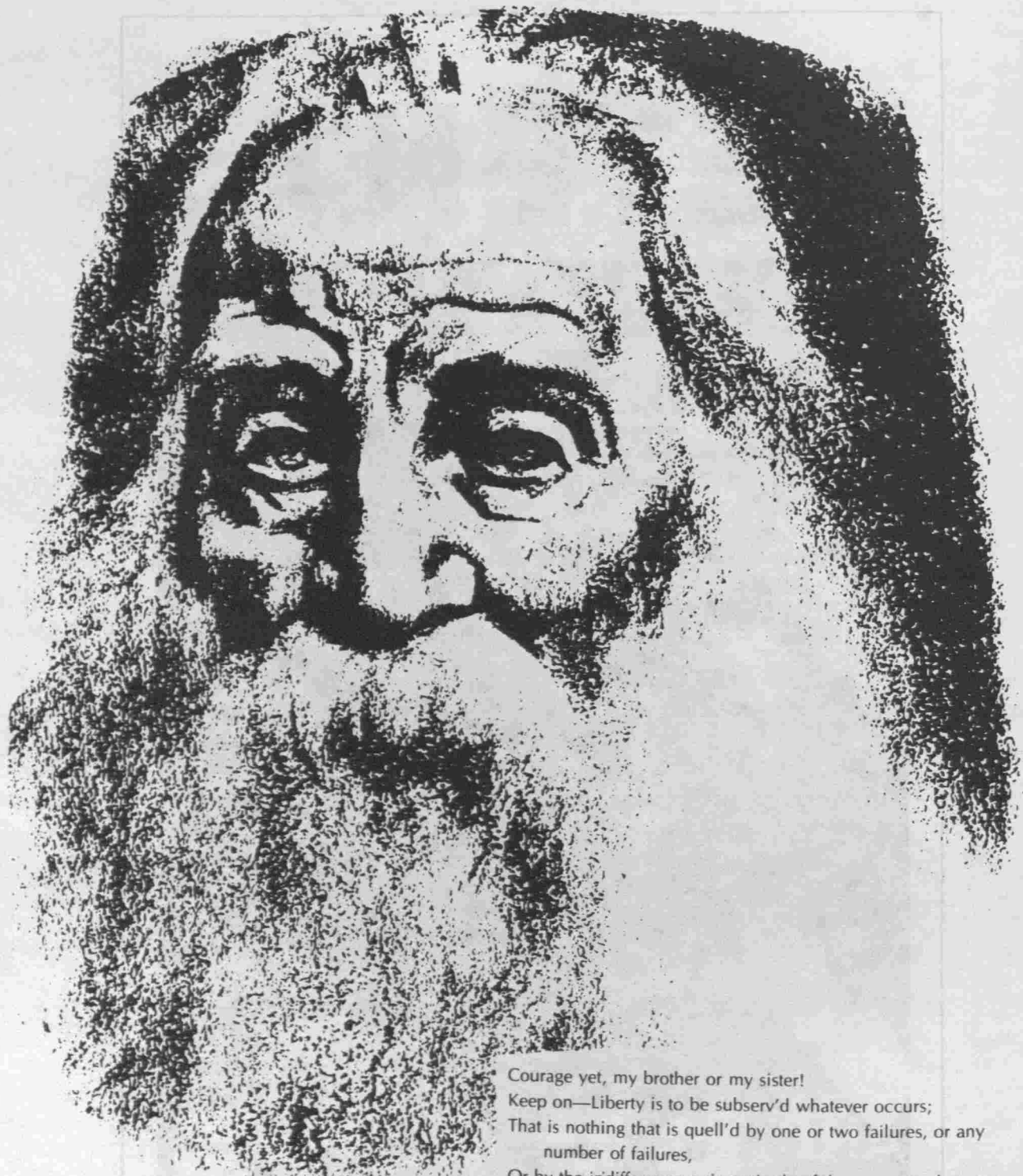
Out of the first crop of my land, I am sending this wreath of wheat to those who brought not only freedom but bread too, to the people.



Soviet peace dove gets a warm reception in Geneva in 1928. In this respect, things have not changed much since the time when Gellert drew this for *The New Masses*.



This *Detente* placard won First Prize from the World Federation of Trade Unions in 1979. A thousand posters were made of this theme, proudly displayed by members of the National Union of Health and Hospital Care Workers, District 1199, at the memorable peace demonstration in Washington, DC, 1977.



Courage yet, my brother or my sister!
Keep on—Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;
That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or any
number of failures,
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by any
unfaithfulness,
Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon, penal statutes.
What we believe in waits latent forever through all the continents,
Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is
positive and composed, knows no discouragement,
Waiting patiently, waiting its time.

—Walt Whitman

A portrait of Walt Whitman.



HUGO
GELLERT

Paul Robeson



The last sketch of Hugo Gellert by artist Charles Keller, on October 23, 1985, at Hugo's, home 13 days before his death.

"He has out-soared the shadows of our night . . ."

Shelley



Daedalus and Icarus

In memory of
our great friend

HUGO GELLERT

(He gave us wings)

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In Memory
of
HUGO GELLERT

**He inspired millions in the great struggle to make America safe for democracy and
the world free of war and exploitation.**

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WORKERS FIGHTING BACK NEED...



On May Day 1986, the dream of generations of U.S. workers, trade union organizers and leaders will come true. The first issue of a national daily paper speaking for and in the interest of working people will roll off the presses simultaneously in New York and San Francisco.

Today workers face a new generation of robber barons — the transnational monopoly owners, the corporate raiders and the Wall Street financiers — all bent on beating the working class into submission and destroying the trade union movement.

A strike movement that began last year is continuing. There's a fightback spirit, a sense of class solidarity and a burning anger that you can see and feel on picket lines, in the union hall and at the voting booth.

Nearly 4 million workers this year will be negotiating new contracts in steel, aerospace, airlines, communications, construction, electrical, maritime, and others.

These workers need the new People's Daily World in their fight.

The new national daily workingclass paper will be able to draw more and broader forces into the fightback. It will build unity. It will help give workers optimism, clarity, a sense of what it takes to win and that winning is possible.

The new PDW needs your help now to make sure that the working class continue to get the truth, every day, everywhere. Help make the dream come true this May day. Send your contribution today.

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Dirección telegráfica: FESYMOND PRAGUE

The World Federation of Trade Unions, representing 206 million workers on five continents and dedicated to the unity and solidarity for peace and progress of all workers of all nations and creeds, adds its voice to the many memorializing an outstanding American, Hugo Gellert, distinguished artist, fighter for human rights and for international friendship, defender of culture and human freedom.



FATE! OPEN THE GATE

*to accomplishments for me
for the benefit of mankind,
Don't permit THIS NOBLE FLAME
in my heart to be extinguished
in vain.*

Sandor Petöfi

Hugo Gellert revered Petöfi as his teacher. He remained faithful to his teaching to the end of his days.

John T. Gojack
Author of Transylvanian Courage

**We Honor a Great Artist, a Distinguished Humanitarian
and a Fighter for Peace and Justice**



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THE LIFE OF
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HUGO GELLERT

**IN WHOSE GIFTED HANDS
BRUSH AND CRAYON
WIELDED IN HUMANITY'S CAUSE,
IN THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY, PEACE, SOCIALISM
PROVED MIGHTIER THAN SWORD OR CANNON,
MIGHTIER THAN NUCLEAR MISSILE!**

Prompt Printing Press



Hugo Gellert (standing, second from left) at a press committee meeting of the *Hungarian Word*.

Hugo Gellert was the president of the publishing firm of the only progressive Hungarian newspaper in the United States.

What was the aim and objective of Hugo Gellert?

To state it in the simplest terms: to make the life of his fellow man safe, secure and happy.

That is the reason he was an anti-fascist.

That is the reason he fought to increase the wages of the working people, secure for them, with paid holidays, paid vacation, pension, etc.

That is the reason he fought for PEACE.

His departure from our ranks places added responsibility on the shoulders of those, who follow the same path that he followed.

James Lustig

We join in honoring the memory of
HUGO GELLERT
Artist and Scholar
Champion of the cause of peace among the nations
of the world.

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His art,
happily, marches on.

Alden Whitman

In memory of a wonderful
human being and of our
work together as friends
during the marvelous days
of the Artist Union.

Martin Popper

In fond memory
of
HUGO GELLERT

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In Memory of Hugo Gellert
Artist and Fighter for Peace
and Socialism

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HUGO GELLERT
A hero of our times

David & Dorothy Lobel

We, the members of the Arts, Entertainment and Media Club of the New York State Communist Party, are greatly saddened by the death of Hugo Gellert, and we offer our deepest sympathy to his family.

Hugo was one of our most esteemed comrades. Since our earliest years in the movement he has been an inspiration and guide in the mobilization of artists for peace, for trade union solidarity, for racial equality and for social justice. The years never diminished his enthusiasm nor dimmed his vision of a rational, humane and safe world of socialism.

Our memorial to Hugo Gellert shall be our continuing effort to advance the noble cause to which he devoted his life.

We salute the life

of

HUGO GELLERT

People's Artist

UpdateUSSR

(formerly New World Review)

In gratitude for

Hugo Gellert's

Life and

Achievements

**National Council of
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HUGO GELLERT

**from his brothers in the
United Scenic Artists,
Local Union 829.**

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Comrade in the struggles
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was a noted artist who helped
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"We can see far for we are standing on the shoulders of giants . . ."
Hugo Cellert's mural in Hillcrest High School, Jamaica, New York.