

readable (Communist jargon made that practically impossible), at least more intelligible. After a brief, convulsive struggle, most of the pros threw up their hands and fled. O'Connor was not, I believe, a Communist.

He handed me a clipping from the *New York Times* and told me to write a snappy lead and "class-angle" the story. The story was about the activities of one General Sandino, a Nicaraguan officer, who had sharked up a parcel of bandits (known to the *Daily Worker* as "the anti-imperialist forces") and had taken to the hills, where he was standing off the national constabulary supported by the United States Marines. (The marines were presently to be recalled amidst pangs of "imperialist" bad conscience.) "Class-angling" meant to give the news a Communist interpretation. I felt quite equal to that, but, though I have written hundreds of them since, a snappy lead then seemed to me a feat beyond my powers.

I assume that I succeeded, for I was asked to write more and more for the *Worker*, still on an unpaid voluntary basis. I know now that I could scarcely have failed. No ability was needed on the *Daily Worker*. All that was needed was a dim notion of Communist theory and the audacity to face a typewriter. What resulted was then "edited"—a mysterious process for which nobody seemed responsible, least of all the nominal editor. It was quite a test of revolutionary devotion to read the *Daily Worker*.

With my brother's death, I stopped writing for the *Worker*. I stopped all party activities. I seldom saw my comrades. Once in a long while I met Harry Freeman. He was tactful; he gently raised the problem to the plane of reason. He was organically incapable of grasping it in any other way. He pointed out the illogicality of my brother's act, which he regarded as a purely individualist and negative solution to a struggle that demanded that men live for it, and die only when they had to. He pointed out the greater illogicality of my grief, which it was unseemly not to master, since, as a Communist, I should understand clearly the forces that caused such disasters as my brother's, and what to do about them.

I did not then know that reason and logic can be a blasphemy. Freeman's calm exasperated me. But, as my grief shrank, in hardening, into a core of unchanging anger, I decided to go back to the *Daily Worker*, as the most obvious thing I could see to do. Now I went as a full-time writer and was paid a starting salary of ten dollars a week, when I got it. Often nobody received any wages, for the *Worker* was always on the brink of bankruptcy.

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The *Daily Worker* office was a long, narrow room with only two windows at the front. Desks were set end to end against the two long walls. There was so little space that the writers, facing the opposite walls, sat so close that the backs of their chairs almost touched. I have seldom seen an orderly editorial office, though I have known newsmen with a talent for dissembling disorder by filing it in their desk drawers, bookcases or against the wall. The *Daily Worker* writers disdained subterfuge. Each desk was a triumph of chaos. Editorial and human relations were much the same.

Harvey O'Connor had left some time before my return. No one was responsible for the orderly routing and flow of copy, and it sometimes happened that two or three writers were discovered to have written the same story. The paper's nominal editor was J. Louis Engdahl, a Communist in his late forties or fifties, who seldom paid any attention to what was going on, for, at the time, he was a prey to both political and emotional stresses of great intensity. He sat at the front of the office, at one of the two windows, usually staring fixedly out. At long intervals, he would beat out a page or two of copy, which was dull but at least intelligible. Engdahl himself was not. If you asked him a simple question, he would turn away and stare out the window. When you had about decided that he had forgotten you, he would turn around and fix you with his big round lenses that magnified his eyes to a slightly mad expression. Then he would grunt. Sometimes he mumbled a few words, scarcely audible. I do not remember hearing him utter five coherent sentences.

In his prime, he had been a Socialist in Wisconsin. He was now a follower of Jay Lovestone and had received the editorship of the *Daily Worker* as a prize in some factional deal. He felt that he was slipping. He also lived in terror of the telephone, for that seemed to be his wife's preferred way of reaching him, and he did not wish to be reached. When it rang, he would stare at it gloomily, then have someone else answer it. We always knew who was calling when we heard: "Comrade Engdahl is out of the office. No, I don't think he will be back."

Behind Editor Engdahl, at the other window, sat Comrade Vern Smith. Comrade Smith was a tall, folded-over man with a shock of white hair, startling because he had a youngish face that at first glance looked fatuous. It was only on closer inspection and closer acquaintance that you perceived that the face was also wary and