of seven pages.

by the Friends of Democracy."

Democracy which was organized

and was headed until his death,

about four years ago, by the Rev.

necticut."

Purely Commentary

est book in the world." In a hard-bound cover, entitled "A Letter Gatos, on May 7, 1940:

Several years ago, this Commentator referred to "the short-

'The World's Shortest Book': The Famous Exchange of Letters Between John Steinbeck and Rev. L. M. Birkhead Nazis . . Recollection of Birkhead's Services

ported.

By Philip Report Extreme

Slomovitz Right Wingers Avoid

BOSTON, (JTA)—The emerg-In reply to the above letter, Steinbeck replied, from Los ing extremist right-wing movement in the United States appears inclined to keep anti-Semitism at arm's length and to guard against any expressions of anti-Semitism at its forums, two local Jewish community relations agencies re-

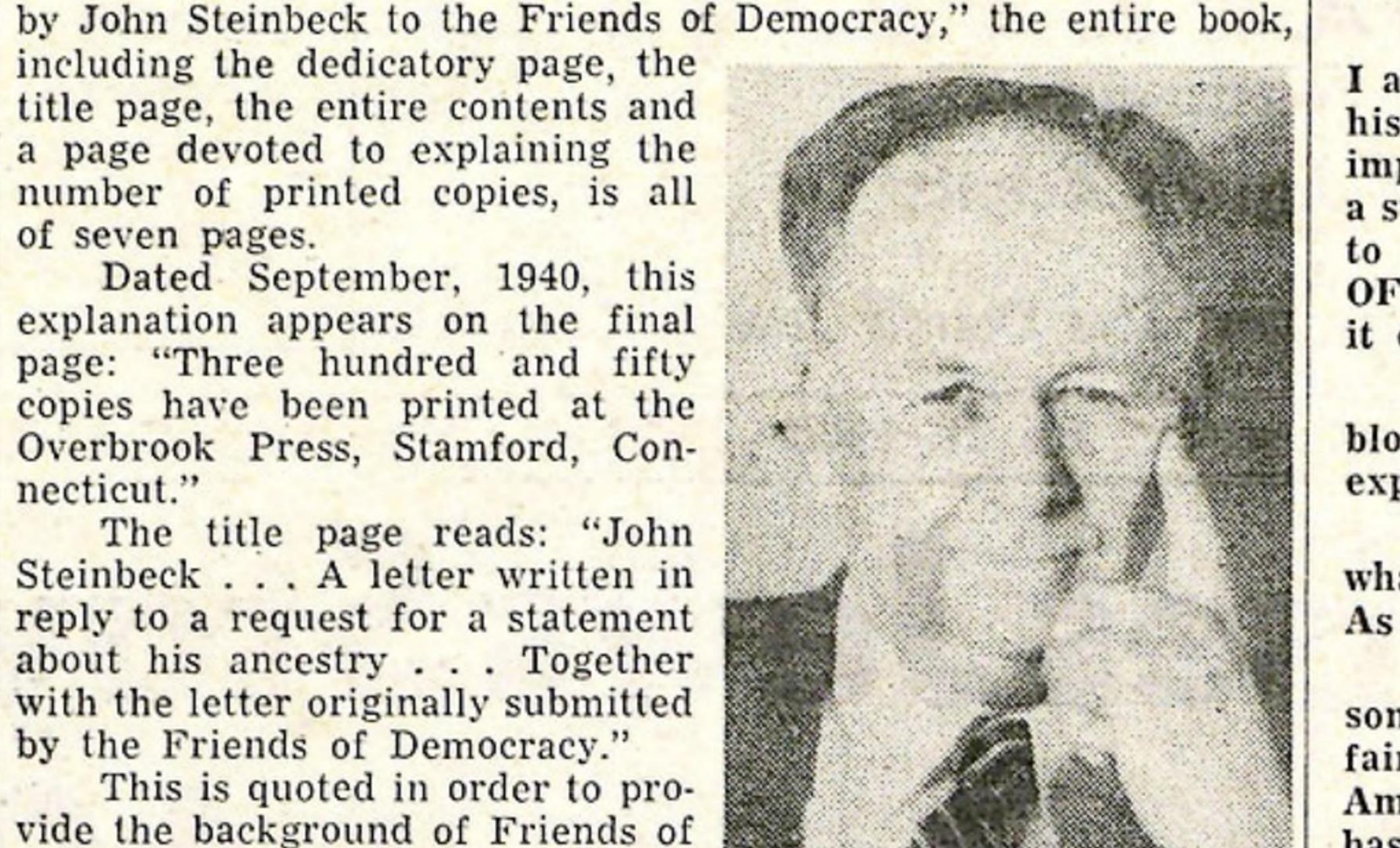
> The conclusion emerged from an appraisal by the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Boston and the New England office of the Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith of a "13hour talkathon," held in Boston under the title, "New England Rally for God and Country."

> The two principal themes of the rally were "castigation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" and recurrent praise of Major General Edwin A. Walker, according to a report compiled by Robert E. Segal, Jewish Community Council director, and Isadore Zack of the ADL office.

> They reported that these two themes "indicated that hostility towards the self-respecting and embattled Negro community has replaced anti-Jewish outbursts when rgiht-wingers get together." They added that "no nationally known anti - Semitic propagandists" appeared at the lengthy rally "and evidently were not invited or welcomed."

The report also noted that while the printed program indicated that 20-minute question periods were planned after presentations by each of the 12 speakers on the program, no questions were invited throughout the program. The report added that "past experience suggests that embarrassing questions reflecting considerable bigotry often arise in such forums and it may be well that those in charge of the meeting were determined to avoid such displays of intolerance."

The appraisal referred to



The Late Dr. Birkhead

Dr. Leon M. Birkhead. Our story begins with our late friend L. M. Birkhead, with whom we were associated for more than a quarter of a century in the battle against bigotry. Birkhead, who spoke in Detroit on several occasions, made many friends here. One of his meetings, held in the Central High auditorium, over which this Commentator presided as president of the American Jewish Congress, was invaded by adherents of Gerald L. K. Smith, and admirers of Father Coughlin and Charles Lindbergh. They heckled the speaker and the chairman, threatened them and used vile sneezing powder in an attempt to drive out the audience. The episode ended in the anti-Semites having marched out of the hall, permitting the meeting to go on in orderly fashion. The invading horde of bigots was composed mostly of elderly men and women who looked like a frustrated lot.

This is only part of the story. At noon, on the day of that disgraceful anti-Semitic demonstration, a luncheon was arranged by the American Jewish Congress, which then was headed locally by this Commentator. An hour before the luncheon, a prominent Detroit Jewish leader called us to plead against any comments by Birkhead about either Ford, Smith or Lindbergh. When we informed him that there could not and would not be any censorship of speeches, he warned us that Smith's Jewish attorney at that time was planning to send a shorthand reporter to the meeting that night to make a complete record of the proceedings. (When G. L. K. Smith first came into the public limelight, he was not an anti-Semite. In fact, he began by addressing a few Jewish audiences against Coughlin. Very soon he was among the extremest maligners of the Jews.) When we got to the Central High auditorium with Birkhead, a shorthand reporter was already there, in front of the platform, with all his equipment set up for action. As if Birkhead would have hesitated to provide the panic-stricken with the text of his speech!

He had held a pulpit in Kansas City and had taken a trip to Jewish historian and publicist, Bernard G. Richards, through the of the rally participants and Germany in the early 1930s. While visiting a book exhibit in Jewish Information Service he is supervising with skill, has had added, that if Rockwell had ap-Munich, he was struck by a special exhibition that was sponsored an opportunity to call attention again to the famous Steinbeck peared, "the rally managers by the arch pervert and anti-Semite Julius Streicher. It was a letter. Octogenarian Richards, always alert to Jewish historical would have been in serious display of anti-Semitic literature, and what shocked Birkhead was needs, renders a service retaining data about Jews everywhere. trouble." that most of the pamphlets that were on display were printed in the United States. Shocked by what he had seen, he comreturn to this country. He began to trace the background of the movements that were encouraging bigotry in this country and he came to the conclusion that drastic steps must be taken to fight prejudice and to expose anti-Semitism.

Soon after his return to his home, Birkhead gave up his remaining 25 years of his life to the battle against anti-Semitism.

He exposed and fought every vestige of prejudice and was responsible for bringing to light manifestations of hatred. In a number of instances he succeeded in encouraging the abandonment of hate movements. He interceded with the Fords in efforts to stop the distribution of the malicious forgeries, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and was influential in enlisting the aid of many Christians in movements to fight Nazism, Fascism and race hatred.

Word had spread that Steinbeck was a Jew and the anti-Semites made him their target. On May 2, 1940, Birkhead wrote to Steinbeck, to his home in Los Gatos:

"I hope you will not think am impertinent, but our organization has had put up to it

John Steinbeck the problem of your nationality. You may consider that it is none of our business, nor the business of anyone else in the country. However, there is a very widespread propaganda, particularly among the extreme reactionary religionists of the country, that you are Jewish and that 'Grapes of Wrath' is Jewish propaganda.

"I wonder if you have any sort of statement that you

could send me which would clarify this issue.

"I think you will be interested in the work that our organization has been doing in combatting the pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda so widespread throughout the country. I am sending you a copy of our most recent publication, 'Father Coughlin: Self-Condemned.'"

This is the letter on the basis of which Steinbeck wrote his Appeal campaign to be "one of ing increased immigration.

famous reply that led up to the publication by Birkhead of "the Overt Anti-Semitism shortest book in the world."

Steinbeck's Rebuke to

"I am answering your letter with a good deal of sadness. I am sad for a time when one must know a man's race before his work can be approved or disapproved. It does not seem important to me whether I am Jewish or not, and I know that a statement of mine is useless if an INTERESTED critic wishes to ride a preconceived thesis. I cannot see how the GRAPES OF WRATH can be Jewish propaganda but then I have heard it called communist propaganda also.

"It happens that I am not Jewish and have no Jewish blood but it only happens that way. I find that I do not experience any pride that it is so.

"If you wish-here is my racial map, although you know what an intelligent anthropoligist thinks of racial theories. As you will see, I am the typical American Airedale.

"My grandfather on my father's side was German, the son of a farming family which lived and still lives on a fairly large farm near Dusseldorf. My grandfather came to America in the late fifties in time to be in the Civil War. There has been little communication with the German branch since then except for a visit to Germany about four years ago by a second cousin of mine. He reports that the family still lives on the same farm and that they appear to be good citizens, intensely blond and quite able to prove the nonsensical thing the Nazis insist on. Their name and ours by the way was Grosssteinbeck but the three s's in a row were an outrage to America so my grandfather dropped the first syllable in the interest of spelling.

"My German grandfather married a New England woman whose family name was Dickson who came from Leominster, Massachusetts, where her family had lived since the middle seventeenth century.

"On my mother's side my blood is all north Irish, my grandfather, whose name was Hamilton having come from Mulkeraugh, near Londonderry, and his wife whose name was Feaghan from nearby.

"Anyway there it is. Use it or don't use it, print it or not. Those who wish for one reason or another to believe me Jewish will go on believing it while men of good will and good intelligence won't care one way or another.

"I can prove these things of course—but when I shall have to—the American democracy will have disappeared.

"Yours is only one of the many letters I have received on the same subject. It is the first I have answered and I think it is the last. I fully recognize your position and do not in the least blame you for it. I am only miserable for the time and its prejudice that prompt it.

Sincerely. JOHN STEINBECK

"P.S. On both sides and for many generations we are blond and blue-eyed to a degree to rouse the admiration and perhaps envy of the dark complexioned Hitler."

This exchange of letters deserves a place in the annals of libertarianism.

On the occasion of the award of the Nobel Prize for Litera- radio reports that George Rockture to John Steinbeck, the question regarding his background well, the leader of the Ameri-Birkhead had come to the libertarian movement by accident. again was raised by some interested parties and the eminent can Nazi Party, was to be one

menced to do research on the subject of anti-Semitism upon his return to this country. He began to trace the background of Irwin Green and A. Alfred Taubman Named AJC Pre-Campaign Division Co-Chairmen

Irwin Green and A. Alfred Taubman have been named co-chairmen of the pulpit, organized the Friends of Democracy and devoted the pre-campaign division-big gifts solicitations- of the Allied Jewish Campaign, Charles H. Gershenson, campaign chairman, announced.



A. ALFRED TAUBMAN

Taubman was pre-campaign co-chairman in 1962 when Green was a pre-campaign vice-chairman, Both serve on the board of governors of the Jewish Welfare Federation. Taubman is a director of the Detroit Service Group, Jewish Center and Home for the Aged. Green serves on the boards of the Service Group and the Center and is a member of the Federation capital needs committee.



IRWIN GREEN

Florida Parley to Launch UJA's Drive on Feb. 17

The United Jewish Appeal an- the greatest the American Jew- | The tendering of a reception 1963 nationwide drive at a 25th national inaugural conference, Sunday, Feb. 17, at the Fontainbleau Hotel, Miami Beach, Fla.

nounced that it will launch its ish Community has ever seen." and dinner by Governor Richard The UJA's 1963 campaign will J. Hughes of New Jersey in seek a total of \$96,000,000 for honor of the state's top Jewish assistance programs in behalf of leadership on the occasion of 575,000 homeless and distressed the UJA's 25th anniversary year. Joseph Meyerhoff of Baltimore, Jews in 28 countries, with \$36,- is expected to point the way to general chairman of the UJA, 000,000 of the goal to be sought a similar series of events said that plans call for this 25th as a United Jewish Appeal "Spe-throughout the country. The launching of a United Jewish | cial Fund" for Israel's continu- dinner is to be held Jan. 29, at Nassau Inn, Princeton.