

the principal industries in Japan. Governmental intervention, under this Act, has enormously strengthened the trend toward large-scale monopolistic enterprise in Japan. Equally significant material on China's agrarian problem is included in Document II, particularly with reference to the extreme inequality of land distribution.

Judging by this report of its proceedings, the Banff Conference omitted consideration of several factors highly germane to its theme. In a discussion of the topic of economic control, complete failure to deal with the planned economy of the Soviet Union constitutes a glaring omission. To do the Institute justice, the blame for this omission rests largely on the Canadian authorities, who blocked the admission of a Soviet delegation that had been expected to participate in the conference. A second noticeable gap exists in the case of the treatment devoted to China, which centers

wholly on the Nanking government's reconstruction program, omitting all reference to the much more significant economic developments in Soviet China. It should be recognized, of course, that since the Chinese Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations functions in the area controlled by the Nanking government, the situation in this respect is a delicate one. Even the most advanced and liberal of bourgeois research organizations must be puzzled as to the best method of dealing with a country in which the revolutionary movement has solidly established itself and is competing on equal terms with the recognized government for mastery of the whole country. The easiest way out, of course, is to ignore the existence of the revolutionary movement, but such a policy hardly contributes to an adequate treatment of contemporary developments in the Far East.

DONALD HEMSLEY.

What the Author Does Not Hear

WHEN THE LOOMS ARE SILENT, by Maxence Van der Meersch, translated by A. Blossom. William Morrow and Company. 1934. \$2.50.

THIS novel, by the young French writer, Maxence Van der Meersch, has been hailed by various French journals and critics as one of "poignant realism."

On reading, however, this proves to be pseudo-realism, with actuality subjected and distorted (no doubt unintentionally), by a mind not yet equal to the material which it would creatively reflect.

When the Looms Are Silent purports to be a novel depicting a textile strike in a small town of northern France. Actually, the strike merely offers a flat somber background for the pitifully circumscribed lives of the author's main characters—men and women, significantly enough, who for the most part are unwilling participants, and to whom the strike brings personal tragedy, broken friendships, and general demoralization.

Nowhere does the author give a picture of the average trade-unionist, not to mention the militant French worker, while the one "Communist" is a crude caricature. A petty-shop-keeper forever boasting of having "plenty of money" from some mysterious source, he is described on the book's jacket as "a scavenger and opportunist" who fattens on the workers' misery. In contrast with the author's sympathetic, flesh-and-blood delineations of members of the *Garde Mobile*, strikebreakers and strike victims, and of the "good employer" Denoots, we have in this one racketeer-revolutionist a lifeless puppet, who pops in and out of the scene like some unreal devil.

Truly, *When the Looms Are Silent* offers a type of "realism" which the French textile manufacturers may well relish. Bourgeois critics mention the book for the *Prix Goncourt*. But French weavers and spinners, who have lived through such struggles, will shake

their heads in amazement, saying, "Why, the man gives only the back alleys, the sewers. He's left out all the main story."

In view of the great French movement of today, with its united front of Socialist and Communist workers embracing a decisive section of the French working class, such a novel as this reflects an inexcusable ignorance of the material and characters with which the author presumes to deal.

Van der Meersch has been compared by some enthusiastic critics with Zola. But he lacks what the great Zola had—a sweep of the whole canvas, with all the impact of surging forces and human classes, and a tremendous undercurrent of the dynamics of his era. While Van der Meersch depicts a number of his characters with real talent, and the setting

in the impoverished homes of the textile workers with evident sympathy and care for vivid detail, this is not enough. Since he is still young, it is to be hoped that *While the Looms Are Silent* marks but a stage in his growth. Either that, or he will fall victim to that easy philosophy of Catholic Fascism, and the "career of glory" it stands ready to offer him.

Nowhere in recent fiction is there a clearer example than in *When the Looms Are Silent* of an author projecting his own Spengler feelings about the universe onto the objective scene, and calling the result "realism." Van der Meersch's evidently troubled conscience and philosophy of frustration and futility have been generalized into a world philosophy. Hence, *When the Looms Are Silent* becomes a tragedy of the futility of class conflicts and strikes. Like many other intellectuals, the author stands at the crossroads, caught in his own middle-class contradictions and paradoxes. Repelled by the barbarity of capitalism, feeling its doom, he finds himself as yet unable to understand or accept the working class and its struggle for a new world.

But until he does, both as man and artist, the great drama to him must remain senseless, and his relation to it floundering and obsessed by a feeling of futility.

MYRA PAGE.

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Redder Than the Rose

ROBERT FORSYTHE

WHEN I reached that portion of Isidor Schneider's interview with Gertrude Stein in which she referred to herself as more Communist than the Communists, I put my hand to my head and uttered a cry which bystanders have since told me sounded like "peep" and slid fainting into the waste basket. From this you might assume either that I was fatally stricken by the brilliance of Miss Stein or merely irritated by her presumption, but you would be entirely wrong. It was purely a physical matter. Twice previously on the same day I had heard the same words from other lips and I very much suspected that I was being made the object of a plot.

Mr. Edmund Wilson once indicated his desire to take Communism away from the Communists but that may have been youthful zeal and it is hardly likely that he entertains such hopes at the moment. If he feels, however, that he is more Left than the Left, he is entirely in style. Just where this new rallying cry for ex-Democrats, ex-Humanists and ex-Communists arose is not clear but it is in full swing and a revolution happening within the week would be a terrible thing with such wild people around to lead it.

Naturally it is not merely a matter of force; it is a problem of dialectics and philosophy and the philosophy is so marvelous that the historians of the future will bow in wonder before such logic and discernment. I know an interesting fellow who is a writer, a playwright, a philosophical anarchist and a supporter of Herbert Hoover. I have never had the courage to question him about his Hoover affiliation, but he could

probably sustain it on the ground that only by fostering tyranny can we have freedom. His long stay in Hollywood at a fat figure has been explained as his way of bankrupting the industry and thus bringing about its downfall. He is now said to be at work on a play which proves that Tom Mooney framed the State of California.

I have another friend who is eighteen miles east of Lenin going rapidly further left. He is a broker and a Trotskyite and I am no longer able to face his scorn. The last time I saw him he was coming out of the Waldorf-Astoria and although I tried to hurry by, he caught me and said some very harsh things about the timidity of the Communist Party in this country. He might still have had me there, backed against a window containing the treasures of the late Czar, if his chauffeur had not interrupted to say that the car was waiting. When I say that my friend is a Trotskyite, I must explain that he is also a Technocrat and in addition has been reading Malaparte. His theory is that Trotsky and four good engineers could put New York City at the mercy of the revolutionists by turning off the lights and overpowering Fiorello while he was scurrying about in his nightshirt hunting a candle. My friend explained this to me as the theory of permanent revolution; all you do when you want a new revolution is turn off the lights.

Unless something is done I am afraid we are going to face indignation from people who are expecting a great deal from us. Intellectually it seems that we are not as daring as we had thought. I know of a lady who has been successively a Suffragette, a Catholic and a Socialist. For some time she has been requesting the services of the more agile and younger

male comrades in educating her in the intricacies of Communism but they have evidently failed at the job. The last report of her was as chairman of an Utopian meeting, which I am informed is much more Communist than Communism as well as much more Rosicrucian than Rosa Bonheur.

It is, however, around the tea table that the true essence of radicalism is attained. I must report a wave of indignation in such circles at the delay in the revolution. One lady only recently was remarking that her brother, a major in the army, is an excellent man to approach on the matter of revolt. She indicates that she would speak to him. But beyond that she was not pleased with the conduct of the Party. She said that although she had just been won over to Communism, she felt that she was far more advanced than many of the party members and she was at a loss to account for the lag. She said she had been speaking to the servants on her estate and whereas they had all been ardent Republicans when she spoke to them in the past, they were now all ardent Communists, answering her questions of were they Communists with the reply that they were Communists indeed. She felt that if her people were of that opinion, the servants on other estates must have like views and she couldn't understand what was holding things up.

On the cultural front I have recently had contact with a Hearst reporter who rather frightens me with his enthusiasm. He has not joined the Communist Party but he tells me he is far more Communist than the Communists. In covering a strike about a month ago, he wrote of the hoodlums who crawled up from the gutters like insects coming out from



"We hoid you had fifty million bucks to start a fascist army."

Ned Hilton