

Bad Luck, Fate is so uppermost that, like a thing hackneyed, it ceases to have any meaning. "How cruel life is," Pirandello readers are likely to say to themselves. "What, indeed, is the use of striving for anything?"

I do not know the extent of Pirandello's reading public, but I imagine it is large, for he has a gift of narrative that gives grace to his most absurd themes. He can reproduce the conversation of all kinds of people with a remarkable sense of accuracy, and, at times, probes penetratingly into the motives of his characters. For all these talents, his work is made thin and tedious by his warped outlook on life.

There was a time when Pirandello's antics with metaphysics resulted in patterns that startled with their originality. But no writer can go on depending on clever twists; eventually, he becomes twisted himself. His latest novel to be translated into English, *One, None, And a Hundred Thousand*, was actually a satire of himself, the satire of a man who worried himself sick over the idea of what was reality. It is little wonder that Fascism approves of Pirandello. He is a good acrobat; he can do all sorts of tricks without touching earth for a long time. So long as other writers follow his example and hang themselves from ceilings, Fascism will feel safe.

JERRE MANGIONE.

### A Pal for Tatiana

*I AM A COSSACK*, by Boris Kamyshansky.  
Longmans, Green and Co. \$2.50

The renewed campaign of slander against the Soviet Union, which is finding more and more room in the press and the movies, is being consistently carried on in such books as this. That is why its cheap abuse, its sentimentality, its incredible, melodramatic, "saved-by-a-fluke" incidents did not prevent its publication, as they should have done. And that is why this "biography" will be discussed in reviews as another valuable inside story of the Revolution.

But, of course, this is not a biography, though the blurb lists it as such. It is another *Escape From the Soviets*. The author is the son of a Cossack landowner, educated as an engineer as well as a Cossack in the Czar's army, who at outbreak of the First World War is on a secret mission abroad for the Russian government. Returning to his native country at the moment when the Kerensky regime is being exposed by the Bolsheviks, he fights in the White Armies and then escapes to America when their defeat is complete.

The author establishes himself as a man of liberal instincts early in the book. The Revolution of 1905 found him sympathetic to the miserable state of the peasantry and complaining that just such oppressive measures as the Czar was taking were alienating the middle and upper classes. He was tolerant, though a bit contemptuous, of two fellow students who had become revolutionaries. He helped save the life of a fugitive revolutionary. And also, like a true Cossack, he showed his no-

bility by protecting the lives of a Jew and his little daughters during a pogrom. These incidents not only prove useful to the author by establishing his humanity and broad-mindedness; they also come in handy later in the book to save him from the Cheka and to help him escape.

If the first half of this mediocre account of a young Cossack's life makes the reader wonder why it was published, the second half effectively shows him. The first sign that this dull sentimental story is not the purpose of the book comes suddenly upon the reader, who has been plowing through an account of the author's student days at the institute. The building of Dnieprostroy according to him was a complete waste of labor and money. Why? Well, his own studies of it as an engineering student had convinced him of it. And, to dispel any doubts as to his own ability to judge, he adds that the project was never undertaken in Old Russia because of similar findings by Czarist engineers.

Then the pace becomes swift. As soon as the Kerensky government is overthrown, all pretense of detachment is dropped. We read about the "misguided hordes of Reds" who swooped down "for the conquest of our rich Cossack land." Tales of murder, rape, torture, all darkly implied, alternate with sneers at the disorganized Red hordes. No sooner do the Red armies drive out the Whites than down settles the "Red Terror" on these peaceful inhabitants. A fleeing tribe of nomads numbering 100,000 is massacred to a man. Utterly careless of what history has already said of the Bolsheviks, our author fiercely flashes this ace: "Had it not been for the existence of the White Army, the Soviet Government would have joined hands with the Germans, would have sent her troops against the Allies."

Consistency is also cast to the winds. On

one page we learn that the "spectacular trials" of sabotaging engineers were caused by the fanatical Reds, whose ignorance of engineering made them suspect the more cautious councils of experts. A few pages later, his account of his own position as engineer under men whom he hates proves amply that the fanatical Reds were perfectly correct in their behavior toward the White Guards whom they were forced to make use of during the desolation of the civil wars.

But the end comes at last. "The prospect of spending our lives in Soviet Russia, which meant conditions unbearable to civilized (sic!) people, filled us with despair." And so he escapes with his family, his cheap heroics, his abuse and distortions to write, many years later, a book that will put him once more at the service of those reactionary forces doomed to be wiped off the earth as the October Revolution cleaned him and his kind out of Russia.

PHIL HOROWITZ.

### A Culture That Survived

*THE LUMMI INDIANS OF NORTH-WEST WASHINGTON*, by Bernhard Stern. Columbia University Press. \$2.

Most white Americans have a conception of the Indian that results from the exploitation of the Indian by the circus, the vaudeville circuit, the movies, and the melodramatic novelist. Nor does the casual tourist who has seen "Fred Harvey" Indians in the Grand Canyon, or in their pueblos in New Mexico, their hogans in Arizona, their tepees in Yellowstone Park, know anything about the Indian and his culture.

There are a half million Indians still living in these United States, and they vary greatly from tribe to tribe. Until recent years the anthropologists and ethnologists have neglected serious and scientific study of their

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culture. Thus valuable sociologic data has been lost irretrievably, since the impact of white capitalist civilization has destroyed or changed the life of most tribes. But there are a few groups who have resisted with some success the conscious attempt to break down their tribal life. Among such are the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest and the Northwest Coast Indians, of whom the Lummi are a minor tribe.

"Because of the tribe's geographic isolation until recent years, Lummi culture has remained relatively alive in spite of the aggressive disruptive encroachments of the whites, whose exploitation of the Indians has been flagrant in this region," Bernhard Stern writes. He might have said, "in this as in every region where American imperialism has penetrated." Like the Pueblo Indians, the Northwest Coast Indians could maintain their tribal life longer than other tribes because of the relative inaccessibility of their land, and its poverty of natural resources such as gold and oil, and its inferiority to other areas for agriculture. They were not in the path of the American empire as it conquered its way westward.

The Pueblo Indians are agricultural; the Lummi are hunters and fishers. Like other Northwest Coast tribes, and in contrast to the more democratic Pueblos and Plains Indians, they place great emphasis upon wealth as a determinant of social status. Prestige is gained by the accumulation and the giving away of property. They have an aristocracy of families who inherit wealth, the most valuable being fishing rights in favored locations. In another important respect the Northwest Coast Indians differ from all other Indians; their custom of keeping slaves. The Plains Indians adopted captives into the tribe or killed them; the Lummi enslaved them for life. They also made slaves of orphaned children. To these slaves the drudgery was allotted. Wars in which captives were taken were frequent, as well as feuds between villages and families.

Like other Indian tribes, they are ridden with superstition and their medicine men enjoy great authority. Their social life centers around religious ritual and potlaches, festive occasions when the rich gain greater prestige and power and demonstrate their superiority by gift-giving. The recipient is humiliated if he cannot return an equally valuable gift. The Lummi do not possess the skill of Pueblo Indians in art, except in weaving blankets and baskets. The ceremonial ritualistic dance is however as elaborately developed an art as among any tribe.

The national minorities problem in the United States is larger than the Negro problem, around which it centers as involving most numerous groups. There are not as many racial groups in this country as in the Soviet Union, the only country in which the problem has been solved, on the only possible basis, self-determination and the encouragement of racial or national culture, within a socialist economy. But the Ameri-

can Indians are one such national minority who have suffered racial persecution under the iron fist of white exploitation ever since the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadores. They successfully resisted the attempt to reduce them to chattel slavery, but they have known every other injustice in the arsenal of imperialism. Their white conquerors, who are so horrified at the un-Christian proposal to expropriate the expropriators, had no scruples against dispossessing the Indians from tribal lands. The Tsar of all the Russias was more "honorable" in dealing with racial minorities than the "great white father" in Washington. Every moral precept upon which bourgeois civilization is supposed to be based, according to its apologists, was and is being violated in dealing with the American Indian. Robbed of their communal property, butchered ruthlessly, slandered as sneaking thieving savages, their primitive culture, in certain cases a primitive Communism, destroyed, herded upon reservations and pauperized, in the first concentration camps beside which Hitler's are nurseries, the American ruling-class can now afford to be more "liberal" and "generous" with their "wards." But a real solution will be found only on the basis of self-determination as proposed by the Communist Party as a solution for the Negro problem. Soviet Russia has shown the only way to end racial as well as class conflict and exploitation by the dominant class of the dominant race.

Stern's book is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on the American Indian, but one wishes he had given, in addition to his interesting data on the social and cultural life of the Lummi, more about their political and economic organization, the record of their relations with the whites, and more than the mere assertion that they have been mercilessly exploited.

LISTON M. OAK.

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