

false contract, dying by murder and by starvation and disease because of promises broken and faith betrayed.

Efforts of sympathizers of Indians at relating this story of rapacity have been justifiably intense with indignation and condemnation. But historians largely dominated by chauvinistic animus, have been remiss in documenting this unsavory aspect of American history with the many revealing source materials preserved in government archives and in the records of pioneers. The works in the *Civilization of the American Indian* series of which the books under review are the seventh and eighth volume to appear, have made an excellent beginning in this practically neglected field. Vestal's book which takes up documents relating to the ignoble treatment accorded Sitting Bull and the Sioux is far superior to Forman's study of the pioneering efforts of the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole after their forced migration to Oklahoma. The former is marked by a greater understanding of Indian life and thought, a more coherent and skillful presentation of the poignant drama of Indian-white contact, and is in general more discerning in interpretations. The pitiful tragedies depicted in the pages of these books, are searing even when presented with scholarly, even pedantic objectivity. They cannot be dismissed by declaring, as does Charles Beard, in his *Rise of American Civilization* that they are "deeply rooted in the very constitution of the universe." The success of the governmental policy toward national minorities in the Soviet Union proves conclusively that the contact of diverse races and cultures need not lead to the decimation of the natives, when the motives of profit and imperialist aggression are absent, and the rulers are devoted to the welfare and interests of the masses of the population.

BERNHARD J. STERN.

Book Notes

AN anthology of American proletarian literature will be issued early this spring by International Publishers. The book will include fiction, poetry, literary criticism, drama, reportage, and workers' correspondence. It will be edited by Granville Hicks, Michael Gold, Isidor Schneider, Paul Peters, Joseph North, and Alan Calmer. A general introduction will deal with the contributions of proletarian literature in this country and the problems of revolutionary writing today. Short critical forewords to each section of the volume will also be included. The editors and publishers are working to make this volume a representative collection of contemporary proletarian literature in the U. S.

Original manuscripts of Marx, Engels, and Lenin will be on display at the Workers' Bookshop, 50 East 13th Street until Feb. 21, in commemoration of Lenin's anniversary.

The growing collaboration on the revolutionary art front is indicated in the announce-

ments of the prize-winners in the contest for choral workers sponsored by the International Music Bureau, of which the Workers Music League is the American section. An American composer, Jacob Schaeffer, of New York, shared with an American poet honors in the divided second prize. Schaeffer's composition was written to a text by Gorky, while Heinrich Bruch of Moscow wrote the music to Langston Hughes' poem, "Song of a Black Girl." Complete information on the contest may be had from the Workers' Music League, 799 Broadway, New York.

New York is applauding a remarkable new Russian movie, *Chapayev*, (Cameo Theatre) an attempt at an actual historical biography as such, rather than fictionized on the screen. International Publishers is producing the actual biography by D. Furmanov, who was attached to the Red Division commanded by Chapayev in the Russian Civil War. The book is being published this month.

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when you laugh, laugh like hell; and when you dance, dance at...*

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The Theatre

Waiting for Lefty

ON Jan. 5, when the curtain rang down on the first performance of Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* the audience cheered, whistled and screamed with applause. One week later when the same actors had repeated their performance, the Fifth Avenue Theatre, packed to capacity with hundreds of standees, fairly burst with a thunder of hand-claps and shouting. A valuable new play had been written into the history of the American revolutionary theatre, a dramatic work with roots coiled about an actual event in the life of the New York proletariat. (It was Joe Gilbert, Secretary of the Taxi Drivers' Union, who emerged from the wings to say that just such a meeting as Odets presents took place last March when members of the Union met in the Bronx and overwhelmingly voted to strike.)

And yet the audience went away not altogether sure that it was a play that had electrified them to the marrow. Some of them referred to it as an unforgettable experience but a disjointed, structurally arbitrary piece of playwriting, in which the union meeting was a convenient device for tying together dramatically unintegrated scenes. The actors felt no such flaw. Intoxicated by the tension of the rapid, compact episodes, they forgot to pull their punches during the tussles. The spectator, however, may feel uncertain that the play is a dramatic entity. But a second seeing provides sufficient perspective for discerning in the juxtaposition of scenes a clear logic binding them into a solid, dramatic whole.

The first of the eight scenes opens on the union meeting. At once the audience is tied into the action as members of the strike meeting shout from the floor to the speakers on the stage who address not one another, but the entire house. A slick union misleader tries to pour oily words on the rebellious rank and file who challenge him from the floor and riddle his pussyfooting periods with pungent, hard-boiled guffaws. Confident that they can carry the decision to strike, they are marking time, awaiting the arrival of their spokesman, Lefty. But Lefty is still absent. One of them, Joe Mitchell, demands the floor. He wants to tell what happened to him. And as he begins to talk the setting blends into a new scene where his story is acted.

It is brief, turbulent, final. Bringing home his miserable earnings and expecting sympathy from his wife, he receives her icy scorn instead. She is through with her wretched existence, and through with a man too yellow to do anything about it. Faced with losing his wife or fighting for a decent life for her and his children, he is momentarily lost before these iron alternatives. In

a scene packed with intensity and knife-like dialogue, he rises to the one decision and runs off to join his comrades in the call for strike.

Suddenly the audience discovers a chemistry worker in the office of his employer. He is given a raise. Learning that his researches are used for war chemistry he is racked by the memory of his brother murdered by the last war. Yet needing the money, he accepts. When he is told his job includes spying on a fellow worker, the hate that has been rising during the interview seizes upon him. He lashes his employer with insinuations which glance off the latter who shrugs and retorts with suave cynicism. Finally, no longer able to bridle his fury, he drives his fist into his enemy's face. This young worker, facing alternatives essentially analogous to those which confronted Joe Mitchell in the previous scene, struggles to reach a decision—and arrives at exactly the same conclusion that Mitchell reached in the previous scene. So far the playwright has shown a typical segment of taxi-workers in their evolution toward militancy and he has emphasized its emotional and ideological significance by extending this situation to another locale of the class-struggle. The dramatic parenthesis which Scene III affords is far more than a flash-back: it is a broadening of the scope of the play by an authentic and original departure in dramatic form.

In the scenes that follow the same method may be discerned. A young hackie at his sweetheart's home. Three years of waiting and working (she is a sales-clerk) but no better off today! He has finally determined to give her up rather than marry her into a starvation existence. To cover up his suffering he tries to dance, wisecrack, buffoon—but both of them break down. In a frantic attempt to make out why they are being sacrificed, they grope with pathetic generalizations. This masterly scene compresses into a few minutes of dialogue and action the pain inflicted on millions of American workers who are unaware of the pitiless logic of their positions in a system responsible for their tragedies. The parenthesis to this episode follows as Scene V: the office of a casting director living islanded in decadence. An actor as much at sea about the world as the hackie of the previous scene tries to get a job and fails. But the parallel between these two situations is made dynamic. Before turning from the office in bewildered despair,

the young actor runs into a fusillade of words from the secretary, a class-conscious worker who tries to telescope her whole revolutionary philosophy into a half-dozen speedy sentences.

Ordinarily her sloganizing would seem mechanical and flat, but coming after a previous scene whose power was built with nuances of action and understatement, the oversimplified speech manages to carry. From the viewpoint of structure it ties into the next scene: the strike meeting which is still waiting for Lefty. The audience long identified as witnesses at the meeting where it has heard individual stories of the rank and file, now watches the union's misleader pull out his trump card. He brings on Clancy who's going to tell from his own experience in Philadelphia just why strikes don't work. But before Clancy lets drop many lies, one of the rank and file leaps up from the audience and runs to the platform to accuse him of being a paid company agent with a long strike-breaking record. The ensuing physical clash that threatens the meeting is dramatically resolved in one taut moment: the accuser reveals that he has been exposing his own brother.

During this scene the rank and file workers emerge from under the smooth lies of their opponents whom they begin to recognize as such. They are fiercely determined on straightforward action. And in the parenthetical scene that follows, the same progression is traced. An interne, whose patient has been killed by an incompetent colleague with "influence," demands an explanation. His elderly chief, who has watched corruption strangle scientific work throughout his career, tells him more than he bargained for, among others things that he is fired—retrenchment closes the charity ward first! With studied moderation he manages to channel the interne's sputtering rebelliousness into the direction of organized militancy.

By the opening of the final scene, therefore, the clear revolutionary path has been exposed; now it is up to the union membership to take it. Through a brief scene of rapid-fire action the rank and file rises in an uncompromising body, to demand "Where is Lefty?" When one of their number rushes in with the news that Lefty has been found murdered they don't wait to ask who ordered the job, or if it was a cold-blooded effort to abort the strike. Flaunting the

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