

between the aims of the two main groups among social workers:

The one group sees the entrenched force of ownership opposing the organized force of united workers. Regarding this conflict of forces as inevitable under a system of capitalism, it proposes that social workers shall join in the struggle on the side of labor. The other group, *impressed with the progress already made toward curbing the irresponsible acquisition and use of wealth*, and toward equalizing the bargaining power of capital and labor, and hopeful of ultimately attaining a system of economic relationship, on a democratic basis, in which the interests of owners and workers may be rationally reconciled, doubts the necessity for the revolutionary route, and regards support of that theory by social workers as involving the abandonment of their professional tools and skills. [Emphasis mine—H. C.]

Note here the (probably unconscious) absence of qualification in the italicized passage, as if it were an unquestioned fact that the irresponsible acquisition of wealth was really being curbed, as if statistics gathered by unimpeachable sources do not show conclusively that the wealth of the few keeps increasing at an accelerated rate against a background of reduced real wages and lowered standards of living.

The editor states that contributors were cautioned against expressing personal opinions in their articles. Nevertheless, the whole work is filled with bias, implicit and explicit, in favor of the present order. Strewn throughout the book are gems of impartiality such as the personal praise of the "*finely conceived* Civilian Conservation Corps development" in the article on "Foster Care for Children." We get another example of objectivity in the article on "Transient and Homeless Persons," where the author obligingly presents "the recommendations of the transients themselves, represented in the Youth Congress held in New York City in August, 1934." This Congress, we are told, endorsed the federal transient-camp system, and urged enlargement of the camp program. The author carelessly neglects to mention, however, that the "Congress" she speaks about was not the bona-fide Youth Congress, but a rump session held by a handful of incipient fascists who bolted the Congress proper when the latter refused to submit to dictatorial rule. The *real* Congress, comprising an overwhelming majority of the original delegates, went on record as bitterly arraigning these transient camps (known as slave camps to their inmates) and calling for their immediate abolition!

Even more grievous than the "errors" of commission, perhaps, are those of omission. Often the significance of a book (and this is especially true of reference works) lies not in the material it presents, but in the essential data it excludes. The National Congress on Social and Unemployment Insurance, representing a broad united front of professional and working-class groups (including many social workers), was held in the first days of January, 1935, and hence comes well within the scope of the Year Book. Why is it that this Congress receives no mention what-

ever, although it was one of the major events in social welfare during the period covered?

Another very important event relating to social workers was the President's highly-publicized Conference on Economic and Social Insurance held in the fall of 1934, to which many prominent social-work leaders were invited to help map out a program that would guarantee "security to every man, woman and child in America." Yet this conference receives only casual mention, and no description, in the Year Book. Is this omission attributable to the fact that the conference represented one of the crassest betrayals of social workers on record? Is it because Roosevelt forced the "representatives" of social work to adopt an emasculate program of security and then threw even that into the scrap-heap once it had served its ballyhoo purposes? Is it because any detailed discussion of this conference would involve the painful necessity of exposing the Great Idealist in the White House?

Why is the important subject of Social Insurance dismissed in a fifty-word definition, while many relatively unimportant subjects are discussed at length in articles of

1,000 words and more? True, several aspects of the subject (old-age assistance, etc.) are discussed separately, but every social worker knows that social insurance, in a very significant sense, represents far more than the mere sum of its parts. Was the subject omitted because it involves embarrassing excursions into the fields of economic and political theory?

Beneath the blanket of "objectivity" laid down with so much ceremony in the preface, we find in this volume evasions of the essential, distortions of reality and a slew of Pollyanna veneerings. The myth of impartiality dies hard, but here we have one more instance of its impossibility. All presentations of facts involve interpretation, since there must be selection, emphasis and arrangement of these facts, arbitrarily culled from the total body of available data. The soundness of the paradox that an accumulation of partial truths may be used to distort the whole truth is once more glaringly revealed. Like most reference works of its type, this Year Book represents, essentially, a flight from the fundamental fact.

HENRY COOPER.

## The Making of a Riga Correspondent

MOSCOW CARROUSEL, by Eugene Lyons. Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.50.

THE Riga or Copenhagen correspondents supplying "news" about the U.S.S.R. are not necessarily rogues and fabricators. They may be doing their job "for the good of the revolution" (a "real" one, of course). Above all, they are doing their job, they can persuade themselves, for the sake of the humanity so woefully lacking under the sinister Five Year Plan.

For instance, Mr. Eugene Lyons. He wound up his none too brilliant career as a Moscow correspondent for the United Press in true Riga fashion. However, judging from *Moscow Carrousel* he was pining away for the "human values" totally lacking under the reign of the "party hierarchy."

The book is a collection of impressions about Moscow and Muscovites written—some of them well written—in different periods since 1928, when Mr. Lyons began his job. A pilgrim so ardently in search of Truth and Justice might have at least dated each chapter. The average reader left without such guidance will no doubt accept situations and difficulties of three and five years ago for the present-day Soviet life. As in most such books, the self revelation is the most significant of all its "revelations." The real feature of *Moscow Carrousel* is that it shows you what happened to a correspondent obsessed with the idea that the "human approach" is the monopoly of the foreign colony in Moscow, whereas the Kremlin had nothing but contempt for human life—"including proletarian life"—(p. 363).

*Moscow Carrousel* is a strange mixture.

Two or three eloquently written chapters about Moscow, about Stalin, are drowned in a froth of light and varied matter flavored with dashes of the "purest" Riga spice. Most characteristic of the latter kind is the statement (p. 58) that "few Russian representatives in the outside world are permitted to take their wives and children with them." Mr. Lyons no doubt *knows* that almost all Soviet representatives in New York, for instance, happen to have their families with them. On the other hand, he himself talks of American engineers in the U.S.S.R. who had left their families behind in Milwaukee and Kalamazoo—presumably to give some Russian girls short-lived hope of being saved from "drowning" (the way one Russian stenographer was permanently "saved," according to Lyons, by marrying a foreigner). But Russian engineers traveling to the U. S. A. leave their wives behind—as hostages.

Mr. Lyons writes mainly about "former people," "left overs." His heart goes out to them and to the Nepmen, to the Russians in general "who dare not even think in their own beds" (p. 57) what the noble foreigners are allowed to say with impunity. (However, in another chapter we find a Russian peasant holding forth against the Kremlin with no one interfering). Some of these characters or even most of them may even be true ones. But—and this is the important thing—you will be expecting in vain a man who spent six years in Moscom to show you at least *one* sincere and intelligent Soviet worker or one sympathetic Communist functionary.

Mr. Lyons was stewing in a certain circle, mostly foreign specialists and diplomats. He

was feeding on "rumors." He was a megaphone for people who, because of humiliating failures in a new social system in which they have lost status and to which they cannot adjust themselves, are against the Soviet regime. The readers of the United Press service became fed up on Mr. Lyons' "rumors." A Riga correspondent in Moscow was an anomaly even to readers in far away America.

Mr. Lyons' babble about "disappearing people" (p. 6) reminds me of what I had

the occasion to check up while in Moscow in 1929. On the afternoon of November 6, a friend of Mr. Lyons, also a foreign correspondent, told me a "secret": Bucharin is arrested. The man was visibly touched by the "Soviet cruelties." The next morning I saw Bucharin on the Lenin mausoleum in the Red Square witnessing the parade. . . .

Mr. Lyons, by his own admission, went about buying antiques and his heart was aching for the "former people" forced to sell him their cherished objects—at low prices,

we presume. He became their spokesman. The more he vegetated in this debris of the past, the more dissatisfied the United Press subscribers became, the more he tried to placate them with all kinds of information sent out via different channels. Until it became clear for the United Press that there is no necessity of maintaining a Riga correspondent in Moscow.

Lyons was first to get an interview with Stalin (because of the United Press, of course, although Lyons is trying to place himself on the same level with Barbusse, Shaw and Wells. . . ). He messed his assignment. Duranty, who followed him, made much more of the interview, as well as of his job in general. Lyons attempts to brush away Duranty and others as "pro-government" people. Lyons is decidedly *not* pro. But he is pitiful in his argument that the United Press recalled him from his job because of that.

Because he was stewing in his circle, because he listened to whispers rather than used his eyes, because he made a triumph over a petty game of trying to outsmart the "censors," his stuff became worthless. Because of his "smart" style, the wink and smirk in each paragraph, *Moscow Carrousel* is worthless as a mirror of Soviet life, in spite of the eloquence attained in some of the chapters.

PAUL NOVICK.

## The Wreck of Good Lives

*BLESSED IS THE MAN*, by Louis Zara.

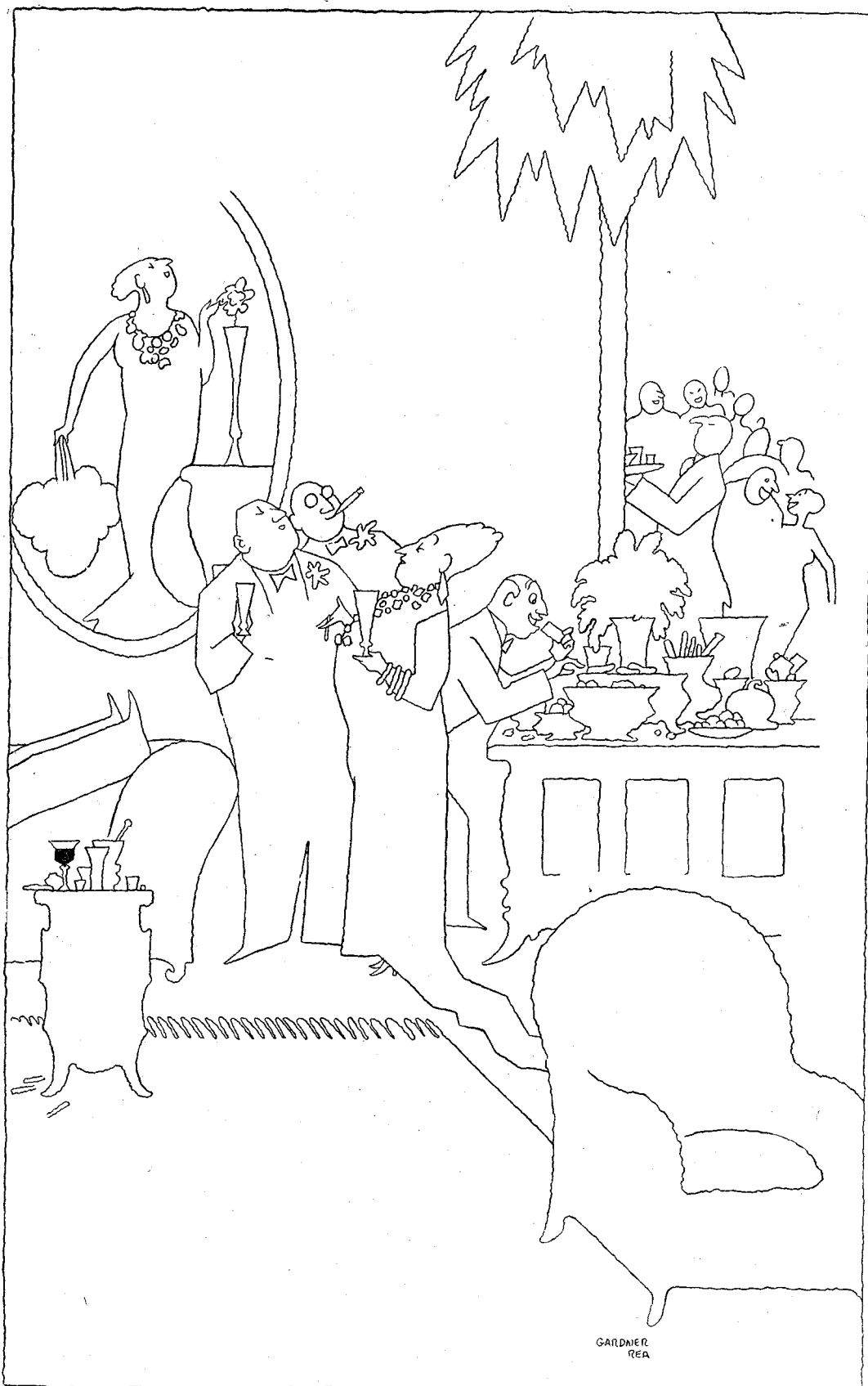
Bobbs Merrill. \$2.50.

*WEEP NOT FOR THE DEAD*, by Michel Matveev. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

**S**OMEHOW, in spite of the fact that these two books are as different as two books could well be, there is a connecting link between them. Each reveals the ghastly way in which talent is crushed and wasted in the capitalist world.

Matveev's central character is a sweet singer of Jewish folk songs who, after the pogroms committed by the Whites in south Russia during 1919, flees the land, with his wife and mother and his brother and the latter's family, and is hounded and persecuted in one country after another. He is starved and beaten, imprisoned and detained, until one's flesh almost creeps with the weary, senseless cruelty and monotony of it all. Thrown about like a dirty rag from Russia to Rumania to Poland to Turkey to Palestine to North Africa, the little group finally end their painful and futile odyssey in Paris, where the singer, to keep body and soul together, toils almost twenty-four hours a day at the fur trade. Hopeless and more hopeless grows his life, and all the song is crushed out of him. One day a worker, "in corduroy trousers," greets him with: "Good morning, comrade," and a new light flares for a moment in his soul.

"It was sublime music to me. I wished



"Of course, I personally have no quarrel with Soviet Russia."

Gardner Rea