

in 1928. "Eventually," says Mr. Andrews, "our specimens were released but bitter feeling was engendered on both sides. . . . In the last analysis anti-foreignism underlay all the trouble; that, accompanied by the increasing nationalistic spirit throughout China. Any agitation of whatever character that

was directed against foreigners found immediate popularity with the masses." Just so. And how unnatural of this people not to recognize that these high-minded foreigners, engaged in purely scientific research, deserved the thanks of all right-thinking Chinese.

DONALD HEMSLEY.

Old Roguery

MY COUNTRY AND MY PEOPLE, by Lin Yutang. Reynal and Hitchcock. \$3.

THIS book has become one of the smart books of the year; some reviewers who first ignored or dismissed it have had cautious second thoughts about it and have expressed them; it has become a best seller and is being read as the last word about China.

The reasons for its success are plain. In a field where solemnity is the rule it uses a nonchalant and even, at times, a slapstick style. It gives approving tolerance to popular vices, to laziness, indifference and good living. Some of its chapters, especially those on Chinese literature, are valuable and from the samples given I would welcome a volume of his translations of poetry, especially poetry from the Chinese drama.

Nevertheless the book is useless and even misleading for an understanding of political or economic China or almost any aspect of China that is of more than passing interest. There is not a paragraph in the whole book on the Soviet districts of China. A vague epilogue dealing with conditions in China is prefaced with this cautious note "the following must not be taken as reflecting on the National (Nanking) Government, but rather on the immensity of the task which the government is faced with in its gigantic work of evolving order out of chaos." In the light of this respectful obeisance to Nanking the following might have been expected as a corollary "... the Communist idealist, with a volume of Marx under his arm and unkempt hair on his head and smoking a Russian cigarette and perpetually fulminating against somebody will not bring China into salvation."

It is not merely this smart-aleck attitude that one finds offensive. The gist of Lin Yutang's book is that China has survived invasion, social disorder and economic misery in the past, that China "can take it." Yutang quotes from a paper by Dr. J. S. Lee "The Periodic Recurrence of Internecine Wars in China," which divides Chinese history into eight hundred year cycles each beginning with military unification, a period of wars, secession, subjection to foreign rule, to be followed by a renewal of the cycle. This seems to comfort Yutang who conveniently overlooks the fact that colonial status and its special type of exploitation, which China is facing at the hands of Japan, is very different from a change to a foreign dynasty and that in her present crisis China's civilization and

not the conqueror's is threatened with absorption.

Resignation to the inevitable is fine for a man comfortably situated for the enjoyment of leisure and the arts and unexposed to the miseries that have to be undergone. The Chinese masses who die in the floods and droughts, who are kidnaped into the armies, who sicken and starve at a rate unknown to any other civilized country must feel differently. They do the enduring and they may not feel as philosophic about it as Yutang.

They may even feel different about the , ures of discomfort, for Mr. Yutang roguis. tells us that discomforts are good for the health and the material comforts of Western civilization are signs of decadence. As a matter of fact, far from enduring in silence the Chinese masses are in open revolt. They established a commune in Canton. They captured Shanghai for Chiang Kai-shek, though later he betrayed them. They have established Soviets in China over a vast territory and are the only hope of China to escape Japan. To leave this unmentioned is to paint a portrait without a face. The reason is obvious. The face would not be pleasing to Nanking. Yutang, who is so cutely provocative and challenging to other intellectuals, has a great disinclination to offend the Nanking government which, by general consent, is one of the most, if not the most corrupt regime acting as a government in contemporary world affairs.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

Housing for the Landlords

HOUSING UNDER CAPITALISM, by Sidney Hill. Published by International Pamphlets. 10c.

I GREET this housing pamphlet for two reasons. First, because it is a pamphlet, whose forty succinct pages cost only ten cents, so that everybody can buy it and has time to read it through. Second, because housing literature generally has not yet caught up with the New Deal, and no one has yet made such a well-rounded job of analyzing and interrelating the activities of the various Washington agencies, showing their ineffectuality in dealing with public housing as contrasted with their effectiveness in respect to private construction, whether by way of insuring new and momentarily sweet mortgages or salvaging the banks' old curdled mortgages.

While the pamphlet contains useful analyses of similar failure of housing in other capitalist countries and the quite different approach in Soviet Russia, and includes the author's positive recommendations, it is his presentation of the recent American situation that I am anxious to comment upon.

When Mr. Hill's pamphlet appeared some months ago, the only agency supposed to do public low rental housing was the P.W.A., with its urban housing and its subsistence homesteads. He shows how it blundered and delayed its urban projects, and how the few completed projects with their \$11 room rentals came nowhere near meeting the problem for people of low income or on relief. He shows how the rural subsistence homesteads tie people to a meager subsistence level while they try to pay for homes on installments, with little prospect of cash income with which to make payments. I regret that he did not mention the forty-seven additional

urban projects that P.W.A. has under way to house some 25,000 families at \$7 or \$8 per room if and when finished. It would have added accuracy without weakening his argument, for the 25,000 families thus housed constitute only one percent of the people who need it!

He shows how at the same time the Home Owners Loan Corporation and Federal Farm Mortgage Corporation lent over six billions (sixty times as much as P.W.A. has been allotted) under the guise of helping farmers and home "owners," but with the actual effect of bailing out the banks. It speaks volumes for the muddled sentimentality of these people that they accepted this new burden of a government mortgage. I know a few hardboiled home "owners" who permitted the mortgages to foreclose and then rented the homes back again at a great saving.

Having released the frozen funds of banks insurance companies and building and loan associations, the administration passed the National Housing (sic) Act establishing the F.H.A. to insure private loans for renovation and for new houses, so the same institutions could lend all over again for the same middle class and not low cost houses whose mortgages it had had to salvage. That is, in effect, it lent its own funds, except that instead of controlling the new construction directly, it permitted its funds to go into sour mortgages on old houses, and the exchanged funds of private institutions into the new houses. And then private interests have the temerity to criticize the government for "piling up debt" for public housing, relief, social security, in contrast with permitting private initiative to do the financing for new construction. What do they want for their bad money?

top of this, Mr. Hill shows that re- money goes out in great measure as rent into the pockets of slum landlords. He thinks the Administration has thought all this out. I disagree. Though the results are the same as if intentional, I think it is just part of a general confused viewpoint that thinks it is doing good liberal things. The distinction is important. Big business is fighting the administration as being radical, and the administration thinks it is at least experimental. Big business should bless this administration. It could never have got what it has in this depression, might not even have survived, without the liberal and, I think, sincere pattern of Administration leaders. Through lack of a concerted philosophy the administration is fulfilling perfectly its role in economic history.

This lack of a concerted political and economic philosophy runs through our entire country and explains why so many sham battles are fought, why workers don't effectively demand housing coupled with social and health insurance as the author advocates. He asks why housing isn't built, why slums continue, and says "Workers who live in tenement flats . . . farmers whose houses are as truly slums . . . must frequently ask themselves such questions." Not enough of them do, Mr. Hill! If people building new homes with the little money they can scrape together considered a moment why the last crop of home "owners" got it in the neck and whether these conditions weren't bound to recur, they wouldn't build them.

No, the millions of badly housed, underfed, bullied people simply think they're in

hard luck. We must show them how they can do something about it. We've got to show them that it's irrelevant whether Mr. Roosevelt *thinks* he's their friend or not, that romantic "experimentation" isn't worth a damn.

That's why I like your pamphlet. It shows that we can't get housing under capitalism, whether the government is amiable or unamiable. If we could get this pamphlet into the hands and heads not of sixty million people, but only two million people (or a third of those who read Mr. Macfadden's publications) we would be doing a real job. It is almost a supererogation to review it for *THE NEW MASSES*. Its readers will read it anyway. But how are we going to get new people to read it? That's the problem we must put our heads together to solve.

ALBERT MAYER.

The New Republic announces a series of three articles by George Soule to be published under the general title:

Does Socialism Work?

There have been almost as many articles written about Russia as there have been visitors to the Soviet Union. How could it be otherwise? Tremendous issues depend upon the world's judgment of the first socialist society in man's lay experience. That judgment will be based on the testimony of hundreds of thousands of witnesses. Travellers from Russia tell and write of their experiences because those of us who have not been there demand a report. We want to know. We want evidence.

George Soule has recently returned from the Soviet Union. He has evaluated his experiences and impressions from the perspective of a trained economist, noted them with the eyes of an insatiably curious visitor, and analyzed them to show what their meaning is for all of us here who have at heart the necessity for a decent social order in the United States. The three articles, published under the general title DOES SOCIALISM WORK?, are:

- I. How People Live in the Soviet Union
- II. Materialism and Culture in the Soviet Union
- III. Judging the Soviet Union

Other features coming in The New Republic include

A series by

W. B. YEATS

Four chapters from his distinguished and witty autobiography.

A series by

EDMUND WILSON

A report of his travels in the Soviet Union.

A series of

Prose Portraits of American Writers

Revaluating the past work of notable American authors and defining their meaning to the world today.

Since 1914, The New Republic has been a rallying point for liberals, progressives and radicals

Special Offer: 30 Weeks of The New Republic \$2

Send only \$1 with the coupon below

THE NEW REPUBLIC, 40 East 49th Street, New York, N. Y.

For the enclosed \$1 please begin my thirty-week subscription to The New Republic. I shall remit an additional \$1, in full payment of the subscription, upon receipt of your bill.

Name.....

Address.....

N.M. 1-28-36

Brief Review

BUTTERFIELD 8, by John O'Hara. (Harcourt, Brace and Co. \$2.50) After the extraordinary applause (in which *THE NEW MASSES* did not join) that greeted *Appointment in Samara*, John O'Hara became that sad figure, a promising young novelist in search of something to write about. He finally found a subject in a newspaper scandal of four or five years back, the story of a besotted young nymphomaniac who jumped off a Fall River boat. It must have seemed to O'Hara that this story was somehow significant, and he was quite right. But he had no idea what its significance was. The best he could do was to point it up with some rather ghastly sentimentality about purity and the home. Mr. O'Hara has an uncommonly good eye, and the novel reflects many revealing details of life in the speakeasy era, but it should begin to be apparent, even to Mr. O'Hara's admirers, that this is not enough.

JAPAN'S POLICIES AND PURPOSES, by Hiroshi Saito. (Marshall Jones & Company. 1935. \$2.50.) These "selections from recent addresses and writings" show that the Japanese Ambassador thinks of himself as the representative in the United States of a hostile Power. With curious simplicity, he announces his gratitude for the fact that Americans are "always ready and eager to listen to what the *other side* has to say" (italics ours). He is surprised that he is "asked to speak and write more or less publicly" in our midst. On the lips of a veteran agent of imperialist diplomacy, such language is both instructive and amusing. And the book contains other gems of statesmanlike subtlety, besides echoes of Woodrow Wilson, tributes to Lincoln and the elder Roosevelt, proof that "we (the Japanese) are a democratic people" and a dithyramb, in pidgin, on the Cherry Blossoms.