

cursion, he did not take part in the war of 1870-71, a relatively brief war, too, but somewhat longer and more hard-fought than the other. But the World War put the quietus on all plans of operation bearing even the remotest resemblance to Schlieffen's timed schedule for over-the-border excursions. It proved that prophecy would not stand up after the first encounter with the enemy: the balance rests in the lap of undetermined factors.

Why, at this time, dig up time-worn military plans and the lessons of the last war which have already been discussed at length? Because an article just published in *Der Deutsche in Polen* (The German in Poland) brings these things to mind. The article is presumably the result of studies made by a German General Staff officer for which it would appear he has received the prize of the German War Academy. His subject is "How Czechoslovakia Can Be Conquered," and the writer proceeds precisely along the lines of Schlieffen before the World War. Before France can mobilize (a matter of fourteen days), Germany must destroy the military strength of Czechoslovakia by cutting off retreat into Slovakia (see Schlieffen's plan for surrounding the French army!) and must occupy Prague (see Schlieffen on the subject of occupying Paris!). Along the narrow, mountainous border of Slovakia, defense will then be organized to keep out the Russians, who in the meanwhile would have come lumbering down from the East. And after that all the German forces would be pitted against France.

The Schlieffen plan, conceived before 1914, planned the crushing of France in six weeks. The chief-of-staff of the German Eighteenth Army Corps in Salzburg evidently plans the extinction of Czechoslovakia in only fourteen days. He mimics Schlieffen to the extent where he says that should the campaign extend beyond the time scheduled, it will fall through. In other words, if Czechoslovakia is not brought to her knees in two weeks' time Germany may look forward to a most disagreeable, long-drawn-out struggle, the outcome of which cannot be foretold.

We would suggest that the non-military reader, who might be struck with the audacity of this latterday plan, allegedly the work of Colonel Conrad of the German General Staff, compare the schedule mapped out by Schlieffen with the actual facts as they unrolled on the battlefields of France. The comparison holds a lesson likewise for the putative proposals of Colonel Conrad. Every day which Schlieffen bargained for stretched into a month, figuring the duration of the war on the basis of operations against the country which was the objective of the initial drive. And the situation before us is in no wise different. A war against our country would last not a mere two weeks but more than a year. It will no more end in the surrender of the Czechoslovakian army than the World War ended in the surrender of the French army. And that is probably as much as the general reader wants to know.—

COL. STANISLAV YESTER.

## Citizen-News Strike

TO NEW MASSES: Milita been thrown around the wood *Citizen-News*. This is was once looked upon as the in the Southwest. The strike sands of sympathizers of workers have canceled their paper. *Variety*, the local film at the *Citizen-News* plant, elsewhere. CIO and AF of their support to the strikers. committee, almost one hundred ready withdrawn their ad paper for the duration of the to do so are having their st At various times as many as sympathizers joined the pick dozen stores along Hollywood workers, movie stars, writers, the studios, laborers, and e are helping to picket. Amoi actively assisting the striker Melvyn Douglas, Frank C Konrad Bercovici, Gale Sonder, John Ford, Jim Tully, Miriam Hopkins. Radio br public with the strikers' cau of the strikers, the Hollywood appears regularly on the s are being held at the homes people to raise money for the ago two thousand formal i members of the film coloi cocktail and picket-line par front of the newspaper offic

What is it all about? Why owner of the liberal Hollyvolved in a strike? Why is a fighter of corruption in hponent of national and intel pleaded for the release of T the courage to denounce t syndicalism law of Californ Palmer now receiving the su ler, of the reactionary Los . the identical interests he onc

The answer is simple er veneer of liberalism, Palmer on the organization of his o ine unions. An innocuous co welcome with open arms, Newspaper Guild was a bir At the Hollywood *Citizen-l* the guild had been draggi months—because of Mr. Pa then, on May 14, when ever agreed upon and only Mr. necessary on the contract, th ers—all active guild membe moving-picture critic, Mell writer, and Roger C. Johnso to found the Los Angeles was its chairman in 1936, missed. Later on, two more felt the ax.

The management's excuse "the recession," but that ha Dr. Towne Nylander, of the National Labor Relations Bo induce publisher Palmer to re further negotiations. But Thereupon the local office of to Washington that Harlan ing the Wagner act. This for he had previously been a

picket lines have plant of the Holly: daily paper which aladin of liberalism in full swing. Thou: striking editorial subscriptions to the ily, formerly printed now being printed unions are pledging ording to the strike advertisers have al- tisements from the rike. Those refusing s promptly picketed. teen hundred strike lines in front of a boulevard. Maritime chical workers from a state assemblymen the movie notables ire Dorothy Parker, a, Dudley Nichols, gaard, Lionel Stan- ig Lardner, Jr., and casts acquaint the

The official organ *Citizen-News Striker*, ets. Weekly parties well known movie ikers. Several weeks ations were sent to inviting them to a on the sidewalk in

Harlan G. Palmer, d *Citizen-News*, in- former progressive, office, a bitter op- tional reaction, who i Mooney, who had nefarious criminal—why is Harlan G. ort of Harry Chand- ges *Times*, and of ought?

gh. In spite of his er looked with favor workers into genu- any union he would t the Los Angeles : a different feather. s negotiations with on for nearly 'six er's insistence. And ing was apparently mer's signature was ace editorial work—Elizabeth Yeaman, G. Scott, editorial eporter, who helped pspaper Guild and ere summarily dis- tive guildsmen also

the dismissals was r convinced anyone. gional office of the l, tried for hours to ate the five, pending mer flatly refused. e NLRB complained Palmer was violat- his second offence, sed by the NLRB of

fostering a company union among his printers. Neither case, as yet, has been decided.

The Palmer-guild fight has given rise to many anomalous and amusing situations. For instance, the notorious "Red" squad, of the Los Angeles police, the declared foe of every progressive cause, is to be seen lurking near the picket lines, providing protection for the liberal publisher who formerly castigated the squad for all it was worth.

Harlan G. Palmer insists on his right to dismiss whom he pleases. He will not be dictated to either by his employees or by the government; it is a matter of "principle" with him. The strikers counter with the charge that the firing of the five guild members was an obvious attempt to intimidate employees, discourage union activity, and prevent the signing of a guild contract. They also remind Mr. Palmer that the American Newspaper Guild, to which they are affiliated, has never lost a strike. Frank Scully, the Hollywood wit, sums up the matter with a poetical observance:

Palmer's creed is "Love thy neighbor,"  
Unless the guy's for union labor.

Hollywood, Calif.

CONRAD SEILER.

## Two Artists

I N OUR issue of July 12 we published an open letter to Thomas H. Benton by Joe Jones. Jones told Benton he was enlisting in the fight against the dismissal of Benton as instructor in the Kansas City Art Institute. Since Benton had himself been victimized by the reactionaries, Jones wrote, it was possible to hope he would adopt a progressive attitude. This correspondence ensued.—THE EDITORS.

DEAR JOE: Much obliged, old cock, for your open letter. The spirit of it is swell, only I'm not quite deserving. I'm not temperamentally serious enough to go in for righteous indignation. All this stuff from the "real-estate peddler" (thanks for the designation, I'll use it) to the antics of Dewey Short and the simplicities of Sirovich are just part of the whoopee of life to me. They are to laugh. The only thing I object to in your letter was your attitude toward the cultural status of Missouri. In my view, the state leads the world. Haven't they got a Benton mural on the walls of their state capitol?

Chilmark, Mass.

TOM.

DEAR TOM: I am sorry you were unable to see my point of view about Missouri being a culturally reactionary state—when I made my point, you will remember there was a threat to remove your mural from the walls of Jefferson City by a gang of political idiots who thought it was a progressive statement.

You can imagine my confusion when I first heard of your dismissal as art instructor. I was so delighted to find your bedfellows castrating you in the way you so richly deserve that it was extremely difficult to see the real issue at hand—one that many artists with a "more sincere temperament" could find themselves in sympathy with and consider worth fighting for.

We laughed, too, because everyone likes to remember he told you so. And even now we like to believe the fight isn't over, because we know reactionaries are not licked only by threats of opposition—our fear is that we may hear of your future dismissal as a subtle thing that takes the form of your quitting your job because you are no longer the happy boisterous Kansas City brat which you like to think yourself.

St. Louis, Mo.

JOE.

# REVIEW AND COMMENT

## Who Is B. Traven?

IT is four years since that mysterious American novelist who calls himself B. Traven allowed his first book to be published in his own country, in the language in which it was originally written. That was *The Death Ship*. It first appeared in Germany in 1926, in a version written by Traven in German. In 1934 a translation by Eric Sutton from this edition was published in England. The following year *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* came out simultaneously in London and New York; the former a translation from Traven's German, the latter as written originally by him in English. Add to these puzzlers the fact that all Traven's thirteen books were first published in German from the author's own manuscripts in that language (although written by him originally in English) and we understand why the libraries of the world have classified him as a German writer. Our own Library of Congress, with its customary zeal for full names, expanded B. into Bruno; whereupon, reproved by Traven, it contracted Bruno back to B. and so revised all of its printed cards!

Traven has been called variously an Englishman, a Russian, a Yugoslav, a Czechoslovak, a German, and a Mexican. His agent in London even says that his real name is not Traven. In a recent letter to an American bookseller Traven settled the question of his nationality, if not his name. "May I just mention," he wrote, "that my first name is not Bruno, of course not; neither is it Ben, nor Benno. These names, like the many nationalities I have, among them the German, are inventions of critics who want to be smart and well informed. Several times I have protested in European publications that I am not even of German race or blood. The publishers of the German editions of my books knew from the first day of our relations that I am an American born in the USA. Why my books were published in Europe and not in this country first is another story."

The curious thing is that Traven's German and English styles are both a bit foreign. Speculating on evidence in his books, I hazard that he is a Wisconsin-born Scandinavian. But it really doesn't matter; his books are all we need to have of him, and all that he wants to give us. Like Jack London and Upton Sinclair he is a true international proletarian writer; that he is an American is incidental. His books have been published in fourteen languages.

Like its predecessors, Traven's latest book to be published in this country (*The Bridge*

*in the Jungle*, Alfred A. Knopf, \$2.50), has a blurbless jacket. His publisher is still enjoined from advertising his books, except in certain liberal periodicals, and is sworn to secrecy as far as any personal publicity is concerned. Other American writers, notably Jeffers and Steinbeck, have sought to avoid personal publicity, but I believe Traven is unique in the way he lays down the conditions under which his books are published and binds his publisher to absolute silence. When his Swiss publisher requested a photograph for publicity purposes, Traven promptly responded—with a group picture of several hundred men, explaining that he was among them!

It appears that Traven is a plain, simple man who thinks himself no more important than the plain, simple men who set, print, bind, pack, and ship his books. These men he holds to be quite as necessary as he in the production of a book. He feels that he has enlisted and is living in a new sort of association that embraces the world, in which a man who creates something great creates not for himself or for his personal interests or notoriety, but with the object of serving mankind to the utmost of his strength and ability. This service to mankind is the duty of every man, and as Traven considers writing to be his duty, he recoils from lionizing and flattery. He does not look upon himself as an artist or writer, but as a worker. His American publisher sends him no clippings about his books.

Traven has, of course, been banned by the Nazis. Since 1933, his sole German outlet has been his Swiss publisher, the Büchergilde Gutenberg, in Zürich. In spite of the contempt expressed in his work for what he regards as bureaucratic bolshevism, his books are being published by the Soviets in huge editions. In the USSR *The Death Ship* has sold two million copies; in the USA 2,500.

Of all Traven's books *The Death Ship* is the only one which is not about Mexico. That

"Moby Dick of the stokehold" is a masterpiece of which I believe Americans will be increasingly proud. When the movies tried to buy the rights to it, Traven's reply was characteristic—"I write to propagate ideas, not for reasons of profit." And in the book itself is a passage which tells what he thinks of the movies and sea-writers, including Conrad, O'Neill, and McFee:

All the romance of the sea that you still find in magazine stories died long, long ago. You would look in vain for it even in the China Sea and south of it. I don't believe it ever existed save in sea stories—never on the high seas or in sea-going ships. There are many fine youngsters who fell for those stories and believed them true, and off they went to a life that destroyed their bodies and their souls. Because everything was so very different from what they had read in those alluring stories. Life on the sea is not like they make it out to be and it never was. There is a chance, one in a hundred, maybe, that at some time romance and adventure did exist for skippers, for mates, for engineers. You still may see them singing in operas and making beebaboo in the movies. You may find them also in best-sellers and in old ballads. Anyway, the fact is that the song of the real and genuine hero of the sea has never yet been sung. Why? Because the true song would be too cruel and too strange for the people who like ballads. Opera audiences, moviegoers, and magazine readers are like that. They want to have everything pleasant, with a happy ending. The true story of the sea is anything but pleasant or romantic in the accepted sense. The life of the real heroes has always been cruel, made up of hard work, of treatment worse than the animals of the cargo 'get, and often of the most noble sacrifices, but without medals and plaques, and without mention in stories, operas, and movies. Even the hairy apes are opera singers looking for a piece of lingerie.

The rest of Traven's books form an epic of Mexico's common people. All phases of the industrial and agricultural life are treated in turn, always from the proletarian viewpoint. These books, all published since 1926, include *The Cotton Pickers*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (gold prospecting), *Land of Springtime* (a general study of Mexico, particularly the state of Chiapas), *The Bush*, *The Bridge in the Jungle*, *The White Rose* (petroleum), *The Carreta* (transportation), *Government* (a satire on the effects of bureaucracy on the Indians), *The March into the Mahogany Jungle* and *The Troza* (both on the lumber industry), and his latest book, *The Rebellion of the Hanged*. All but one are novels. Only four of them are available in English, and only two—*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *The Bridge in the Jungle*—in Traven's own English version.

Most of our recent books on Mexico have been written by traveling novelists and so-



Sid Gotoliffe