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Japanese scenes in the book conveyed only the faintest impression of what fascist tyranny was like.

At least there was enough ambiguity to cause one Chinese reviewer of the book in far-away Chungking to declare: "If only Pearl Buck could travel again through her long unvisited China, she would see much which has only come into existence recently. And if she were to use her art to interpret these developments as they really are, we are certain she would achieve even greater success than before." *Dragon Seed* responds to this challenge for a more faithful interpretation. The author suggests the stride forward in the consciousness of the people, particularly of the younger generation. She shows that an ignominious lackey like Wu Lien represents only the dying fraction of the merchant class. She portrays the obscene hypocrisy of puppet regimes which are, if possible, even more hateful to the people than the dictatorship of which they are branch offices. She describes the Japanese use of opium in order to break the will of a population when murder and starvation do not work. She portrays the humanity, resourcefulness, and bravery of people fighting to retain their ancestral plot of earth.

In her Nobel Prize lecture on "The Chinese Novel," Pearl Buck described the stylistic method of the Chinese story-teller: "He kept his audiences always in mind and he found that the style which they loved best was one which flowed easily along, clearly and simply, in the short words which they themselves used every day, with no other technique than occasional bits of description, only enough to give vividness to a place or a person, and never enough to delay the story." Much of this can be applied to her own style. It is, above all, lucid and simple. However closely it may correspond to the Chinese, it does succeed in communicating a sense of great dignity and assurance. It is, to be sure, a dangerous style because it tends to even off the sharp edges of reality: it tends toward monotony and artificiality. But for a story that is inherently dynamic, the style of biblical simplicity creates, as in this novel, an effective sense of reserve power, a sense of meanings that are wider than the immediate subject matter. Unlike the verbal pyrotechnics of the experimentalists, this style seems to get one close to the more habitual patterns of folk expression.

Yet the book is unquestionably limited with respect to both the psychological depth of portraiture and richness of social theme. The character who interested me most was not Ling Tan but Jade, the daughter-in-law. But we get only suggestions of those qualities which make her a representative type of the new Chinese woman who, breaking the bonds of centuries, takes her full place in modern life. The characters are in motion, but they are not fulfilled. And this is no doubt in part due to the structure of the book. There are long time intervals, particularly after the first section, and during these intervals there is no dramatic progression of character. Similarly, the social framework

of the novel provides no points of organic contact between the development of political consciousness in the village and the general development of Chinese life. The book refers to no parties, no leaders, no bodies of ideas and organizational influences; and this isolation, credible at first, seems less and less real as the war goes on. There is in this respect a vacuum, a sure clue that the novel is not, as of course it could not be, written out of immediate experience.

But the fundamental drive and the fundamental perception are there. As I read the book I kept thinking of a talk I had with Pearl Buck some weeks ago. I had above all been impressed by the sincerity and determination of her feeling about "superior and inferior" races. She had written a letter to the *New York Times* taking issue with that paper's editorial treatment of the so-called "crime wave" in Harlem. "Our government," she had written, "can and should see to it that all Americans shall have equal economic opportunity and that colored people in this democracy shall not suffer insult because of their color." In answering the challenge of Hitler, she said, we must also answer the challenge of racism in America. Bigotry, hypocrisy, the concept of master and subject races, are threats to national unity and the unity of the diverse peoples who are fighting fascism.

The strength of her feeling on this score, the strong sense of fair play and human decency, the deep affection for the Chinese people which the novelist expressed in this interview has been translated into imaginative terms in this book. Anyone who sympathetically reads *Dragon Seed* would be ashamed to evaluate human beings in terms of color or of race. In one symbolic episode there appears a white teacher who makes her Chinese girl students automatically memorize "Paul Revere's Ride." She is utterly unconscious that in the anti-Japanese war raging around her the Chinese people are creating their own Paul Reveres. There is a superb irony here which underlines Pearl Buck's implicit moral that with virtually bare hands the people of China have for years been fighting not only their battle but ours, against a savage aggressor. *Dragon Seed* will strengthen our determination to fight with such an ally unto the death of fascism.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

### Limited Poll

AMERICAN OPINION ON THE SOVIET UNION, by Meno Lowenstein. Introduction by Broadus Mitchell. American Council on Public Affairs.

THIS book was prepared sometime before June 22. It is probable that the author was then not aware of the degree to which the very opinion he was analyzing was being regimented with such effect that he himself was confined within limitations whose narrowness is only now becoming apparent.

Certainly at the time the book was being done it was enterprising merely to undertake such a project.

Thus the book reflects the repression that reaction in America was exercising, inhibiting and constricting workers even in the field of scholarly research. I feel that Dr. Lovenstein will agree with me that his book would have been clearer and firmer, that it would have struck deeper in its analysis had it not been carried out in the atmosphere of political firings from WPA rolls and teaching staffs, inquisitions conducted by legislative investigating committees, discriminatory application of technicalities in the courts, job blacklists and editorial blacklists, with social pressures superadded.

The chief reflection of these disagreeable realities of a reactionary period shows itself in Dr. Lovenstein's study in his hesitation in dealing with what is perhaps the most characteristic phenomenon of American opinion on the Soviet Union—the monster image created and circulated by the American "organs of opinions." This image was projected with all the journalistic and editorial skills so highly developed in our advanced country and kept going with a continuity and implacability not shown toward any other country, not even toward Japan and Germany, most dangerous of our international enemies.

To have discussed this monster image and the reasons for summoning it so continuously from the propaganda bottle would have called for a consideration of class motivations, a discussion which would have risked placing the book in the dangerous area euphemistically designated as "controversial." It would have led to the embarrassing recognition that until faced by an overwhelming crisis as in 1932 and the greater one of today, the ruling class is tireless in carrying on its class war strategy. One of its most persistent operations has been its anti-Soviet propaganda, though that has meant perilous inattention to and even strengthening of the nation's avowed enemies.

DR. LOVENSTEIN avoids the issue but cannot keep it from hanging in looming implications over the book. He deals very gingerly with the mass media where the monster image has its hugest projections, not touching upon radio and movies at all; he pays minor attention to the newspapers; and in the sections on "general magazines" makes no distinction in weight between a magazine with a circulation of millions and one with a circulation of twenty-odd thousand. This leaves him standing on comparatively safe ground. It permits him to lay the responsibility on the intellectuals.

As a result the book is carried out on the basis of an assumption not directly stated but implied throughout. The implication is that, for reasons Dr. Lovenstein finds himself constrained not to go into, American opinion was biased and misinformed; that this situation should have been corrected by those

groups in American life whose interests and professional responsibilities called for their acquiring accurate information and forming unbiased opinion. These groups were editors, economists, historians, sociologists, technicians, business analysts, government officials, and scholars in general. Their failure is what Dr. Lovenstein dwells on, stressing in his conclusion the "deficient services rendered by scholars and intellectuals." That is virtually all that he arrives at as explanation for the misinformation and bias in American opinion on the Soviet Union.

"Add up the failings one by one; the deficient services rendered by scholars and intellectuals, the inadequacies of published information, the immense proportions of the subject, and the lack of intellectual and emotional preparation of the people in the United States. These factors lead to this fatal conclusion: America is not getting the benefits of another nation's experience. The American people are not being given the necessary information with which to make the decisions that are expected of them and that they have to make. They are left continuously unprepared and uninformed."

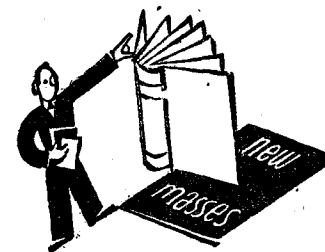
But this is diagnosis by restating the symptoms. Is it mere accident or is it in the nature of scholars and intellectuals to render deficient services? Why in a world equipped with radio, speed press, teletype, wirephoto, etc., with newspapers in the big American cities running to forty-eight pages and over, and American magazines fabulously big and fabulously cheap, and available everywhere in the country, should published information have been, in Dr. Lovenstein's polite word, "inadequate"? Who and what were responsible for the "lack of emotional and intellectual preparation" in the country best supplied among the nations of the world with institutions of learning, printing presses, radios in every home, and so on and so forth?

The explanation is not the innocuous one that scholars and intellectuals failed in their duty for, alas, it was their duty, as dictated by class interests whose reach extended even to learned journals, to withhold information and to misinform. It is not the failure of scholarship but the deliberate misuse of scholarship, that lies behind the corruption and stultifying of American opinion on the Soviet Union.

If these limitations of the book are understood, then its values, however constricted, can be emphasized. For Dr. Lovenstein's book nevertheless, despite its limitations, does a very useful job. So far as I know, it is the first systematic study of this subject. The material it digests is very large—books, the labor press (except left wing magazines which are not dealt with under any category), business magazines, economic journals, newspapers, learned periodicals, and government reports. In the digest of this material much useful data is assembled.

Furthermore, the book gives some attention to one fact which has rarely, so far as I know, been dealt with; that is, the direct effect of

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developments at home on American opinion on the Soviet Union. This effect was always more immediate and influential than the reactions to events in the Soviet Union. Bearing that in mind we begin to see why America's economic needs during the depression brought about a comparatively "good press" for the Soviet Union; and why the subsequent "bad press" in the later thirties had a direct relationship to the growing power of reaction in America and its interest in expanding a Red Terror image, and not to the Moscow trials.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

## Quack, Quack

HOLLYWOOD: THE MOVIE COLONY—THE MOVIE MAKERS, by Leo C. Rosten. Harcourt, Brace. \$4.

DR. ROSTEN's study of Hollywood is extensive but not intensive, like a very little manure spread over a very big field. At first sight the book appears impressively scholarly; it was subsidized by both the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, it boasts in its blurb of a "trained staff of eleven people" assisting the author, it bristles with questionnaires. Yet, upon closer examination, what should have been objective research disintegrates into a hash of gossip, generality, and prejudice. Such meat as the book has is in quotations from other authors. Although advertised as an economist, Dr. Rosten abjures economic analysis of Hollywood's problems in favor of a quack pseudo-Freudian psychoanalyst jargon—"Spending becomes a mechanism by which one part of the personality pays off another." The tables of statistics resolve themselves, for the most part, into singularly pointless tabulations of the marriages and ages of screen personalities. *What Makes Sammy Run*, which offered itself as a novel, was yet a far more sober and competent economic analysis than the Rosten book; and the TNEC report on the film monopoly (an indispensable piece of research which Rosten dismisses with one footnote), although an impersonal study, afforded far more insight into the psychology of the movie industry than *Hollywood*. When such cynical superficiality is added to a deliberate whitewashing of the producer caste, it is surprising that Rosten has been appointed to a key job in the organization of films for defense—surprising and tragic. His total subservience to producers is hardly good equipment for an efficient and conscientious administrator. Nor are films for democracy best supervised by a man who visibly has such limited understanding of the meaning of the word.

Similarly, the book's style is inappropriate to a serious survey. Dr. Rosten's overblown version of the English language, in which a pretty girl becomes a beauteous maiden, and the practice of paying stars enormous wages is called "the iron ring of Pactolian salaries," makes heavy and dull going, even when relieved with such sensational chapter headings as "Eros in Hollywood" or "The Night Life of the Gods." Considered separately, these pretentiously named chapters dwindle into

(a) lurid accounts of Hollywood extravagances and absurdities, (b) defense of these foibles on the rather curious ground that Eastern social leaders behave even worse.

Dr. Rosten's refusal to use not only elementary economics but even elementary common sense leads him into frequent grotesque contradictions, as when he spends pages trying to prove that not money but vanity and various psychological aberrations dictate the mad scramble for Hollywood prestige—and then gives the whole show away by concluding, "Prestige is carefully guarded in Hollywood for its monetary complements (sic) are exact, obvious, and inescapable." But the worst contradictions are reserved for the chapters on producers and on "Politics over Hollywood." In the former the author amuses himself and us with loving description of the "screwiness" of producers in general, then insists that, since the film business is a screwy business anyhow, only these screwy geniuses understand it well enough to produce such masterpieces as, say, *Gone With the Wind*. In other words, the present producers must be left in control or there will be no more Scarlett O'Hara. Of the role of the producers in exploiting their subordinates, in perverting and debasing good work, something is said, but only through occasional personal anecdote, without any attempt at sincere analysis. Of the role of the producers in union-busting and terrorization, nothing is said at all. A bland footnote declares that the whole question of the unions will have to be left for a later volume.

WORSE still is the political chapter. After a hypocritical condemnation of Red-baiting, Rosten launches upon a hysterical diatribe that could give Martin Dies points. Carefully declaring that his darlings, the producers, are not Communists (who ever thought they were?) the author slanders the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League and the Motion Picture Democratic Committee with the stupid, Pegglerish "Communazi" label. The present position of world events exposes this nonsense as the miserable thing it is; Dr. Rosten should bring his malice up to date. His definition of



patriotism, similarly, leaves something to be desired. Wishing to heap the highest possible honor upon such a patriot as the convicted income-tax evader, Mr. Schenck, Rosten triumphantly produces as proof of sterling democracy—Schenck's devotion to the cause of Finland. This book is not a survey of Hollywood; it is an appeasement of Hollywood—the Hollywood of reaction, labor-baiting and Red-baiting, and cheap escapism.

JOY DAVIDMAN.

## Where Do We Go from Here?

THE INTENT OF THE ARTIST, by Sherwood Anderson, Thornton Wilder, Roger S. Sessions, William Lescaze. Edited, with an introduction, by Augusto Centeno. Princeton University Press. 1941.

THESE essays have considerable variety of form. Mr. Wilder's, the briefest, is rather like a syllabus on basic principles of the drama, which would be useful in preparing for an examination; it is very rich in 1, 2, 3, 4 heads and subheads: "A play presupposes a crowd. The reasons for this go deeper than (1) the economic necessity for the support of the play, and (2) the fact that the temperament of the actors is proverbially dependent on group attention. It rests on the fact that (1) the pretense . . . and (2) . . ." Anderson's is informal and chatty, a talk among friends. Lescaze's takes the form of a question and answer dialogue on architecture, with excellent graphic illustrations. The paper by Sessions is most like a very good lecture, with a piano at hand to be used in the analysis of the opening bars of the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*.

I found Professor Centeno's elaborately phrased introduction hard to read. But when translated into the simpler terms I am used to, it said rather familiar, and on the whole, undisputed, things about artists and art. Such as: The artist is a doer, a maker. And art is always primarily the expression of a living man. (One could, of course, question the meaning of "living.") And artists are creators and interpreters of our times and lives. (Professor Centeno puts it "of the realness" of our times and lives, and one could discuss the meaning of "realness" to the end of our time and our lives.) An artist cannot separate himself from "livingness," and yet has to be "separate." (Does that mean something like objective or detached?) Many artists have had certain handicaps conducive to "separateness": blindness (the legendary Homer), deafness (Beethoven), tuberculosis (Chopin), epilepsy (Dostoevsky)—all sources of "separateness" but not of "separation." Where no such handicaps are discoverable—as with Bach and Shakespeare, and one might add Titian, Goethe, Tolstoy, and many others—Professor Centeno says ". . . the psychological origin of this attitude of the spirit may remain uncomprehended." So the theory does not add up to much in accounting for the attitude of "separateness."

More open to question than most of the statements is this: that the artist is not a political thinker—in fact, not a thinker at all.