

# A Liberal Looks at the Soviet Union

By SAM DARCY.

A Moscow Diary; by Anna Porter. Published by Charles M. Kerr and Company, Chicago. Price \$1.00 net.

**C**ERTAIN petty bourgeois liberal writers are well meaning in their attitude toward the first workers' republic when one nevertheless despairs of their ever understanding it.

Miss Anna Porter went to Russia and was thrilled by the "most interesting place in the world" because of the "great experiment." She saw a youthful people who increase production, go on holiday parades, rebuild their cities, and think about world politics with equal fervor and enthusiasm. The strain of the entire book which her trip produced is the "insistence on banner, tramp and drum."

She also sees Moscow audiences enjoy wild west thrillers in the movies, and (fickle petty-bourgeois) her enthusiasm is dimmed. She undertakes to apologize for this. She says: "Probably these worthless things are given as a necessary relaxation from the equally necessary propaganda, for lack, at present, of something better, for Russia has not yet had time to build up a cinema repertoire."

The apology is unnecessary. The proletariat has been vitalized by a revolution and today is young. That's why it enjoys the wild west thrillers which are virile, and adventuresome—it isn't the William S. Hart slush that carries the appeal but the vigorous life of the broad plains.

She records the facts but does not understand them. Earlier in the book she lets us feel the pulse of the masses. She is describing one of the demonstrations:

"Suddenly the roll of drums was heard without the door and way was made for a company of Young Pioneers, boys and girls, with their gorgeous red and gold banners, and red neckerchiefs. Down the aisle they marched to the roll of their own drums, and up to the stage, forming in two long lines across it, in front of a giant red-draped and green-garlanded portrait of their great chief, Lenin, whose name their organization also bears. Since his death they have been rechristened "Young Leninists," to indicate that his aims are their aims. One of their number stepped forward and spoke for them. Great enthusiasm was shown for the little band, for these young people, like our Scouts, are the government pillars of the future. Hundreds of thousands of them are enrolled throuth the country, with a large membership in Moscow, and they understand very intelligently just what their task is, not abstractly patriotism, kindness, courage, honesty, but definitely defense of their class against the threat of the armed world without. Again the "International," this time sung by the whole audience thru three long



**UNCLE SAM CAPITALISM TO SISTER CATHOLIC CHURCH:** "Now, Sister, you stick around Mexico and get in his way until he hits you with his hoe; then you scream bloody murder and I'll rush in and take the whole plantation."

stanzas. I have never heard it so triumphantly sung, with no hint in the tone of the dismal and rebellious wall so often heard in other countries—rather a suggestion of victorious fulfillment."

This does not smack of the esthetic quality which pleases our American intelligentsia, but it is the spirit which has built, is rebuilding and perfecting a new society. She compares the Young Leninists to the Boy Scout movement. But let us not forget that the former is serving the needs of the working masses, while the Boy Scouts, tho they are children of the workers in the main, are being won away from us to the enslaving ideology of faithful servility to the boss.

Much has been said about the waifs in the territory of the Soviet Union, made destitute by war and revolution, running wild without any care being taken of them by the workers' government. Miss Porter tells much to refute this. After describing the methods being used to gather these children in and the care being given them, she strikes at the core of the difference between the work of a proletarian government in this direction and that of our own charity institutions:

"At the end of the four months each child finds his place in a permanent home—for average or subnormal or gifted, where he is given the training his special case requires. Only absolutely destitute children—orphans or those with irresponsible parents, are cared for here, but practically every child in Moscow is now accounted for, and it cannot be so very long with the constantly bettering conditions, before the provinces, too, are brought up to this standard. The hopeful point of the whole story is, that while in other countries as fast as one set is redeemed others take their places and the same tragic round goes on, in Russia they are slowly redeeming the conditions that make for criminal vagabonds. While we continue cheerfully pouring water into the sieve, refusing to notice the holes, 'realist' Russia is putting a solid bottom in the sieve."

It is interesting to read this book and watch her reactions to the things that are in the U. S. S. R. She treats with labor conditions, woman's status, militarism, and the children's movement.

This last is the most interesting. The revolution is now over eight

years old. Children have been born after the revolution, many were too young at the time of the revolution to have known the fear of a boss, and have grown up in the conception that the workers of the world should be emancipated and who look upon the relation of worker and boss in the capitalist countries much as we do upon the chattel slavery of pre-civil war days. These children—millions of them—march and sing and play and learn international solidarity of the working class from the lips of the pioneers of 1905. Miss Porter writes:

"Here it is all taken for granted—the onward march of youth over the dead traditions of the capitalist past. A young woman friend here is eager to visit America 'to see what a capitalist country is like before it passes away.' At twenty-four, capitalism to her is ancient history, and the United States an anachronism. So let the reactionaries rave. Soviet Russia goes straight forward, its ranks of youth march by for hours to do honor to its founder, and the echo of their tramp across the water fires our own youth and confounds the critics."