

He Was a Soviet Worker

I WAS A SOVIET WORKER by *Andrew Smith*. E. P. Dutton Co.

ANDREW Smith, who after a number of years in the Soviet Union wrote a series of articles for the Hearst press on his experiences, has brought together his material in *I Was A Soviet Worker*.

What makes it possible for this man—with a long record in the American radical movement, charter member of the Communist Party of the United States, active in its behalf among Hungarian workers—to be so bitter against the land which he approached with such high hopes? As a member of a worker's delegation to the Soviet Union, his imagination had been fired, his faith confirmed by what he saw.

He would make Russia his permanent home, he decided. Before he left America's shores his life savings of several thousand dollars were donated to the American section of the Comintern. His book, however, is bitter almost beyond belief. He sees no progress, recognizes no improvement. Russia under the Soviets, to him, is even worse than the Empire of the Romanoffs.

Gloom, misery and bureaucracy dominate its pages. There is nothing of the undeniable rise in wages and general living conditions. No allowances are made for the tremendous political and social dislocation of the war years or for the birth pangs of a new society emerging from the corruption of Czarism.

His emphasis is laid mainly, however, on what he sees as a definite development toward the creation of special classes, a favored Communist caste rising at the expense of the whole population. In his own position as a fairly well paid specialist, he had little personal complaint to make and his party membership gave him exceptional opportunities to travel through the outlying districts of the U.S.S.R. The account of a Volga trip, into territory not generally visited by outsiders, is particularly interesting.

Smith makes little effort to be objective, and his story can hardly be accepted as a balanced study of the new Russia. Grievances are often exaggerated out of all real proportion exceptional incidents inflated. Nor does the publication of his articles in the Hearst press, inspire any considerable respect for his working class intelligence. There is nothing decent or constructive in the attitude of that Number 1 Soviet Hater toward the U.S.S.R.

When all is said and done however, this book can hardly be laughed off. Facts are facts and whatever the reason, no sympathetic observer will deny that there is still plenty to be done and much to be done better in the land of the Soviets. Is Russia still so weak that it cannot bear to let facts speak for themselves? Is it really necessary to hide behind fantastic claims which cannot, in the very nature of the case be true? Are those, who, with friendship and sincere appreciation of the tremendous task to be done, point out the rifts and mistakes, to be considered as its enemies? Or are they not, in fact, its best friends. . . .

LUDWIG LORE