

## BOOKS ABROAD

*Russie*, by Henri Barbusse. Ernest Flammarion, Paris.

No one in the field of literature has done as much as Barbusse to popularize and propagate the aims and achievements of the Russian Revolution. This is not only so because Barbusse is better equipped than anyone else for this task, but especially because of a clear political and social outlook coupled with a firm intellectual discipline sadly lacking in other writers whose efforts we know.

Barbusse has done more than approach the Soviet Union as an observer. He has thoroughly assimilated its historical significance, its social character. He writes about it like one who has always been of it, and not as the student of an "experiment." Therein lies the fundamental difference between Barbusse and the clan of petty-bourgeois writers on Russia like Dreiser. It is, in fact, like comparing John Reed with Villard or Dewey. But such comparisons are made only to show class attitudes rather than differences in literary treatment of a great historical event.

In *Russie*, Barbusse has achieved something that no statistics, no graphs, no tables could do. In a series of unrelated chapters, he has given us a panoramic view of the dynamic onrush of life and things in the Soviet Union. The book is like a swiftly turning revolving-stage, with surprises and the unexpected striking us in each short chapter. The drama of land and wheat. The oldest man in the world. The mountain house. Proletarian literature. The seven hour day. The soviet film. Conversation with Gorki. A visit to Clara Zetkin.

The chapter on proletarian literature is something that no revolutionary writer should miss. Nowhere has this question been so well discussed. Our own recent controversies on this problem make this an important part of the book for study and debate.

Barbusse has in this book devoted some space to the question of foreign writers who enjoy popularity in the Soviet Union.

"Here is a people which dominates all others by the new vital conception, the social architectural plan of which it is the worker, that is, which dominates all others in thought; here is a people which has changed the face of history and which proposes to change the face of the earth, which is the founder and will be the ancestor of a historical period; which, moreover, in the domain of arts and letters, is already achieving things worthy of its greatness,—and upon this superb torrential deluge, which is all health and logic, one sees floating mediocre works of exported origin and silhouettes of foreign authors whose very names we are ashamed to mention!"

Barbusse ascribes the popularity in Russia of decadents like Proust, Giraudour and Cocteau, to the unquenchable thirst for knowledge of the Soviet masses, and adds that they will learn to classify methodically the results of their investigation of foreign cultures.

*Russie* is a richly documented work, written in a style resembling the structural beauty of constructivist architecture.

Here is hoping for an early and adequate translation.

SAMUEL BRODY.

*Volksbuch 1930*, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin. 3 Marks.

A worker's yearbook richly illustrated with photographs and reproductions from Rivera, Masereel, Steinlein, Grosz, Daumier, Zille, Paul, Heine, Legrand, Kollwitz and others; poetry and prose by Johannes Becher, Kurt Tucholsky, Gorky, Lidin, Barbusse, Inber, etc. The yearbook is particularly full of informative material, numerous articles (reprints, translations and original contributions) on every phase of the worker's relation to contemporary life—social, political, economic, cultural. Even America is not forgotten: Goldschmidt writes on Unemployment Banquet (W.I.R.), Kisch on Hollywood, Ruhle on Chicago and Boston (Haymarket Trial and Sacco and Vanzetti).

LOUIS LOZOWICK.

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