

American Reports 'Peace Festival'

COMMUNIST CLOSE-UP, *By Vincent R. Tortora*. Exposition Press, New York. 1953. 160 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by DOROTHY SARA

During his days as a graduate student at the University of Padua, the author, a young Pennsylvanian, cleverly gained a forged pass to the Third World Peace Festival held in Red Berlin. He posed as an Italian correspondent for an American Communist newspaper, and used his repertorial experience to gain first-hand interviews with participants of the so-called peace festival.

This book, therefore, is more in the nature of a reporter's eye-and ear-witnessing of an event, than any critical analysis of the economic conditions which led to it. In detail he relates the conversations held with the young people, from various U.S.S.R. satellite countries, and points up how deeply indoctrinated they are with the propaganda which is finely ground out by the Communists. Such comments as "we are free, but the Americans and Englishmen are slaves and the victims of a capitalistic system" are mouthed in parrot fashion by these delegates to the festival.

The author, as a reporter, is colorful in his appraisal of these young people; the book does not depict them as unpleasant people at all. On the contrary, during my reading of the book I received the impression that these delegates were just like any group of robust young folks on their way to a state fair, or a camp reunion, or any social excursion, and might be your neighbors or mine. I was moved to feeling sorry for these delegates, because they had been exposed to the Communist indoctrination, and I wonder if the author meant me to feel angry at them.

He makes little mention of the economic conditions which led to this situation, and touches only lightly on some of the feeble protests of the "older generation" in East Berlin against this sweeping tide of communism. As a Georgist I would appreciate this book more if it did not use up almost all of its pages on details of conversations on the trip to the festival, and the blaring carnival atmosphere of the propaganda barrages aimed at the delegates, but rather if the author gave more serious consideration to the economic aspects.

However, the author's intention was, I presume, to give a reporter's dramatic report of the "peace festival" and to expose the psychological results of the molding of young minds through propaganda—and if this was the thesis of his book, he succeeded.