

I, NULIGAK. edited and translated from the Eskimo by MAURICE METAYER. *Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, Ltd. 1966. 5½ x 8½ inches, 208 pages, appendices and glossary. Illustrated by Ekootak. \$5.00.*

Nuligak was a western Canadian Eskimo, and a wise man, born in the Mackenzie Delta in 1895 at a time when boats from many parts assembled in that area to hunt the whale. He had an adventurous life, typical of the arctic hunter's existence. During his incessant search for game he killed many land and sea animals, trapped foxes and muskrat, caught many fishes. All this with a variety of techniques and in the midst of rapidly changing circumstances. He fought for survival and constantly adapted to change. He did not invent, yet he combined new strategies and applied them successfully. In sum, he succeeded in the typical Eskimo manner.

This book is the autobiography of Nuligak, written in Eskimo at the invitation of Father Maurice Metayer who translated and edited the text as faithfully as possible. Each of the five chapters refers to a particular period in the life cycle of the author: childhood, youth, maturity, marriage and fatherhood, old age. Nuligak is an orphan and this is a central fact in his life. It is striking to learn how he joins a succession of foster parents, finding himself continuously in the position of the "poor orphan". This constant change in residence gives us new insight into the variability of certain aspects of Eskimo social organization. Gradually Nuligak becomes an able and highly successful hunter-trapper and he is obviously pleased with the change in status. Dramatic or highly successful events occur in rapid succession. At one point we read about the horror experienced by young Nuligak at the death of his grandmother when he had to drag her dead body on the sled. Later he proudly announces that with forty-four cartridges he killed thirty seals, five ugiuk and four white bears. This is an exploit indeed!

Through Nuligak's own story we learn much about the recent history of the area in which he lived. In the first chapter many traditional customs are described, as well as events associated with the presence of the whalers. Accelerated trapping brought

distinct advantages to the people until the depression of the 1930's when the fur prices fell sharply and made it necessary for the Eskimos to intensify their hunting.

Joy and sadness were part of Nuligak's everyday and profoundly human experience. Yet his was a life full of hardships: "We suffer from the cold when we go hunting! We look for food in such blizzards that our own feet become invisible to us when we are travelling! Storms of snow flakes swirl about us in the darkness of our winter season. It is impossible for us to save money. We spend our whole life in search of something to eat and we work for a very miserable salary."

This autobiography should be read by all interested in the Eskimos.

*Asen Balikci*

IN SEARCH OF THE PRIMITIVE. AN INDEPENDENT EXPLORER'S LIFE WITH THE LAST OF THE EXOTIC PEOPLES OF AFRICA, THE ARCTIC, NEW GUINEA AND THE UPPER AMAZON. By LEWIS COTLOW. *Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Company, 1966. 6½ x 9½ inches. xviii + 454 pages, photographs, maps. \$8.95.*

Mr. Cotlow travels around the world shooting primitive peoples — with a camera, that is. After delving into the depths of Africa, roaming around South America, and exposing himself to danger and dysentery among the people of New Guinea, Mr. Cotlow was invited to visit and to film the Canadian Eskimos at Grise Fiord, in southern Ellesmere Island. His account of his visits there takes up about forty pages. Mr. Cotlow's invitation came from an RCMP Commissioner who told him that he had not visited an important primitive area — the high Arctic, where "Eskimos still live pretty much as their ancestors did hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years ago. . . . There are just seventy-two Eskimo men, women and children, plus two of my constables. No missionary. No Hudson Bay store. And when you find a settlement without either of these, you'll know you are far from civilization. . . . The attitude of

western man towards primitive peoples is a curious mixture of paternalism and hucksterism. In some places the Canadian Eskimo has been romanticized and merchandized, and the production of Eskimo Art by the ton encouraged. In others he has been protected and displayed as if he were the inhabitant of a zoo. Somewhere between these two extremes, the Eskimos as individuals have got lost. The Eskimo that Mr. Cotlow portrays at Grise Fiord is the romantic, stereotyped, grinning primitive. The author concludes "that of all the people I've seen, the Eskimos were the happiest."

The tragedy of the whole thing comes out in one episode. An RCMP constable gave two Eskimo children injections against flu. Mr. Cotlow said he would like to film a re-enactment of this visit to the igloo. So the scene was re-enacted, down to giving the children another injection. Mr. Cotlow writes "I had been worried that my 'actors' would freeze up during a re-enactment, but I should have remembered what good performers most primitive people are. They wanted to go too far, really. Jamisie winced a little too much as the needle went into him, for instance." Could it be that Jamisie suffered pain for no apparent reason than to please another crazy white man? Perhaps, for once, an Eskimo was not acting, but reacting as a human being. Mr. Cotlow, like many amateur anthropologists, does not seem to realize that primitive peoples do put on an act — and not only when they are in front of cameras.

A curious exercise this, in which a government official encourages an American photo-journalist to travel north (Mr. Cotlow travelled in RCMP planes, and stayed at the detachment at Grise Fiord), places constables and Eskimos at his disposal, and assists him in making a film that shows how happy the Eskimos really are. Any "independent" social scientist working in the North would be grateful for a quarter of this amount of official help. Mr. Cotlow made a film ("High Arctic") which he shows to southern audiences, including one in Ottawa in the winter of 1966-67.

Mr. Cotlow emerges in the book as a very human person, enthusiastic and anxious to tell his story. There is a lot of interesting ethnographic information, some astute observations, and a number of tall stories. Mr. Cotlow obviously has a strong sympathy for primitive peoples and their ways. He teases a rhinoceros, lets himself be painted up by one group of primitives, drinks saliva stimulated brews, and suffers sicknesses of all sorts. In the incidents set in Africa, South America, and New Guinea, where he sought out primitive peoples, he has a lot to tell. In the Arctic episode, where he was invited in, he becomes merely a teller of old, stale tales.

In case anyone is interested, there is a detailed description on pages 231-233 of how to shrink a human head.

*Jim Lotz*