

THE CHECK LIST

NON-FICTION

DEFENSE WILL NOT WIN THE WAR, by W. F. Kernan. \$1.50. *Little, Brown*. The principle expressed in the title is so right, its appeal to a nation impatient for decisive action is so direct, that the volume has won public acclaim. Colonel Kernan has done a real service if only because, in most of his frontal attack on the current strategic concepts, he has broken through old-fashioned thinking. He recognizes the rapid decline of the functions of sea power and stresses the importance of aviation.

Nevertheless, he falls far short of understanding the realities of warfare in the air war age. That explains his rashness in urging offensive action before we are ready for it. It's all well enough to calculate that Italy is the weakest link in the Axis chain and hence should be attacked. But he fails to realize that the undertaking is impossible unless and until we are ready to take control of the skies over the Mediterranean. Without that, there can be no thought of transporting expeditionary forces or keeping them supplied. How can we possibly land large-scale forces on shores protected by enemy air power? And if we should obtain a few bridgeheads, how are we to hold them without aerial strength equal to the whole Axis air power on the continent, which can converge to annihilate us?

There is only one thing worse than not taking the offensive — and that's taking it prematurely. Actually, there can be no invasion, whether of Italy or of France, without mastery of the air over Europe. But when that is available, invasion will be become a secondary, follow-up procedure. — ALEXANDER P. DE SEVERSKY.

I'VE COME A LONG WAY, by Helena Kuo. \$3.00. *Appleton-Century*. Kipling's

bruised and beaten aphorism about East and West has taken a further kicking around since the Occident and Orient acquired a common enemy and a common destiny. But the individual transition is still slow and difficult, as Miss Kuo's autobiography proves. Her life has been a long struggle to bridge the gap in spite of the handicaps imposed upon her by both civilizations. In China, in England, and now in America, she has fought and continues to fight for herself, her sex and her country.

Miss Kuo's story has a great deal to recommend it. Her life has been eventful enough to make a first-class adventure yarn; the sharp penetration of her mind as it explores and contrasts Eastern and Western civilizations is a delightful excursion into common philosophy; and everywhere in the book the freshness and charm of her personality make the pages sing with her lovely presence.

PICTURES IN THE HALLWAY, by Sean O'Casey. \$2.75. *Macmillan*. The second volume in Mr. O'Casey's autobiography, and even better than its predecessor. Here he is still in his teens, and for the first time comes in contact with the magic of the theatre, poetry, painting and music. He writes of it all incisively and yet with almost incredible tenderness — not the tenderness of the romantic prevaricator, but the warm, unceasing pull of the boy who has never ceased marveling at floating clouds and the grace of his mother's movements as she prepares breakfast. There is nothing remotely like it in all contemporary autobiography.

AMERICA'S STRATEGY IN WORLD POLITICS, by Nicholas John Spykman. \$3.75. *Harcourt, Brace*. The Sterling Professor of International Relations at Yale has here

written an important and very suggestive book. He considers American foreign relations from the point of view of geopolitics. He deals what appears to be a death blow to the whole isolationist ideology, and pleads for greater "interference" in world problems. "The interest of the United States demands not only victory in the war, but also continued participation in the peace." He is for a revival of the League of Nations, but he would have it greatly revised so that it would be "based on states of approximately equal strength with a covenant that provides for a revitalized Article 10 and a really effective system of 'peaceful change.'" There are many useful appendices, but the index is much too brief.

GOVERNMENT OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC, by Austin F. Macdonald. \$3.75. *Crowell*. Dr. Macdonald, who is professor of political science in the University of California, has here written what is ostensibly a textbook on the Argentinian political setup, but it can also be read with ease and profit by the general reader. He is especially careful to point out the deep differences, as well as similarities, between our constitution and that of the South American republic. There are several valuable appendices and a good map.

THE ROOTS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM, by Rohan D'O. Butler. \$3.00. *Dutton*. Mr. Butler is a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and obviously very familiar with German history in almost every one of its aspects. After massing his evidence, he presents this conclusion: "German thought and German practice have for the last century and a half been undermining the civilization of the west; they are hostile to that civilization and eager to bring about its ruin; they wish its ruin because it is built upon the mean of reason, the Christian ethic, the scientific spirit, and human worth—all alien to the German outlook which casts right back to barbarism." His method of reasoning often amounts to little more than name-calling, and

when he brings up Dr. Freud and psychoanalysis as samples of "the Nazi reaction against reason," one becomes very dubious of the intrinsic value of his book and of its value even as war propaganda.

AMERIGO: A COMEDY OF ERROR IN HISTORY, by Stefan Zweig. \$2.00. *Viking*. Amerigo Vespucci was a commonplace mathematician, navigator and astronomer and yet the New World was named after him even though he did not discover it and was not the first to set foot upon the mainland. How his name came to be used is "an endless story of accidents, errors, and misunderstandings," which he himself attempted to rectify in his lifetime but to no avail. Mr. Zweig related this fantastic tale with great skill. It is the sort of thing he could do perfectly, and now that Hitler has killed him by remote control, it will be a long time before his like appears on earth again.

ALL MY BORN DAYS, by John A. Garde. \$3.50. *Scribner's*. Captain Garde, U.S.N.R., was a naval intelligence officer in Europe in the years 1916-1940. Here he presents his memoirs—his meetings with Kings, Emperors, Empresses, cardinals, premiers, dictators, generals, *et al.* What he has to say makes pleasant reading and in all probability will furnish many a footnote to many a history book in the future. Sometimes his remarks are even of immediate importance, as when he argues from personal knowledge that the Belgian King Leopold was moved by "honorable and imperative reasons" to surrender his army.

HOW MAN BECAME A GIANT, by M. Ilin and E. Segal. \$2.00. *Lippincott*. Addressed chiefly to older children, this book offers an excellent survey of evolution and anthropology, and in every way is as well done as Ilin's previous books, "Black on White" and "What Time Is It?" The translation by Beatrice Kinkadee is very readable and the illustrations by A. Komarov and E. A. Furman are excellent.

FICTION

WIND BEFORE RAIN, by John D. Weaver. \$2.50. *Macmillan*. This first novel by a MERCURY contributor, dealing compassionately with the difficulties of hill people faced with the inevitable change from an agricultural to an industrial way of life, is undeniably the work of one of those rare writers who has reached a high level of maturity at the opening of a career. His scene, the Shenandoah valley of Virginia, is shown in a clear, penetrating light; his characters, especially the young couple whose bitter love story is handled with realism and tenderness, are set afoot on their own paths, alive and moving; his theme, the rising wind of transition pulling up roots before the rain of a new world, is never spoken and yet felt in every happening that occurs in the book.

ONLY ONE STORM, by Granville Hicks. \$2.75. *Macmillan*. "There's only been one storm that never cleared up — and that's this one" is the New England saying from which Mr. Hicks has taken his book's title. It is the story of John Q. Liberal, U.S.A., during the period described by Eugene Lyons as "The Red Decade." Mr. and Mrs. Liberal go through a lot of soul-searching and self-torture trying to decide whether or not to join the Communist Party. While they are on the brink, ready to jump, Stalin signs on the dotted line under the signature of Adolf Hitler. *Only One Storm* is Granville Hicks' apologia to America for ever having contemplated the thought. The Yankee Americans he writes about are warm and genuine, which is also the book's quality.]

GOOD COMRADES, by Felix Salten. \$2.50. *Bobbs-Merrill*. Romantic, sad, and gay stories of rabbits, ants, kittens, dogs, cows, bears, deer, falcons, pheasants and woodcocks. They are all most charmingly written, and occasionally a telling "moral" comes through. The translation by Paul R. Milton is very readable and the illustrations by Bob Kuhn are good.

HILLS BEYOND MANHATTAN, by Guido D'Agostino. \$2.50. *Doubleday, Doran*. A young French architect finally finds himself in accord with the spirit of America after becoming involved in a quarrel between his rich employer, who is starting a snooty hunting club, and the villagers, who refuse to work on the project because the land on which they have always hunted and fished will be taken away from them.

THE GAY SISTERS, by Stephen Longstreet. \$2.50. *Random House*. A story of a fortune, inherited by three sisters, which makes a pretty plum for lawyers to wrangle over, of shady doings in high places, and of the unpleasant facts lurking behind the dignified façades of Fifth Avenue houses. Crisply and ironically written.

THE BIG SNOW, by Jake Falstaff. \$2.00. *Houghton Mifflin*. The story of a boy, thirty years ago, and what befalls him during the big snow on his grandfather's farm. Charming nostalgia.

WOMEN MUST WEEP, by Ruth Adams Knight. \$2.50. *Hale, Cushman and Flint*. The tribulations of a small-town girl who can't find expression for her literary ability. She leaves her dull husband, makes good in the big city and — you're right — finally gives up her career for true love. Fair entertainment.

FULL CRASH DIVE, by Allan R. Bosworth. \$2.00. *Duell, Sloan & Pearce*. The story of a submarine disaster and of murder on land and sea. The excitement and the unusual background make this one a real thriller.

MURDER OF A SUICIDE, by E. X. Ferars. \$2.00. *Doubleday, Doran*. Edgar Prees, curator of the Asslington Botanical Gardens, is found shot at close range with his own revolver. He had attempted suicide the night before. An eccentric crime author and a reformed crook play the rôle of amateur detectives, while Inspector Tingey is at his professional best.