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undeveloped, decayed-in-the-bud kind of a bourgeoisie.

The immense verve, spirit, and resourcefulness of the Chinese people, winning through, at great cost, against such obstacles comes out magnificently in Snow's book. It is there in the whole; and it glows in the detail.

It is a pity, therefore, to have to report that Snow permits himself some asides on matters far away from China that fall very far aside. To speak of one of them: Snow has some misinformed comments about American Communists that indicate a naivete, unbecoming a journalist, which takes at its dirty face value the anti-Communist press.

Among other things he criticizes the American Communists for running a Negro candidate for Vice-President. The Russians, he remarks, would not run one of their Eskimos for high office. The answer is that they would. It is as possible for an Eskimo to be among the Soviet leaders as for a Georgian, a Ukrainian, an Armenian, a Finn, or a Jew, to name a few of the representatives of formerly oppressed nationalities who are now in Soviet leadership. And the answer is also that the Negroes, with a 15,000,000 population and an identification with American life since the foundation of our country as an independent nation, are very different from the several thousand Eskimos who have only, in the last few years, been brought into functioning contact with Soviet life. I think a brief study of the situation in America will persuade Snow that the Communist course is sensible, just, and necessary.

It is unfortunate that even in this small and parenthetical fashion he should contribute to the current anti-Communist hue and cry of the reactionaries. To the extent that he adds anything to it, he adds a mite to the difficulties of the Chinese Communists as well. They have, to a great extent, escaped the smearing that other Communist groups have experienced; but they are coming in for it. Chungking propagandists and Japanese propagandists here will not fail to make use of it. When he reads the April issue of *Asia*, Snow will get a personal foretaste of it. For the editors felt it necessary to balance the clear, good article he wrote for them with a jet of Freda Uteley's frothing-at-the-mouth entitled "Will Russia Betray China?" and dedicated to discrediting the Chinese Communists as inevitable co-betrayers.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

## Spiritualism

THE UNOBSTRUCTED UNIVERSE, by Stewart Edward White. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$2.50.

MR. WHITE, known for more than a generation as a novelist of the great open spaces, shifts in this book from sentimental stories of the campfire to rather less likely tales of life after death and the fun that spirits have roaming the uncharted expanses of the cosmos, unhandicapped by the presence of the natural body. It is a wild and woolly book that makes the yarns told by

cowboys to dude ranchers sound tame and factual in comparison.

Mr. White receives his reports of the beyond from the immortal soul of his dead wife, Betty, who communicates her impressions through a friendly medium. The resulting picture is a familiar one to those acquainted with spiritualist literature over the past twenty-five years or so. The basic philosophy of the spiritualists is simply a variation of metaphysical idealism and rests on the proposition that everything in the universe is in the last analysis composed of mind or consciousness. All the different forms of consciousness, from a lowly piece of mud to the body of a human being, assume their particular manifestations according to their differing rates of frequency vibration.

Says the dead Mrs. White to her rapt listeners: "The only reason you cannot exist and operate in the *entire* universe, as I do—for I operate in your universe as well as mine—is because you are not able to step up your frequency." In other words, when we shuffle off this mortal coil, so hampering to a free soul, we immediately start operating with an other-worldly body of such a speedy frequency that it can easily pass through all those gross forms of matter—such as wooden doors, concrete walls, and plate-glass windows—that sometimes get in our way. Thus at death we become the fortunate inhabitants of an altogether "unobstructed universe."

It is not difficult for a medium to give expression to a quite generalized world view that combines philosophical idealism with some of the patter of modern physics. But when the details of the after-existence are asked for, then real trouble begins and the less said the better. On these concrete details Mrs. White is pretty vague, and coyly passes off embarrassing questions by remarking, "Now you're trying to get me to be Oliver-Lodgish again!"

As spiritualist books go, *The Unobstructed Universe* is undoubtedly one of the better ones. But its main importance lies in the fact that it appeared at this catastrophic juncture in human affairs when so many people in every country are looking for an easy escape from intolerable actuality and when the death tolls from war make the promise of a beautiful immortality especially relevant. The publishers evidently understand the situation, since the book has received almost unprecedented promotion for one of its kind, including full-page advertisements in the book review sections of the *Sunday Times* and *Tribune*.

Just as during the last war there was a noticeable recrudescence of spiritualism and other species of religion, so we must expect a similar phenomenon during the present conflict. But this time, due to the influence of Marxism in general and of socialist humanism in the Soviet Union, I believe that the drift to compensatory supernaturalism is going to be both more limited and more temporary than before.

CORLISS LAMONT.

April 1, 1941 NM

## Fascist Dissidents

THE REDEMPTION OF DEMOCRACY, by Hermann Rauschning. Alliance Book Corp. \$3.

HITLER AND I, by Otto Strasser. Houghton Mifflin & Co. \$2.50.

A VERY large part of Herr Rauschning's book is taken up with a repetition of the essential ideas in his previous *The Revolution of Nihilism*, but they are watered down and spread thin. The promise of the title is simply not kept. "We shall have to learn and accept a little of everything," is the nearest he gets to a positive program. In this respect, the book is an admission of defeat, of emptiness, of Rauschning's own nihilism. And there is a good reason for it. Like Hitler, whom he once followed as Nazi president of the Danzig Senate, Rauschning hates and despises the masses, "the fluctuating, unstable, rootless masses," and he piles on them all the blame for the present crisis. On this basis, the French Revolution is just as alien to him, as he finds the Russian Revolution. The result is complete pessimism. The British edition is called *The Beast from the Abyss* and it is much closer to Rauschning's state of mind. The American publisher apparently used the title of one chapter as the title for the book, but there is nothing in the chapter or in any other part of the book to fulfill it. All we learn is that "we must hope that every useful part of the socialist, corporative or liberal adjuncts will be included in a basically individualistic and liberal structure." But Rauschning confesses that he does not know how much of each is desirable or possible and falls back a "little of everything." He gives the uncomfortable impression of a blind man mumping to himself among the ruins of his own house.

Strasser's book is another in the long list of volumes on Hitler and Hitlerism which make a mystery of both. Gregor Strasser, Otto's far abler brother, was one of Hitler's first followers and the leader of the so-called left wing of the Nazi movement who died in the purge of 1934. The chances are that Otto would never have been noticed without this family connection. He joined the Nazi party in 1925 and stayed for five years. In 1930 he formed the "Black Front" as a sort of internal opposition. From his book one would gather that his chief grievance was Hitler's, rather than his own, preeminence in the party. At the first meeting with Hitler in 1920, Otto Strasser took a violent dislike to him and made him furious by disagreeing with him on everything they happened to talk about. From his account of subsequent conversations, they never seem to have had the slightest thing in common. This extraordinary consistency of behavior toward Hitler by a man who was in and around the Nazi movement for so long should make the whole book suspect. The true things in it are well-known and the little intimacies are at best doubtful and unreliable.

THEODORE DRAPER.

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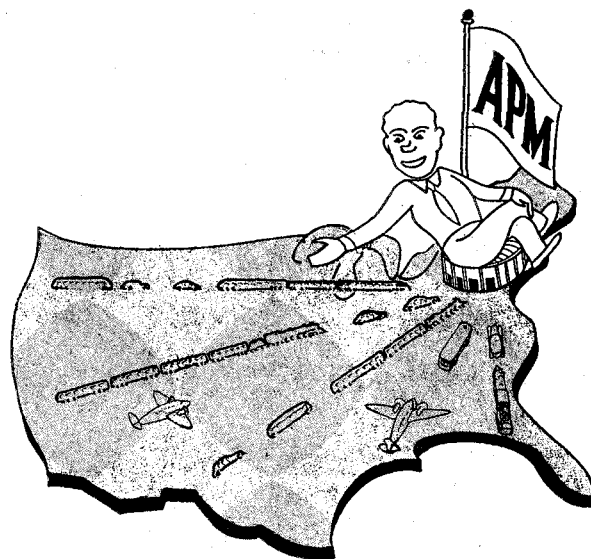
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