

We must master the truth that the cultural front has an equally serious problem of integration.

Our progress is slow, but is it sure? Bosley Crowther, the *New York Times* film critic, raises this question with regard to Hollywood:

"The fact that motion pictures are a most effective medium for stimulating the public as well as entertaining it has had very practical recognition in other countries engaged in this war. We have been slow getting hep to it over here. In the way of entertainment pictures, Hollywood has been turning out its accustomed share, with an occasional spread-eagle venture to prove that it knows a war is going on. But the production of films to inform the people about our war efforts and to inspire us with confidence has been woefully neglected."

One may legitimately raise the same question with regard to Broadway, the large-circulation magazines, and the radio.

The idea of escapism, of "pure" entertainment, which still so largely prevails, is based on a number of fallacies. The "psychiatric" argument is of course fantastic. It is elementary knowledge that people are not strengthened by running away from problems. On the contrary, an informed and dramatic projection of life, given artistic control and intelligence, integrates human personality. It is fallacious, moreover, to think of the American people as softies who can't take it, weaklings to be coddled, neurotics to be distracted. This is not only fallacious, it is arrogant and slanderous. And, most serious error of all, it is fallacious to assume that the truth about this war must be hidden or charmed away. The truth will make us not only free but strong.

A film like *The Girl from Leningrad*, for example, makes one realize both the responsibilities and resources of art in this period. The Soviet film is the artistic counterpart of the military struggle. It is a weapon in that struggle. One leaves the theater not overburdened with new woes, but refreshed, inspired, confident. In celebrating the deeds of the Red Army, one must not overlook the cultural work which at once reflects and stimulates these deeds. Serge Prokofieff composes the opera "War and Peace" based on Tolstoy's novel. Shostakovich creates a "Leningrad Symphony." Derzhinsky completes the patriotic opera "Blood of the People." To such men the notion of escapism is unthinkable. At a recent conference of Soviet writers, the novelist Ilya Ehrenbourg declared: "Much has been said here about how war has affected the work of this or that writer. To me it seems much more important to establish what influence the writer's work has on the soldiers. Time was when we met here to discuss literary trends and movements. What literary movement predominates today? There is only one movement—to the West!"

To the West! There, in a phrase, is the sense of urgency, of purpose, of realism that the times require. This is the spirit that must infuse us not only at the front and not only in the factory. It must also live in our books, our songs, our films. SAMUEL SILLEN.

LAST LOOK AT JAPAN

THE SETTING SUN OF JAPAN, by Carl Randau and Leane Zugsmith. Random House. \$3.

CARL RANDAU and Leane Zugsmith had the rare good fortune to travel through the western Pacific in the seven months or so before Pearl Harbor. They had a sort of "last look" at the islands and shores where almost half the human race lives, a world now changing rapidly, and one that is bound to be profoundly altered by the time Americans again have a chance to travel as these reporters did.

They covered a wide arc, from Japan, through Shanghai, a stop across the China Sea to Manila, then over to Saigon, Indo-China, just as Japanese troops were pouring in; a week or so at Singapore, and the "up-country" plantations of Malaya, then some fast travel across Java, Australia, and New Zealand. Home again via Hawaii, where in late October it seemed "stupid and unthinkable" to American officers that Japan would ever attack.

The latter part of the trip was hurried, and that is where the book wearies. Singapore was clearly a hostage to the nineteenth century; it seemed inconceivable that it would fall in a week's battle, and yet it was obvious that the native population would not fight for the kind of deal they had gotten from their masters.

Java was different, not basically perhaps, but different enough to encourage the feeling that it would fight hard. Arsenals were going at Surabaya and the lovely mountain city of Bandoeeng; you get a glimpse of the rising generation of Indonesians in the figure of Senen, a houseboy in a Dutch home, who was one among the six percent of the population that can read.

One of the best of the lesser parts of the book deals with Indo-China. You never quite realize how the capitulation of Vichy facilitated and accelerated Japan's aggression until you see what it meant in a port like Saigon. And the unconquered spirit of the Free French is expressed in the way one customs official pointed to the short Japanese troops, and remarked with characteristic Gallic incisiveness: "*Les enfants de Petain.*"

Shanghai was a nightmare, where 200 dead bodies of starved beggars, often children, were swept up in the International Settlement every day; Nanking, the capital of Wang's thug state, was a desolation, a mockery to the great white-stoned tomb of Sun Yat-sen.

The keenest, and in most ways the best, part of the book deals with Japan. That country is revealed as a nation under terrible strain. It is a land where young girls work from six in the morning until nightfall for eighteen cents a day in the nine months of the season, a shabby, "mousey-gray" country whose paper and wood slums contrast with both the splendor of the wealthy mansions and the lovely landscape.

Mr. Randau and Miss Zugsmith found the secret police everywhere; the one who eyed

them most they insisted must have been a member of the Japanese branch of the Jukes family. In the Imperial Hotel Nazi delegations swaggered, their fat wives looking like "un-retouched portraits of Queen Victoria." The authors met all sorts of people: the feminist Madame Ishimoto, whose interest in birth control the secret police banned; a man that had been connected with the Little Theater movement which the police smashed because plays have ideas, and "once you have ideas, they are likely to be subversive."

One of the really exciting passages is a conversation with a mechanic who had been a member of the now illegal Proletarian Party. He did not think there were chances of revolt just yet, not "tomorrow morning," but he kept faith.

For all the heavy toll of taxes and disease, the threadbare Japanese ersatz, known as *sufu*, for all the regimentation and emperor worship, you come away from the chapters on Japan convinced that while revolt is difficult, and the empire is strong and will make headway, underneath it all is the deep skepticism of a brave people. When they act, it is likely to be explosive and sudden, like some of the volcanoes that are still smoking in the northern islands of Japan.

This is a book to be read. It is written in a conversational, anecdotal fashion, witty, often penetrating. The authors have managed to combine the ace reporter's passion for fact with the novelist's interest in human character and situation. It is not severely statistical, and does not pretend to broad historical generalization. But it does give one a sense of the issues and forces and people of the Orient on the eve of their great crisis.

JOSEPH STAROBIN.

Dual Personality

HANGOVER SQUARE, by Patrick Hamilton. Random House. \$2.50.

"HANGOVER SQUARE" ends with a newspaper headline SLAYS TWO, FOUND GASED, THINKS OF CAT. And in a way the novel is an expansion of a news story: the first reaction is, well, it's the exploration of a small news item. A man, suffering from schizophrenia kills a woman and man who have brutally mistreated him. So what?

But it isn't as simple as this. The story is told with great skill, with conscious control of effects. It's a kind of inverted "Mario and the Magician." The hero, George, a big lumbering "fool" of a man with a gentle, misunderstood charm, is put up against a group of fascist-minded hangers-on of the English middle class. They torture him consistently and thoroughly, exploiting the hold they have over him—his love for the cast-off actress Netta. Finally, at the moment of his greatest humiliation, he finds that it is he

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who has triumphed—some new friends he has made back him and not the group. At that moment, in an effect of irony, his other personality takes charge and he goes through with the long-planned double murder.

What does it mean? I believe Mr. Hamilton started with an idea for strong narrative suspense—a man has two personalities and one of them is planning a murder. The murder is constantly delayed by the resumption of his normal personality (once rather obviously at the very moment of murder). In the process of developing the idea, Mr. Hamilton gave the victims a brutal fascist cast (actually somewhat mechanical), and to that extent helped justify his story. But at the same time he weakened it, because then the story had to stand the test of being representative—which it isn't, since anti-fascism is not abnormal and unconscious. And George himself afterward sees no way out and commits suicide. The real anti-fascist is no such weak and compelled individual.

Perhaps there is no point in demanding that such a story be representative: it's frankly a freak of life. But in its obscure and distorted way it is human and powerful, and follows the shape of the time.

MILLEN BRAND.

The Cheyenne Struggle

THE LAST FRONTIER, by Howard Fast. Duell, Sloan, & Pearce. \$2.50.

IN *The Last Frontier* Howard Fast has reconstructed another stirring episode in American history from government reports, old newspaper files, and George Bird Grinnell's anthropological monographs on the Cheyenne Indians. The result is a strong tale of a besieged minority who bled its way to freedom.

This is a story of American people in 1878: of hard-hitting frontier editors who went to bat for Indian minorities, of Quaker missionaries who followed the "call" to Indian territory, of Indian agents and of the men of the United States army of occupation on Indian reservations. The core of the story, however, is the struggle of two or three hundred Cheyenne men, women, and children who fought against overwhelming odds in order to return home to a land which they had always believed was theirs.

Prior to 1878 these Cheyenne had the freedom of the plains and regarded this freedom as a necessary asset for survival. Following 1878 they were shunted off their land by land-hungry pioneers, by the railroad companies, by the army and by those who had vested interests in the northern plains. They were herded onto Indian territory, now known as Oklahoma, "a hot, sun-baked, dusty stretch of dry earth, dry rivers, yellow grass, and blackjack pine . . ." with no buffalo to hunt and few coulees to camp in. They found themselves on an "island in a continent" encircled by soldiers, many of whom believed that Indians were good only when their

corpses covered the ground. There was no decent life to be had on this barren reservation surrounded by army men, and the Indians were determined to escape to their home in the Black Hills.

The story of the 1,000-mile flight of the Cheyenne people across the frozen plains from Oklahoma to Dakota in the face of bloody attacks is told here for the first time. It becomes an illuminating and timely incident in 1941. An entire nation had regarded these Cheyenne as simple-minded savages who were unable to have "ideas of freedom and liberty similar to that of most white men" and their escape from the Indian reservation was put down to "primitive stubbornness and race suicide"! But we see that the "primitive mentality" and perversity of the Cheyenne consisted in the same human love of liberty which animates all peoples combating oppression.

The more subjective aspects of the chase are described with great mastery. Around Captain Murray, head of the first company sent against the band, Fast centers the bitterness and confusion which beset all the soldiers who kill desperately without any will to do so. Leader and soldiers become mentally ill: "The telegraph operator felt his stomach sicken, his mouth go dry and bitter. One of the grocery clerks began to vomit as he struggled with his rearing horse. . . ." The description of the tortures that beset these soldiers parallels a great truth: that those who deprive others of their freedom are themselves degraded. Or, as Reporter Jackson, sent to cover the Cheyenne affair, says when he speaks of it, "It's not the dead Indians, we've had all that before. But those guns at Fort Robinson, they weren't only pointed at the Indians, they were pointed at you and at me."

This is one of the few novels about American Indians in which the whites' acts against Indian minorities have not been romanticized or rationalized. Those people interested in the history of "two straddling cultures," as anthropologists are likely to phrase it, will enjoy this book. It is excellent narrative, sympathetically treated from the native point of view. And for those who are more definitely oriented towards the contemporary fight for freedom, this is a tale of social conflict and ultimate victory for a freedom-loving people.

CONSTANCE HYATT.

The Delta

THE GREAT BIG DOORSTEP, by E. P. O'Donnell. Houghton Mifflin. \$2.50.

THE promise and talent E. P. O'Donnell revealed in *Green Margins*, the first of the Literary Fellowships by Houghton Mifflin, has matured in his latest novel, a comedy of the "poor white" descendants of the Acadians now living in the Mississippi Delta region. It is a strange, hot, swampy, and florid region, little known in American fiction and unfamiliar to the average American. Its natives speak a southern dialect interlarded with cor-