

sample of the last two I cite particularly Mr. Hill's chapter on Japanese politics). Mr. Hill also somewhat inclined to think that "little yellow fiends" are to blame for the war.

But if you still need a reminder that the axis is the Axis anywhere and that this war is a serious business in any part of the globe, *Exchange Ship* is more urgently moving than most "studies" of the Far East.

SALLY ALFORD.

Strange History

UP TIDE OF AGGRESSION, by Lillian T. Mowrer. Morrow. \$2.50.

THE author of *Journalist's Wife* has written what she intends as a primer tracing the pattern of fascist aggression. She sincerely hopes her book will help arouse what Mr. Roosevelt called "the massed angered forces of common humanity." Her account, however, is badly off balance and is thus cheated of its best punching power.

Mrs. Mowrer begins by telling us that fascism sprang out of the postwar confusion of the little man, unreasoning, rebellious, instinctively seeking the past. For her, fascism is a technique thousands of years old—used by Lenin for revolution and by Hitler for counter-revolution! As a result of this astonishing confusion, there is no true understanding of the development of fascist forces, or why they were appeased and encouraged in their aggressions.

The author's misconception explains her failure to understand that France was betrayed by its own fascists. The French soldiers, she says, were simply outfought and outthought by the Nazis. And finally her error leads her to exclude practically all mention of the Soviet Union's fight to achieve a united front against the aggressors. Except for the detail of Soviet material assistance to loyalist Spain, there is nowhere in the book an indication of the Soviet's plea for genuine disarmament, of its unfaltering attempt to rally the conscience of the democratic peoples for collective security, of its almost isolated fight in the League of Nations for China, for Ethiopia, for Spain. There is no word of Russia's promise to defend with arms the life of Czechoslovakia, reiterated even in the moment before Hitler marched. And in the earlier period of the war Mrs. Mowrer finds it possible to omit all mention of Russia's continued resistance to Nazi design: Russia's advance that halted the Nazi blitz in Poland, its liquidation of the threat of Finland as a Nazi *base d'armes*, its protection of the Baltic states, its encouragement of Balkan resistance to fascist demands—and finally, its position on the east flank of Hitler, a position which the Fuehrer himself declared was making it impossible to invade England. Mrs. Mowrer's explanation for the attack on Russia is a howler: the Nazis struck at one-sixth of the world in order to create a pincer around Suez!

HARRY TAYLOR.

Put it in your date-book

Sunday, February 28th, 2 P.M.

THE NEW MASSES 4TH ANNUAL

ART AUCTION

ACA GALLERY

26 WEST 8TH ST.

America's foremost artists will be represented in oils, gouaches, etchings, silk screens, water colors, drawings, and other media, thus making it possible to buy the finest artwork in the country at a price commensurate with your budget.

Exhibition Friday and Saturday,

Feb. 26th & 27th

well-known figures in the art and theatre world will serve as auctioneers

COMMITTEE FOR THE AUCTION

DAVID BURLIUK
NIKOLI CIKOFKY
PHILIP EVERGOOD
WILLIAM GROPPER
CHAIM GROSS
MINNA HARKAVY

ROCKWELL KENT
LOUIS LOZOWICK
ANTON REFREGIER
RAPHAEL SOYER
HOWARD WILLARD
ART YOUNG

Admission 35c

"ART FOR EVERY POCKETBOOK"



SIGHTS and SOUNDS

COUNTERATTACK

Dorothy Brewster reviews the new Broadway drama of Russian resistance. Plenty of action, shooting suspense—but some good talk too. A "melodrama" with subtleties and historical truth.

"COUNTERATTACK" comes to fill the gap left by the closing of the Theater Guild production *The Russian People*. Thus we have the second major attempt to adapt to Broadway audiences a Soviet play dealing with the present conflict. Comparisons are in order, especially on those points that may promise greater success for the new play by Janet and Philip Stevenson (based on a Russian drama by Ilya Vershinin and Mikhail Ruderman). Seats are said in the newspapers to be on sale eight weeks in advance—an encouraging sign. "Melodrama" is the word the advertisements are playing up, suggesting action and not talk, and of course it is talk that American audiences always fear to face in a Russian production.

The Russian People had a good many scene shifts and plot complications. But *Counterattack*, as a gentleman behind me said, is just as simple as cops and robbers, with plenty of shooting. It has the concentration secured by adherence to the three unities of time, place, and action. It all happens within about thirty-six hours: a late afternoon and two following dawns, in the cellar of a house on the Eastern Front in the autumn of 1942. It might be Stalingrad. Most of the time, exit from the cellar is completely blocked by the wreckage of the building sitting on top of it, and complete collapse is threatened whenever tanks rumble overhead or bombing planes drop their load. These threats make it what *PM* called the dirtiest play on Broadway—literally—because the dust is always drifting down on the actors. Trapped in the cellar are a dozen Nazis, including a nurse who by some accident was caught in the front line, and two Red Army men who had captured the Nazis, just before the retreat into the cellar to escape the bombs.

THE action develops out of the struggles implicit in this situation. First, the struggle for survival of the whole group till rescue, either by Nazis or Russians. How can they survive lack of food and water (there is a little at first), and air, and can they perhaps dig their way out? Then there is the struggle between the Nazis and the Russians. The Red Army men—one a young collective farm lad and the other an older man, a miner—have the guns and revolvers and hand grenades, and the lights—a candle, a lantern, and a flashlight. And the Nazis are always alert to the possibility of putting out lights

or seizing a gun. That is the physical aspect of the struggle. A struggle of wits grows out of the fact that all the Nazis but one (a sergeant) wear the uniforms of privates; but there is good reason to suspect that one of them is an officer, and it is of the utmost importance for the Russians to find out which one and turn him over, intact, to the commanding Soviet officer, if and when they are rescued. This gives an excellent reason for being careful of the lives of all the Nazis, even when it is almost humanly impossible to keep from shooting some of them in sheer disgust.

A THIRD element of conflict is within the Nazi group itself. One lad—a recent transfer not known to the others—shows that he could rather easily be won over; he is not only afraid, but he is unduly appreciative of the decent treatment, like sharing the water supply, which the Russian code toward prisoners of war exacts. So he is marked for elimination by the disguised officer, and on the first dawn, is found strangled. The nurse and the oldest of the Nazis, an ex-miner and old trade unionist, become in their different ways increasingly disposed to cooperate with

their captors. The nurse, poor girl, is always having to resist the violent advances of the biggest roughneck among the Nazis; and she isn't very happy about the strangling. When the younger Russian is knocked on the head during one of the moments of brief Nazi triumph when the lights are put out, the nurse consents to bandage him up, and the nearest approach to love interest gets underway—but only a very little way, rather maternal.

A final element of conflict in the Nazi group is revealed when it appears that one of them is a Gestapo man, set to watch the disguised officer. Open antagonism breaks out after the officer has been forced to declare himself. So when you really examine the elements of struggle, it isn't after all just cops-and-robbers pattern.

The two Russians are simple types, chiefly individualized by difference in experience: the older much clearer in his thinking and much more adroit in his handling of the situation. There is more subtle shading in the characterization of the Nazis. And I can say this with confidence because a German friend, an exile, saw the play with me, and was impressed by this shading and the truth to the



A Red Army sniper sights the enemy. From "The Siege of Leningrad," reviewed on the opposite page.