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Books from the Loyalist Front

VOLUNTEER IN SPAIN. By John Sommerfield. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1937. \$1.50.

FROM SPANISH TRENCHES, Letters collected and edited by Marcel Acier. New York: Modern Age Books, Inc. 1937. Paper, 35c.; cloth, 85c.

Reviewed by CHARLES A. THOMSON

THE first of these books is by a volunteer, not a "volunteer." It comes not from the regimented thousands dispatched by Italian or German dictators to fight for Franco. The author is an English communist, just under thirty, who views the fight of the Spanish Loyalists as one phase of the international struggle against fascism. He enlisted at Paris, and after a few weeks training behind the lines, reached Madrid with the International Column, "a last, desperate hope" launched against the advancing rebels during those critical days of early November, 1936. He was in the fighting at University City and Casa del Campo, which stopped Franco at the gates of the capital.

His pages bring the Spanish war close-up. It is seen from the angle of the man in the ranks—through eyes which are unusually keen and discerning. There are glimpses of the impatience of the recruit for the front, the exasperation and heartbreaks over inadequate equipment, the unutterable fatigue from long marches and back-bending loads, nights on the hills with rain coming down "cold, thin and intensely wet," the anonymity enforced on the common soldier and the "fine state of automatic apathy" to which he must school himself, the impersonal killing of the enemy, and the bitterly personal loss of one's comrades. Full light is thrown on the crude vileness of war. But the soldier is carried along by the driving endurance of his fellows in the International Column, and by the vitality and matter-of-fact heroism of the Spanish people. There is also the support of his personal credo—the faith which had overcome former hatred of war—that in the Spanish struggle there is something worth fighting for, and it is "something real."

For some the greatest interest of the book will lie rather in what it reveals about John Sommerfield than in what it tells of the Spanish conflict; how a sensitive and realistic mind comes through a bout with the bruising facts of modern war. Here is one of the very few books yet from Spain which are worth while in their own right. It stands far above the run of current war journalism. Much of its prose is so finely and honestly tempered as to have the stripped beauty of truth.

"From Spanish Trenches" contains a collection of letters and diary material, written by foreigners with the Loyalists' troops—Germans, Russians, Dutchmen, a Cuban, as well as Englishmen, Irishmen, and Americans. Most of the letters—particularly those by Americans—present little of lasting significance. Perhaps the

most valuable contributions are by Jef Last, a Dutch novelist, and Pablo de la Torriente Brau, a young Cuban journalist. No one has sketched a more vivid picture than Last does here, of the gallant, confused, and undisciplined Popular Militia as they were rolled back by the rebels in the fall of 1936.

Charles A. Thomson is a member of the staff of the Foreign Policy Association.

The Nazi Mind

I KNEW HITLER. By Kurt G. W. Ludecke. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1937. \$3.75.

Reviewed by SAMUEL NOCK

IN this book, it is a Nazi who speaks. Kurt Ludecke was one of Hitler's first enthusiastic followers; and, if one can believe him, one of the few who could tell Hitler where to get off.

One can't believe him, of course. Enthusiasm dictates his writing, enthusiasm narrates his anecdotes. On the other hand, one cannot help believing in the emotions aroused by that same enthusiasm.

Here frankly, proudly, are antisemitism, advocacy of violence, calumny of such men as Bruening and Stresemann, and adulation of such men as Rosenberg. Here is worship of the Fuehrer, though combined with a certain amount of disillusionment. Here, in short, is a revelation of how the Nazi mind works; and it is a most depressing picture. It is a disconcerting confirmation of the theory propounded in this magazine by Dr. C. G. Jung. It is unreason triumphant.

Even though the author was Hitler's prisoner, even though he had to flee from his Nazis, even though he lives in exile, he has acquired no reasonableness, no perspective, no sense. Like the lawyer to whom the defense was entrusted, he goes bellowing on to the last.

What will perhaps interest American readers is not the fury, but the episodes involving Henry Ford and the Sunday Evening Hour prophet, W. J. Cameron. In 1924 these men were, according to Herr Ludecke, greatly interested in Hitler. Cameron was, he hints, interested enough to think well of spending some of Ford's money; but Ford was too smart. He listened, but he did not contribute.

It is pleasing to read that the German-American societies, before whom Ludecke appeared to praise Hitler, practically gave him the bum's rush. The American monkey-suited Nazis are not going to destroy the Republic.

In a good Nazi style, this book is more than fifty per cent too long; it is full of all sorts of irrelevant nonsense and repetitious twaddle; it has verbal quantity, but not quality. Yet for any one who wants to know something about how Nazis operate in this country—and to laugh at their breath-taking ineptitude—and for any one who wants to look into a Nazi's mind, this piece of exhibitionism will be valuable. Herr Ludecke conceals nothing; and therefore his last-page wishful-thinking that Hitler may perhaps yet lead the world to salvation, makes the Scriptural dog seem a creature of elegant and fastidious taste.

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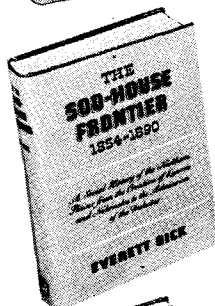
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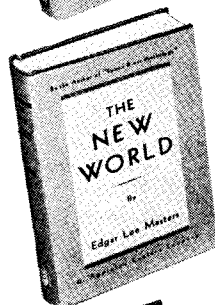
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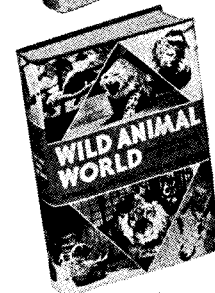
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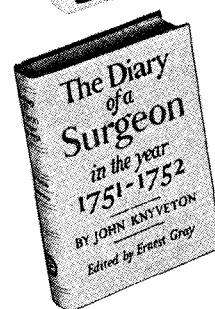
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Myth and Behavior

THE FOLKLORE OF CAPITALISM. By
Thurman W. Arnold. New Haven: Yale
University Press. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by GEORGE C. HOMANS

I WISH to put myself on record at once that "The Folklore of Capitalism" seems to me the most sensible and amusing book which I have had the good fortune to review for this journal.

Besides behaving in certain ways, men talk about their behavior:—what it is, as they see it, why it is what it is, why it ought to remain what it is. The social anthropologists have observed that in a primitive society these verbal statements are developed into elaborate mythologies. They never describe how people in fact do behave; nevertheless they help people to behave well. The reiteration of the mythologies and the repetition of the ceremonies which dramatize them strengthen those sentiments of the men and of the society which allow them to work and live together successfully and happily. Therefore the mythologies are important to the well-being of the society.

But in studying primitive society the social anthropologists have had a comparatively easy task. As Arnold puts it: "It is only the myths of other peoples and other times that we label as myths." The mythology of our own people and times has seldom been effectively studied, because there are few people who achieve sufficient detachment from the beliefs to which they were brought up. The Marxists made a great step when they began to talk about the ideology of capitalism, but they never pursued the subject far enough to reach a satisfactory theory. Pareto's "The Mind and Society" is the best general treatment of the relation between what men do and what they say about what they do. The interest of Arnold's book is that it takes up this subject in detail in the particular case of America at the present time. He describes the mythology, the folklore of the business world: the notion that the economic system is peopled by rugged individuals, which includes such individuals as the Steel Corporation, competing freely with other individuals, owning property and so forth. And he discusses the relation of this mythology to the actual behavior of men in business, law, and politics.

The social anthropologists have had an easy task in another way: they have studied the mythologies of societies which can be treated as unchanging. Arnold asks what happens in the rapidly changing society of the United States. The mythology of capitalism was an expression and justification of the sentiments of the businessmen who made the United States the wealthiest country in the world. Therefore it was useful to American society in the days of the great expansion. At the present time other needs are being expressed besides that of an increase in wealth, and these needs are being satisfied by increased action by the government. Such action is in violation of the mythology of capitalism and of the sentiments the mythology expresses. In these con-

ditions, those who believe the mythology, who feel the sentiments, are often inhibited from taking sensible and practical action in the immediate situation, but resort instead to the reassertion of the truth of the mythology and to the reperformance of its ceremonies. Politics becomes more than ever before a war of religion, which is of all wars the most violent.

Arnold believes that the nation would be better off if more men studied the mythology of capitalism and its functions as an anthropologist studies the mythology of a primitive tribe. He may or may not be correct in this judgment of utility as in other such judgments he expresses. It is dangerous to destroy the religious faith of a people in its myths. On the other hand, it can seldom be done, except in the case of a few men at the top of society. But aside from his judgments about how it would be well for men to behave, Arnold's description of how they do in fact behave is most instructive. He has an emotional bias, as all of us have, but there are few books in which emotional thinking can be more easily separated from statements of observed fact than in his. That is all a reader can ask. In most books published today the two are inextricably intermingled.

Food on the Farm

HOME GROWN. By Della T. Lutes. Boston: Little, Brown. 1937. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ISABEL R. A. CURRIER

NO one has written as enticingly of food as Della T. Lutes has, first in "The Country Kitchen," now in "Home Grown." Even Charles Lamb does not share her laurels, for Mrs. Lutes is not content with one "Dissertation on Roast Pig." She does not dissert. She passes on the immortal in American farm cookery—from spareribs to strawberry shortcake—and in her hands it becomes literature. Her cunning blends gastronomic nobility into tales of Michigan farm life, fifty years ago, and the result ranks with the best of American pastoral prose.

"Home Grown" is divided into twelve chapters, each presenting an anecdote of the author's early life. Each one is as choice in seasoning as the food spread lavishly (with recipes for the cook) throughout the background of the anecdotes. There is humor as pungent as sage; sentiment as compelling as Mis' Thompson's apple pie; wholesomeness to match the Saturday supper of beans and riz biscuits; a nostalgia as tugging as Lije Thompson's anticipation of the tantalizing dishes coming to glory in the old kitchen oven.

Lije (Father) is the central character, with appreciative appetite, homely wit, kindly dignity, and rustic sanity to give the air to a pastorate. Surrounding him, the voices of other old-fashioned characters make the harmony.

There are few readers whose memories or imaginations would not be stirred by this book. It has the universal quality of those tales of childhood which are spun, in thoughtful mood, around the fire of a Thanksgiving evening.