

A Liberal View of the Nazis

THE THIRD REICH. By Henri Lichtenberger. New York: The Greystone Press. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by RAYMOND J. SONTAG

ONE depressing effect of Nazi intolerance has been its capacity to generate intolerance among liberals. It is a relief, therefore, to be able to say that liberal scholarship has at last been vindicated by the production of a temperate, judicious analysis of the Third Reich. "It is hard for me to believe," M. Lichtenberger confesses, "that Germany has suddenly become a land of barbarians. I feel, as do a great many of those who have had the occasion to observe the situation at close range, that the 'eternal' Germany still lives under the brown shirt of Hitlerism as it did under the tinsel of the era of Wilhelm." With that conviction steadily in mind he examines the record of the last four years. He finds much to praise.

In 1932 the German people were sick with worry and discouragement; in 1937 they are full of confidence. In 1932 unemployment had reached staggering proportions, while industry and agriculture were paralyzed; in 1937 unemployment has practically vanished, while industry and agriculture are working to capacity. In 1932 Germany was bound by the Treaty of Versailles; in 1937 the treaty is dead, and Germany has an army which commands fear and respect. If German finance is shaky today, it was shaky when the Nazis took power, and in the interval an army has been created. Many Germans are hungry, but that is not new, and the people are being trained to Spartan endurance. Outside Germany, many doubt if Spartan discipline is really effective. "I

do not pretend to have an answer to these doubts. I can only confine myself to saying that the stranger who returns from Germany, after seeing the meetings of the youth, visiting the labor camps or attending the grand public demonstrations such as the party congresses at Nuremberg, carries away the strong impression that German life has been vitalized." As a Frenchman, M. Lichtenberger is not blind to the danger which these changes hold for his country. "The balance of power has definitely broken to our disadvantage. This, too, in face of a nation which has always worshipped the cult of might and which had nothing but scorn for the weak." But Germans cannot be expected to regret the altered balance of power.

Race, in his opinion, is the secret of the changes in Germany. Fanatical devotion to the cult of race not only explains the credit side of the ledger, but also the debit. Coolly, without a trace of passion, he analyzes the Jewish and religious problem as the Nazis see these problems. Only at the close does he state his own verdict: the racial theories are not new or difficult to understand, but the calculated violence with which they are applied is difficult for Frenchmen to understand.

They feel unresponsive to a country which submits in silence, without protest, and without revolt, to the treatment which the Nazis inflict upon their vanquished enemies, and they gaze with astonishment and hardly with sympathy upon the blustering clamor with which the victors celebrate their triumph.

What of the future? M. Lichtenberger thinks the Nazis are fully conscious of the hazards which war entails; peace depends largely on the moderation and steadiness of other countries and partic-

ularly France. He thinks economic collapse unlikely in the near future. The religious issue is bound to create a dangerous ferment; Christianity and the cult of race cannot find a basis for compromise. But far more important is the old feud of capital and labor. National Socialism is a strange combination of revolutionary radicalism and social conservatism which temporarily has captivated almost the whole nation. So far Hitler has been able to hold the balance between the two elements, but it is a balance which cannot last. In the end he must move to right or left, and then racial solidarity will lose its power to make all Germans members of a harmonious family.

No two students would agree on either the present or the future of Germany. M. Lichtenberger's modesty disarms criticism, and his judgment compels admiration. Admirable also are Mr. Pinson's translation, notes, and appendices of documents.

Raymond J. Sontag is professor of history at Princeton.

Flower of Indignation

EARTHLY DISCOURSE. By Charles Erskine Scott Wood. New York: The Vanguard Press. 1937. \$2.

Reviewed by LEONARD BACON

COLONEL Charles Erskine Scott Wood is one of the good Americans. They are not so numerous that we can afford to undervalue them, and God forbid that this reviewer should do so.

Colonel Wood never did a mean thing in his life. And he has been consistently on the side of the angels ever since he began writing more than half a century ago. He hates and loves as he ought and he speaks up loud and clear. Why then in spite of vigor and sincerity should his book seem academic and remote from bitter actualities? It is hard to render a reason. But I suppose that the ineffectiveness of most liberal writing is due to an unspoken assumption that we are all very nice people who would make a beautiful world, were it not for Hearst and Hitler and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mussolini and opponents of birth-control and the American Legion. One attacks such individuals and groups. One displays their inconsistency, their dishonesty, their cruelty. And in what respect is the situation altered? The wicked remain as they were. And the liberal sits looking slightly foolish as the petals drop from his fine flower of indignation.

This I think is the defect of Colonel Wood's book. There is spirit and verve in it, and one admires the vital nature of the author, however unconvinced by his argument one may be. But one remembers the aphorism (William James's, I fancy) that there is nothing sadder than an idealistic voice crying vainly in a pragmatic wilderness.



"KAMERADSCHAFT"

United They Stand

THE ENGLISH COÖPERATIVES. By Sydney R. Elliott. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1937. \$3.

Reviewed by MARQUIS CHILDS

HERE is the story of coöperative big business told by a coöperator who is also a skilled journalist. This account of what is far and away the most important consumers' movement in the world today is absorbing throughout, particularly as it is unfolded against the background of Britain's present-day trend toward cartelization and all the devices of monopoly control.

Mr. Elliott gives a convincing picture of the coöperative movement as a St. George single-handed and alone resisting the encroachments of the great trusts and combines that dominate British trade. Cartelization has taken place so gradually in Great Britain that we are unaware in this country of the extent to which it has gone. It has not been a spectacular growth as in our own NRA when industry united with government to fix prices.

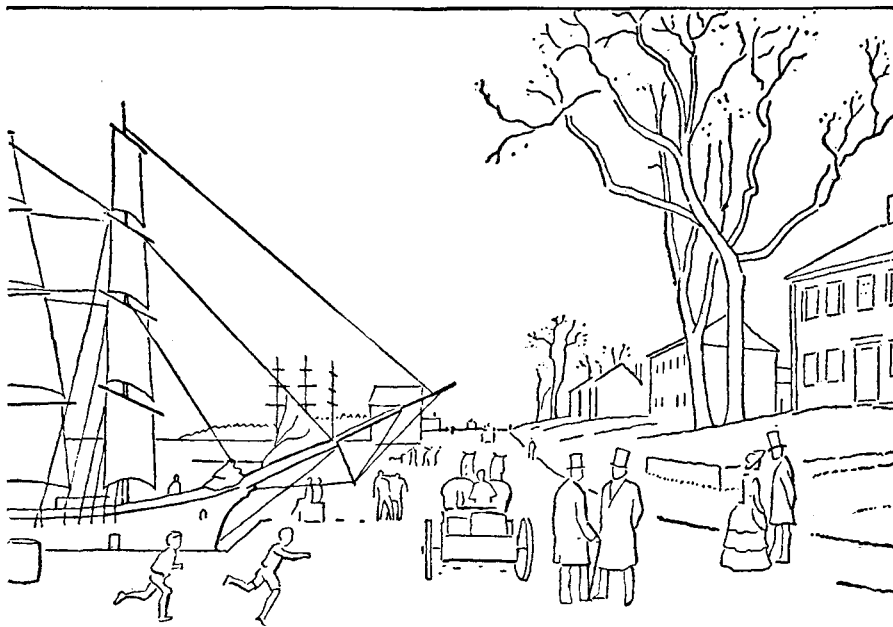
For that very reason perhaps it has been far more pervasive. And British experience, Mr. Elliott makes clear, confirms what we have learned in America during the past five years: that commissions, investigations, and laws are powerless to stop the growth of trusts. But the Coöperative Movement, with its 7,500,000 members, its thousands of retail stores, its great wholesale depots, factories, and warehouses, its banking and insurance departments, has had a considerable effect on the retail price level, lowering costs of a number of commodities.

Because the great trade combines succeeded in obtaining laws intended to tax away coöperative reserves, British co-operators have been forced to go into politics. There is a more or less loose alliance between the Coöperative Party and the Labor Party, and Mr. Elliott believes that the coöperative philosophy of production for use, quite apart from "visionary socialism," will have a larger influence upon labor in the future.

Certain hostile critics of the coöperative movement in this country have recently declared that coöperation is without the power, or even the incentive, to improve the quality of consumers' goods. Mr. Elliott shows that the coöperatives in Britain have consistently sought to raise the level of the products they sell under their own name. It seems highly unreasonable, not to say illogical, to expect them to have achieved perfection overnight.

He has watched the rise of a consumers' movement such as no one would have imagined possible forty years ago, and that is reason for a little hope.

Marquis Childs is author of "Sweden, the Middle Way," a study of the coöperative system.



DRAWING BY MAITLAND DE GOGORZA: From "Kennebec."

As the Kennebec Goes

KENNEBEC: CRADLE OF AMERICANS.

By Robert P. Tristram Coffin. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by KENNETH P. KEMPTON

HERE is a lusty braggart of a book. Superlative and hyperbole chase heels through its pages. Maine is the best state in the Union, the Kennebec valley is the best of Maine, so the author's farm on Merymeeting Bay is the finest in all Christendom. Maine winds are strongest, her trees were eighty-footers, her men the ruggedest and her women most prolific; and the snow is always six feet deep on the level. Ships built on the Kennebec went forth "to whiten all the world with their sails." Maine winters are cold enough to "freeze the whiskers [sic] off a brass monkey."

Now to those who know them, Maine and the Kennebec can stand superlatives. But others may be a trifle dashed by the unutterable loveliness of, say, Kennebec fog—that "long parade of beauty half a mile high." And the blue water described so temptingly may seem a little cold. The trouble with tall talk about Maine is that when you come to the sad ends of wooden ships and the ice and lumber trades, the anticlimax is terrific but there's nothing more to say. The only real lack in this book is restraint. An academic argument, perhaps? But if you are looking for characteristic Maine qualities, what about serenity and the trick of understatement? A good many people down there are "just mod'rate." A classic quality that the author forgot.

Once allowance is made for Mr. Coffin's exuberance, however, the book is good reading. It is informative without being dull, and almost unfailingly interesting

without being facetious or merely sensational. And a great deal of information is packed in here. The author begins with a bird's-eye view of the river itself and a man's sense of Kennebec weather. He goes back to the Stone Age and the Oyster Shell Age, then, and brings us up through the Abenakis, the first Europeans, the six Indian wars, Arnold's disastrous march, the *Enterprise* and *Boxer* fight in 1813, and on past heroic nineteenth-century commerce and industry to the quiet river of today. Shrewdly throughout he intersperses the dead past with the lively present in the person of Cap'n Cy Bibber, lobsterman, anatomist, and philosopher at large. He writes history so racy that it sounds like a story, and a new one at that. His language is pungent with the salt of Maine speech.

Many parts of the book are memorable. I like the picture of farm dogs and cattle painfully alert for Indians. On the subject of food Mr. Coffin is irresistible: Aaron Burr's feast of bear meat on Swan Island, a chapter called "Good Eating Begins in Maine," and a passage on native cookery from skates' fins to pie will make your mouth water. But I like best a chapter called "Folk on the Farm" that shows the amphibious nature of Maine-coast people. "You have to back an eelspear out through the mowing machine wheels before you can start haying. The bagged Baldwins in the shed are mixed in with the split and dried hake. . . . The cow's milk in September may taste of tar, because she's been grazing where the seine was spread out after going through the tar kettle." That gets them where they live, and no nonsense.

Kenneth P. Kempton is the author of "Old Man Greenlaw."