

Reports from China

INSIDE RED CHINA. By Nym Wales. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company. 1939. \$3.

THE DRAGON WAKES. By Edgar Ansel Mowrer. New York: William Morrow & Company. 1939. \$2.

Reviewed by T. A. Bisson

WHEN future historians of China come to the critical turning point marked by the year 1937, two events will claim the major share of their attention. The first will be the launching of the Japanese invasion; the second will be the passing of the Chinese Soviet Republic, and its merging in the Chinese "national united front." In historical retrospect, the second event may prove even more significant than the first. Today it already bids fair to be the crucial factor in condemning Japan's attempted conquest to failure; in the future, it may well lay a firm basis for creation of that democratic republic which Sun Yat-sen failed to establish.

Nym Wales takes up the thread of this story where her husband, Edgar Snow, left off, and carries it to its triumphant conclusion in September, 1937. In "Red Star over China," Edgar Snow described the origins of the "national united front" in Chinese communist policy during 1935-1936, the decisive impetus given by Marshal Chang's detention of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek at Sian in December, 1936, and the tentative approaches toward formal negotiations at the Kuomintang plenum in February, 1937. When Nym Wales reached Yen-an in May, the negotiations were already far advanced; before her departure in September, Chiang Kai-shek had appointed Chu Teh commander-in-chief of the Eighth Route Army—an integral unit of the Chinese national forces. The "united front" manifesto was published on September 22; two days later, the Eighth Army won its first notable victory at Pinghsiangkuan in the northern passes of Shansi.

For more than four months Nym Wales lived through this transitional epoch at Yen-an, in daily contact with the leaders and people of the dissolving Soviet Republic. Her experiences on the road, the melodramatic escape from the police at Sian, and the descriptions of life at Yen-an form the lighter touches in what is essentially a solid piece of historical interpretation. This study must henceforth

be bracketed with the earlier work of Edgar Snow, which it supplements in substantial respects. Aside from their interest as vivid personal narratives, the two volumes constitute an invaluable source book of historical materials on the Chinese communist movement.

In Mr. Mowrer's "report from China," a distinguished foreign correspondent has caught the essentials of China's national struggle and described them in terms that the layman can understand. His running commentary on the Sino-Japanese conflict is neither erudite nor exhaustive; it can be read in a few hours at one sitting. In this lies its chief value. For the author's training enables him to select the significant details and trends, and to phrase his observations in a vivid and arresting style.

Making good use of the airplane, Mr. Mowrer visited seven of the China war's key cities: Hongkong, Canton, Hankow, Chengchow, Chungking, Chengtu, and Kunming. Of Hongkong he concluded that, once the Japanese cut the city off from China, "colony neutrality could quickly give way to definite partisanship"—a prophecy now being fulfilled. While overestimating Canton's defensive strength, he grasped the essential fact that Chinese man-power would convert a southern front into a decided military advantage, as is being demonstrated today. He saw Hankow several months before the city's fall. In June, against official opposition, he insisted on visiting the war front along the Yel-



Nym Wales with three directors of the "Military and Political Academy" in Yen-an.

low River, where he had two narrow escapes. He had personal interviews with most of China's leading military and political figures; in two pages, he presents a brilliant analysis of the complex personality of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.

Mr. Mowrer's book is chiefly valuable for its analysis of conditions in the central government's territory, a field about which little has been written. He successfully conveys a sense of the nationalist spirit which grips the Chinese nation and its people. He finds an increasing degree of unity, a robust morale, a popular responsiveness to the sacrificial demands of the war, an awakening of Chinese women, and a rapidly developing stronghold in China's interior provinces. Against these favorable aspects, he sees dark patches in the continuance of graft, inertia, and inefficiency in some government quarters, the persistence of opium

growing in Szechuan, an unwillingness of old-line officialdom to encourage full popular participation in the war, a continued struggle of the old China against submergence by the new. Nevertheless, he maintains that the new democratic forces are definitely in the ascendant. He concludes that the Chinese determination to resist, combined with Japan's inability to hold more ground than its troops actually occupy and garrison, condemns the Japanese invasion to ultimate defeat.

T. A. Bisson, a member of the staff of the Foreign Policy Association, has recently spent much time in the Orient.

A Poetic Novel of North Ireland

CALL MY BROTHER BACK. By Michael McLaverty. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1939. \$2.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

HERE again we come upon that haunting prose music which is the sole and distinguishing property of the Irish writers. McLaverty has it in full measure. His book is steadily lyrical and leaves eye and ear richly gratified. His is a sadder and more delicate music than the bright, wild quality of O'Faolain, or O'Flaherty's bitter challenging. For McLaverty writes of the Island of Rathlin, off the north coast of Ireland, where the dissensions of politics and religion are strained through the heavy mists and are heard as echoes. The life on Rathlin is rudimentary, close to the core, something to be wrested from the cold and the waves and warmed at the hearth. McLaverty gives us the boy Colm MacNeill, and his brother, Jamesy, and their father, old Daniel, and the others, in terms of their own existence on the Rathlin rocks, tender, strong, pious, loving each other and loving the elements in an old, forgotten way—and all of it expressed in the rich, natural tongue as they speak it.

Later the scene shifts to Belfast, where Colm goes to study, the family following. There the clash of Ireland comes upon them, the Orange against the Green, Catholic against Protestant. Their elder brother, Alec, is slain in the street fighting, and they return mournfully to Rathlin to bear the ache of his death. But nothing of this civil war or personal tragedy is reflected in the unswerving lyricism of McLaverty's writing; they do not deflect it but appear there as deeper notes, as suggestions of another course he is not now willing to follow. If we would complain at all, it would be against this all-too-perfect unity of style, treating as it does of Ireland's bitter crisis in the same unfaltering lyrical terms that served for Colm's tender boyhood. It would have been a larger, stronger book if the steady music had broken where peace itself was broken. It is none the less a beautiful book.

An Eyewitness of the Czech Surrender

BETRAYAL IN CENTRAL EUROPE. By G. E. R. Gedye. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1939. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

“HOW horrible, predestined, incredible it is,” declared Mr. Neville Chamberlain on September 27, “that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we need know nothing.” This brilliant account of remote people and their quarrels should do much to enlighten the British Prime Minister, as well as the American public, regarding the significance—in terms of diplomatic prestige, military strength, and individual human suffering—of Nazi victories in Central Europe. Mr. Gedye, talented and experienced correspondent for the *New York Times*, records the fall of Austria and Czechoslovakia with a passionate regard for both accurate detail and democratic principle. His colorful narrative, the first post-Munich book to give a full eyewitness account of the Czech surrender, provides “human interest” material and outspoken indignation too often lacking in parliamentary papers, diplomatic notes, and prime ministers’ speeches.

The betrayal in Central Europe was not a sudden and spontaneous event in 1938, but the result of cumulative mistakes, intrigues, and surrenders. Mr. Gedye devotes the larger part of his story to Austria, showing the gradual disintegration of national unity under the combined pressure of Nazi conspiracy, domestic strife, and Anglo-French hesitancy. He excels at vivid description of

exciting events: the Vienna uprising of 1927, the suppression of the Socialists in 1934, the murder of Dollfuss and defeat of Schuschnigg, and the final conquest. His analysis of the Austrian leaders—Seipel, Otto Bauer, Dollfuss, Prince Starhemberg, and Schuschnigg—affords additional insight into the breakdown of the republic. The later chapters on Czechoslovakia are briefer and more episodic, but no less useful as a case-study in Nazi penetration and triumph, and in Anglo-French acquiescence and connivance. Mr. Gedye’s picture of the Runciman mission, always partial to the Henlein forces, provides new and disconcerting evidence of the objectives and methods of Tory diplomacy.

This unhappy story of “the fallen bastions” will be told many times again, but never with greater sympathy for the victims and greater contempt for the betrayers. Mr. Gedye takes sides, and compels his reader to take sides, when he portrays the Vienna workmen bombed in their apartments and hounded into sewers, the Jews scrubbing sidewalks while fun-loving Aryans watch and jeer, the stolid Czechs weeping after the announcement of surrender, and the refugees herded into prisons or marooned in the Danube. Even though his treatment of European affairs as seen from Vienna and Prague omits many important external factors and hardly does justice to the difficulties confronting the British and French governments, it reveals the weakness and shortsightedness of the Chamberlain regime and the consequent dangers to Western democracy. Mr. Gedye’s book stands as a tribute to both the efficiency of modern journalism and the humaneness of the modern journalist.

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Beethoven and the Individual Life

BEETHOVEN. By Walter Riezler. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. 1939. \$3.

Reviewed by PAUL HENRY LANG

IT is a generally accepted esthetic dictum that in the historic evolution of music Beethoven opened the path to the cult of personality. There can be no doubt that the great symphonist felt the imperative and inexorable urge to face the universe about him not only as the member of a certain community but as a solitary individual. He realized with profound intensity the tragic and fatal loneliness of the personal life of a genius and fought the struggle for freedom, not for its own sake, but in order to apprehend the place of individual life within universal life. With this individualism he parted company with his forebears—although he retained the discipline of classicism—but his universalism distinguishes his music sharply from that of his romantic colleagues and successors among whom he is so often placed by his biographers. Thus Beethoven is not only the first but the only genius in the history of music who offered a universal solution for the problem of individual life, a fact which explains his undiminished hold on public and musicians alike.

The voluminous literature on the master indicates the unflagging interest in the great musician, but we are woefully lacking in modern essays that would bring us closer to him. Walter Riezler’s “Beethoven” will prove to be an excellent guide for the seeker of Beethoven the musician. It is one of the works that comes from the small group of writers approaching the task with the critical eyes of the scholar and with the loving care of the sensitive musicians. While there is nothing essentially new in its pages, there is no work that offers as many new ideas to the English or American reader, for the author has obviously ransacked the whole literature usually not touched by critics and biographers. The first part of “Beethoven” consists of a short, concise biographical sketch, followed by an essay on Beethoven and Absolute Music, reserving the major part of the book for a study of his works. It is especially this last part which should be greeted by serious lovers of music with genuine pleasure, for it dwells upon the one subject of prime importance which is still missing from our literature on music: style analysis.

Within the compass of a small volume not much can be done and some of the author’s generalizations (especially in part two) may sound a bit strange in their brevity, but he has succeeded in giving a very good idea of Beethoven the composer, which is more than many a celebrated writer and lecturer on music can claim. It is a pleasure to see his sound



G. E. R. Gedye fishing the Pielach, near Vienna