

Waiting for America

PRISONERS OF HOPE. By Howard L. Brooks. New York: L. B. Fischer Publishing Corp. 1942. 319 pp. \$2.75.

Reviewed by THOMAS KERNAN

IT seems that little has changed in defeated France since the first few months of German rule. The cord binds tighter, the shadows have darkened, the lines are perhaps etched deeper. But no new patterns emerge, and no important features seem to be added to the reports of those who left France in the last months of 1940.

This is a handicap to a writer such as Mr. Brooks, who spent several months in Marseilles in the summer of 1941. Most of his observations were reasonably well established by other witnesses many months ago. His book has value principally as a record of personal reactions, in the course of his work for the Unitarian Service Committee. These reactions, it must be said, are entirely to his credit.

The work of the Unitarian Committee had to do with clinics in Marseilles and Toulouse, with medical supplies for the concentration camps, and with such help as could be rendered in securing passports and passage to America. The refugees waiting months for a slip of paper are his "prisoners of hope," always clinging to some shred of belief that a miracle will come to their rescue. Panic cannot endure month after month, and there is little hysteria in the scenes that Mr. Brooks recalls. But sometimes help comes too late.

Mr. Brooks apparently accepts the figure of 41,500 interned aliens in France and Africa, of whom 29,000 are in France. Of these, 15,000 are Spanish Loyalists, 9,000 are Germans, and 5,000 are of forty-two mixed countries, mostly Poles and Czechs. If these figures are correct, the refugee problem is not nearly so great as we have been led to believe, and should not be beyond the competence of the French to solve. Of course the Spanish problem was almost cleared away by Franco's amnesty, and by Mexico's generous reception of bona fide political refugees; most Loyalists who remain in France have elected to do so for some reason other than the purely political. But if the figure of German internees is now reduced to 9,000, it is little short of miraculous, and speaks volumes for the efficient work of the various American committees.

The officials of the concentration camps, Mr. Brooks found reasonable and decent men, if unimaginative. This would be an improvement, as in my own brief contacts I did not find them so. Perhaps Mr. Brooks's opinion,

as befits a minister of the gospel, is too charitable. The basic violations remain: unspeakable sanitation, rags and tatters, lice, bad medical facilities. Against these the "reasonable and decent" jailors should have reacted by this time, for quantitatively the problem is no longer the Augean one that existed on the day when I saw eighty thousand men behind the barbed wire of Argeles.

Mr. Brooks refers several times with admiration to the work of Varian Fry, and frankly admits that he too was irresistibly drawn into situations where no relief worker has a right to be. His boon companions were the members of the French underground movement, and he tells of carrying various underground papers from one city to another. And yet, he seems naively surprised that the Vichy police watch him, and is piqued by their treatment of Mr. Fry. Now it is obvious that any government, even a puppet government, is going to try to defend itself through its police, and is within its rights in doing so. The various relief committees were admitted into France with the guarantee that they would not indulge in political activities, and their possibilities to relieve human suffering have been seriously hampered by the free-lance enthusiasms of some of their workers. Mr. Brooks was probably an embarrassment to the Unitarian Committee, but at this safe distance we can be grateful for his tem-

erity. He knew intimately some of the most intelligent underground workers, and his contacts with them supply the most original and interesting passages of his book. Disappointing to the American liberal, he found small enthusiasm for General de Gaulle, and the underground worker is not necessarily a de Gaullist. We learn that a large part of the French population would prefer someone else, such as General Catroux.

A number of clippings from various French papers—Vichy-controlled and underground—are included after each chapter, and are illuminating as photographs in support of the various opinions of the book. Perhaps Mr. Brooks quotes too freely from *Gringoire*, without explaining to the unwary reader that *Gringoire* is run by a gang of Corsican freebooters who represent the voice of France—even of Vichy France—no more authentically than *Social Justice* is the voice of America. In an almost unguarded moment the author admits that there are many shades of opinion at Vichy, and that if some of the Vichy men are blackguards indeed, there are others who cannot now act differently, but whose hearts are probably in the right place.

Mr. Brooks's title applies specifically to the refugees, but in a larger way it belongs to the whole French people among whom he worked. He found them dazed, incoherent, humiliated, but still prisoners of hope. They too wait for a miracle from America, this time not just a slip of paper. For them the miracle must be the sword.



—Oil painting by Georges Schreiber.

Refugees are waiting "for a miracle from America."

The Prospects of Society

THE STRENGTH OF NATIONS. By George Soule. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1942. 268 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by FRANK KINGDON

GEORGE SOULE has asked himself the question: why cannot we do as well with our society as we know how? His answer is that we have not applied to our social problems the full resources of the scientific methods and knowledge that we have available. "Our chief hope for the avoidance of such disasters as depression and war, and the achievement of positive ends made possible by material progress, lies not in improvised or quack doctrines, not in the promises of new messiahs, and not in religious revivalism, but in a better application of scientific method to an understanding of man and society."

The author makes a serious attempt to point the way toward such a synthesis of our knowledge about how human beings act as individuals and in society as will guide us in directing human conduct to good ends. He is sufficiently modest not to claim that he has all the answers but to state that he is only trying to frame the right questions. His good intentions are somewhat dissipated by a too-discursive recapitulation of the histories of the sciences which sidetracks him from sufficient concentration on their interrelations and immediate contributions to our needs. Some chapters read more like an outline of science than a synthetic blending of scientific ideas. In spite of Mr. Soule's scorn of doctrine his volume makes clear that we need to produce a profoundly philosophical mind to integrate the various interpretations of man and society into a coherent pattern on the basis of which a plan of action may be devised.

This points up the chief weakness of the book. It is so exclusively preoccupied with "scientific method" that it denies the validity of other ways of thinking about human beings and their relationships. It may be that we do not need "improvised or quack doctrines" but we do need doctrines to define the "positive ends" and "the values" on which he insists. Similarly, while we deny the usefulness of "the promises of new messiahs" we do have to acknowledge the necessity for leaders and their words. "Religious revivalism" may be dangerous, but emotional devotion to what is deemed good is essential. In other words, the book is weakened by the fact that it is the brief of an advocate for science rather than an inclusive attempt to mobilize all the methods and motives that operate in men's conduct. In the field it

covers it is full of active suggestions, but it falls into the error of asserting that its limited approach is the only possible one. I seemed to catch the overtones of Herbert Spencer, Thomas Huxley, and the nineteenth century believers in a scientific utopia so clearly that they drowned out such later men as Whitehead, Einstein, and Eddington.

We stand in need of a new scepticism probing deeper than anything we have yet discovered. It must question the methodology that has given us mastery of our physical world and the beguiling instruments of our own power. We have been steadily converting ourselves into cogs of the machines we have created until our machines have whirled us into new mazes of relationships with which we are apparently incapable of coping. Our bewilderment will continue to engulf us tragically until we rediscover the magnitude of man himself, and relegate machines to the instrumental function they are fitted to fulfill. We have made man a little lower than his own inventions and then entangled him further in their power by sublimating mechanical thinking into an arrogant and exclusive philosophy. The machine may be analogous to man at certain points,



George Soule

but it is not a final parallel. Scientific method will illuminate certain areas of human conduct, but it cannot encompass the whole man. That in him which is natively irrational will escape his own reason. Part of our emancipation from the evils we have created is to discover the limitations of the reason itself. To this end scientific thinking may show us the way, and to this extent Mr. Soule is a useful guide, but beyond this he suffers from a concept of man that is too limited and too artless.

English Traits

BRITISH LIFE AND THOUGHT: AN ILLUSTRATED SURVEY. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1941. 479 pp., with index. \$3.50.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

THE British Council, formed in the mid-thirties by British leaders in public life, was a somewhat belated recognition of the importance of publicity, even to the stables of governments. This book, issued by the Council, assembles in one volume eleven pamphlets, printed separately in 1940, dealing with various aspects of British political and cultural life. The writers are all well-known and respected experts in the fields they cover, and their essays are competent, clear, informative. Professor A. Berriedale Keith on the "British Commonwealth," J. E. Hales on "British Education," L. Dudley Stamp on "The Face of England" (an essay on human geography), Bernard Darwin on "British Sport and Games," Earl Baldwin on "The Englishman"—indeed, all these essayists—have an intimate, personal knowledge of what they are writing about, a love of British ways, a quiet enthusiasm that hardly deserves so noisy a name as patriotism. The book as a whole is certainly not a critical study of a great nation; only an individual, a Bryce, a

Tocqueville, can write that sort of book. But there is much honest information in "British Life and Thought," and straightforward reflection of a national temperament and way of life.

The book will surely help keep old friends of Britain in America. To this reviewer, however, it seems unlikely that the book will make new friends for Britain in America. Perhaps that task is beyond propaganda—beyond the propaganda of words and pictures, at any rate. Perhaps the Germans are right. The only good propaganda may be the kind that arouses fears more strong than hatreds. But the tone of "British Life and Thought" is not a tone that makes converts. It is too *Anglican*, in the comfortable, latitudinarian sense of that word; the revivalist touch is lacking. You just can't convince people who, for some reason, dislike the British, that the British Navy has since 1588 been the big, good-natured, disinterested policeman of the seas. Yet that is just what Professor Michael Lewis tries to do.

However, "British Life and Thought" is so faithfully upper-class British that it is bound to warm, and keep warm, the hearts of those who love Britain today. But there ought to be some way of keeping the book out of the hands of the heathen.