

what they believe to be right, and stick to it, they will certainly have the people with them.

The ex-President is sure that he was right. He was right in vetoing the Taft-Hartley bill, the so-called Tidelands Oil bill, and in his many other vetoes—more, he believes, than were returned by any President since Cleveland—even when they were overridden by Congress. He was right in advocating a national health plan, in seizing the steel industry, in his policy in China, in his almost reverential awe of General Marshall. He was right in his criticisms of the press. At the time of Korea “three of our biggest publishers, I think, were dividing our people and leading the world to believe that the American people had no confidence in their Government. The campaign of vilification and lies and distortions of facts in so many of our papers were the greatest asset the Soviets had.” He was right in 1948 in believing he could win against the showings of the polls and the double defection of the Dixiecrats and the Wallaceites. On some of the other points his rightness will seem less self-evident to others than it does to Mr. Truman, but in the last, at least, he is on indisputable ground.

The ex-President's closing comments on the 1952 election are perhaps of the liveliest immediate interest. Mr. Truman makes certain recent maneuverings more explicable by revealing his annoyance at Adlai Stevenson's coyness before the convention, and over certain Stevenson “mistakes” afterward—chiefly those of attempting somewhat to dissociate himself from the White House and of being too tepid in the defense of the Truman record. But it is on the Republican campaign that Mr. Truman lets go: “The most brazen lie of the century has been fabricated by reckless demagogues among the Republicans to the effect that Democrats were soft on Communists.” Eisenhower “permitted a campaign of distortion and vilification that he could not possibly have believed was true.”

“Within the first few months,” Mr. Truman says in the opening sentence of this book, “I discovered that being a President is like riding a tiger. A man has to keep on riding or be swallowed.” Truman was never swallowed. Right or wrong, he rode the tiger and kept command. As the book ends, with Mr. Truman conferring with his successor on the handing over of the Government, the man from Independence manages to leave hanging a question mark as to whether Mr. Eisenhower could do—or has done—the same. The memoirist is clearly aware that another election is upon us.

The Sea Lane to Victory

“The Atlantic Battle Won,” by Samuel E. Morison (Little, Brown, 399 pp. \$6), the tenth volume in the *“History of United States Naval Operations in World War II,”* tells of the offensive that led to our ultimate victory over Nazi Germany. James A. Field, Jr., of Swarthmore College, author of *“The Japanese at Leyte Gulf,”* reviews it here.

By James A. Field, Jr.

THE seapower which Admiral Mahan saw a mighty influence on history was an exploitative and aggressive seapower, working outward from Europe to seize and maintain control of the new worlds across the oceans. Victory in the wars for empire and dominant influence in shaping the modern world went to Great Britain, situated offshore and thus able to control all by controlling the western approaches to the Continent.

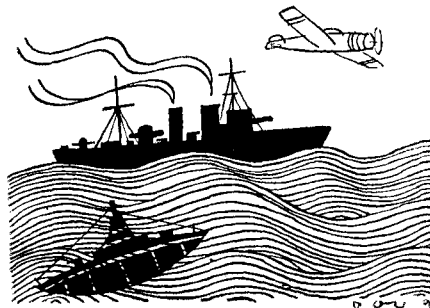
In the last century, however, the employment of seapower has greatly changed. The policies of the maritime states of the Western world have become conservative. As improvements in land transport permitted increasingly effective mobilization of the manpower of interior Eurasia the previously dominant rimlands found themselves mortally endangered. Wars were no longer wars of maritime states, aggression now came from the heartland, and from the Crimean War to the organization of NATO the problem has been one of stabilization and defense. In the new context control of the western approaches has become if possible even more important, not as the way to transoceanic wealth but as the means of obtaining salvation from overseas.

In two world wars success in dividing the Atlantic world by cutting the ocean trade routes would have brought German victory. In both this success was very nearly gained by the submarine. Surprisingly, in the Second World War as in the First, neither side was prepared to contest the issue on anything like the scale that was ultimately required. In 1939 the British were very short of escort craft, while Hitler entered the war with only forty-nine operational U-boats. Yet by V-E Day the German Navy had employed 1,179 submarines,

699 of which had been lost to Allied action. In six years of war this under-sea fleet, while failing in its primary task, sank 187 warships, almost 3,000 merchant vessels, and took some 40,000 lives in the process.

The crisis of the U-boat war, which came in 1942, was dealt with in “The Battle of the Atlantic 1939-1943,” the first volume of Admiral Samuel E. Morison's “History of United States Naval Operations in World War II.” In the spring of 1943, when Volume X, “The Atlantic Battle Won,” takes up the tale, things were at a stand-off, and this just-published book is the story of the offensive which led to victory. New technical devices, new production brought the Allies through. In May 1943 U-boat losses exceeded new construction, and merchant-ship sinkings reached a new low. Admiral Doenitz, bemoaning Allied scientific superiority, was forced to redeploy his boats away from the crucial North Atlantic convoy lanes to peripheral areas such as the Central Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean. The initiative was never regained.

Like all of Morison's volumes, this is operational history written on the tactical level, and in this one more than in most the nature of the subject prevents a unitary organization. Here are more depth charges than doctrine; shifts of time and place are kaleidoscopic; there is no assembly of great forces or sweep of fleets to battle. But the hundreds of individual anti-submarine actions, presented in remarkably complete detail, are united by the shipping problem, the central problem of the war. Since solution of this permitted solution of all else this book is in a very real sense the key to the whole series. Had it not been possible to write of “The Atlantic Battle Won” the other volumes would have made very different and far less pleasant reading.



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Gone With the Wind

AMERICAN writing, if you except the immortal and changeless frontier cowboy, has lost its regional character. Ten years ago *The Saturday Review* published several regional issues—New England, the Far West, Midwest, and, of course, the Deep South—and ultimately gave it up as hopeless. Though the novelist may recall his childhood experiences in his natal state, he is apt to spend his adult life a thousand miles or more from his birthplace. Hemingway was born in Illinois, but for years he has lived in foreign countries and is now permanently settled in Cuba. Dos Passos came from Chicago; his last trilogy was centered in the District of Columbia. Steinbeck came from California but prefers to live in New York, and his latest novel emerged from New England. Erskine Caldwell after he had exhausted rural poverty and the city slums of Mississippi wrote a bleak Maine novel, in which the characters lived and behaved as badly as if they were descendants of "Tobacco Road's" poor white trash. Faulkner's last book is a war novel.

Many critics deplore this gregariousness; but the fact remains that the United States from one ocean to the other has changed with startling rapidity, and even the Deep South has felt the effects of our national prosperity. A man who was born in Arizona or Washington or my birthplace, Connecticut, today finds that he is in another world. This is not true of the Frenchman or the Englishman whose cities and villages and countryside maintain their ancient characteristics. It is inevitable that readers should prefer consistency, and they are cer-

tainly not getting it from American novelists who have abandoned ancestor worship along with the scenes and dilemmas of the past. In one of Elizabeth Bowen's addresses to an English audience she said that regionalism cannot continue. "Gradually a writer's art flags, and the writer knows it," she said. "Now is the time to make the break, to strike out, to establish at any price a new vital outside communication."

Many American critics were led astray by this metamorphosis. They look back on the successful writers of thirty years ago and damn them. What once seemed intensely real and moving cannot stir the readers of today. For example, Dos Passos or Sinclair Lewis. Bernard DeVoto in his book "The Literary Fallacy," a violent criticism of the novelists of the Twenties, said, "Never in any country or any age had writers so misrepresented their culture, never had they been so unanimously wrong." However, Sinclair Lewis's "Main Street" was an enormous and immediate success. Why? Because it destroyed the outworn and traditional misconceptions of small-town and village life in the Midwest, where all young women were presumed to be virgins and all old men noble-hearted philosophers. Carol Kennicott, like Madame Bovary, was bored to extinction in the horse-and-buggy town she lived in with her doctor husband, and she had good reason to be.

MR. DeVoto was a remarkable journalist and historian of the West, but a heavy-handed critic. He attacked Van Wyck Brooks's studies of American

literature, saying that Brooks had made many statements which so intelligent a man could not possibly have made if he had actually read the books or looked up the facts he was talking about. Then he got out his machine-gun and slaughtered all of the best writers of the period. Dos Passos overlooks the nobility of the common American and so does Faulkner, Mr. DeVoto says. "Lewis when he abandons his amiable and occasionally dangerous fools is unable to conceive of a man above the level of a high-school boy." "Hemingway lacks maleness," which would certainly surprise the author of "Death in the Afternoon" and more than a few women.

In a final blast he wrote, "When history comes to describe the culture of America between the Great Wars it will not be American ideas or the American way of life that looks tawdry, cheap, empty, and base. It will be the half-bushel of authors who presumed to find them so on the basis of a blend of arrogance and ignorance."

In the late Forties and early Fifties the gruesome childhood experiences revealed by many young writers in their first novels must have horrified their parents when they came out in print. Certainly there were more homosexuals, sordid love affairs, contorted minds, and naked violence in fiction after the war than had ever appeared in any equally brief period of a country's literature. Many of these writers have either calmed down or have disappeared from the literary scene, and many of the books of only a few years ago now seem to be foolish, including Tennessee Williams's only novel, "The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone." The honest writer may seek eroticism for its own sake; and when he discovers that the public is satiated he will turn to more financially rewarding pastures.

Foreign critics often have a higher respect for contemporary American literature than our critics. André Malraux in an interview published in this country said, "Many cultured Americans consider their present-day literature decadent. To them the great period is the nineteenth century, the period of Poe, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman. Hemingway has something in common with these primitives." He is praising and not condemning contemporary American literature when he states that "it is the only national literature which is not the work of intellectuals." The great effort of this literature is going to be its attempt to intellectualize itself without losing its direct contact with American life.

—H. S.