

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PRAISE FOR ALANBROOKE

AS THE ENGLISH publisher of "The Turn of the Tide," may I point out the inaccuracy of your reviewer's statement (SR May 18) that the book has been "roundly damned" by British military critics. So far from this being true, it was hailed as a military work of outstanding importance by the military correspondents and critics of nearly all the chief British dailies, including *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Sunday Times*, *Scotsman*, *Yorkshire Post*, and *Daily Mail*, as well as the BBC. It has been praised, too, by a host of distinguished British service chiefs. These have included Alanbrooke's wartime fellow Chiefs of Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham of Hyndhope and Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Portal of Hungerford, who presided at the book's launching; by the former Deputy Supreme Commander of the Liberation Armies, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder; by Field Marshal Lord Montgomery of Alamein, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Mountbatten of Burma, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris, General Sir Archibald Nye—Alanbrooke's Deputy Chief of Imperial General Staff throughout the war—Generals Sir Leslie Hollis and Sir Ian Jacob, both of whom served under him as members of the wartime Chiefs of Staff Secretariat; General Sir William Morgan, formerly Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean and Head of the British Military Mission at Washington; General Sir Bernard Paget, Montgomery's predecessor as Commander-in-Chief of 21st Army Group and the trainer of Britain's D-day armies; General Sir Richard O'Connor, who encircled the Italian North African Armies in 1940; Generals Sir Frederick Browning and Sir Richard Gale, Britain's two most famous wartime commanders of airborne troops, General Sir Miles Dempsey and General Sir Brian Horrocks. It also has been commended, among others, by the Earl Attlee, Lord Templewood, Sir Alexander Cadogan, and Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, Britain's most eminent historian. Naturally there has been criticism of a book that raises such tremendous issues and touches on so many reputations, but to suggest that it has received universal condemnation from British military critics is a gross perversion of the truth.

W.A.R. COLLINS.

Chairman, Collins Publishers.
London, England.

GENERAL MARSHALL REPLIES

MY REVIEW MADE some earnest criticisms of a book and its author and subject. Mr. Collins said nothing in reply to any part of that. He is concerned only because the review said that the British reception of the book was something less than a unanimous hurrah. So I quote from one London reviewer: "Who is the greatest man of the age? By his own confes-



"Then, in June 1967, the almost legendary 'Abominable Snowman' was discovered by the American Vice President when he halted his Goodwill Motorcade through Nepal in order to jump out and shake hands with what appeared to be an ordinary Himalayan native waving to him from beside the road. . . ."

sion Lord Alanbrooke, the general hardly anyone heard about until he revealed himself as the architect of our victory. I had no idea he was such a hero, etc., etc." Grant that the tone is amateurishly sarcastic, my point is that no one has been quite that nasty on this side of the pond.

Six British reviews have come my way. I have quoted one that is typical. Since I do not have time and money to go through the whole British press, I must go by what I see. Is that fair enough? To Mr. Collins's mind, however, I committed a "gross perversion of truth." Now let us look at the charge. In order to damn me, he let himself become persuaded that I implied the book had been "universally" damned by British critics. I said no such thing, and either Mr. Collins must know that or he is an ignoramus. I said "roundly condemned," and the adjective used is qualitative rather than quantitative, since by definition "roundly" means "boldly, vigorously, briskly, etc., etc."

Furthermore, none but its publisher would claim that this book raises "tremendous issues," though I grant its recklessness in touching on reputations. The only real issue is whether history should hew to the line of truth and its chroniclers should eschew hearsay, invalid documentation, and extravagant assertion. And that is a simple question.

Mr. Collins must know that as Chief Historian of European Theatre I became grounded in the conference notes and other top-secret papers which disclose how great events became weighted in the mutual undertakings between Britain and the United States. Most of them were familiar to me twelve years ago when

I took the first steps to establish historical collaboration between the Imperial General Staff and our own on World War II operations. It is from that background that I say the case as organized by Sir Arthur is faulty, inaccurate history. Since fact is not established in a shouting contest, it does not impress me as proving anything that a gallery of British generals endorse Sir Arthur's book.

I, too, like it. I simply add that even in such a primary matter as why the German Army came at odds with itself in the crisis hours preceding Dunkirk, Sir Arthur is woefully ignorant about his sources. What he writes on that score is interesting but it is also dead wrong.

S.L.A. MARSHALL.

Detroit, Mich.

WE'LL ALL DIE

THE TONE OF condescension in Dr. Willard Libby's "Open Letter to Dr. Schweitzer" (SR May 25) is not only repulsive in itself, but makes suspect the arguments he offers against Dr. Schweitzer's statement. To assume that the end justifies the means, to assume the responsibility for deciding that the suffering and early termination of life for an estimated number of people is a "small risk" in relation to the possibility of death and destruction from Russia, is to forget that WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE SOMETIME and that therefore it's the QUALITY OF LIVING that matters. There is no unknown on which the AEC may speculate that justifies repudiation of the great law of life that bids us love our neighbor as ourselves.

MRS. LESTER GARNER.

Sterling, Col.

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BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

Designs for Acting

ONE LUXURY that theatre fans always find hard to resist is a book of scenic reproductions. Unfortunately, the mounting costs of photoengraving have made recent American efforts in this field a bit on the shabby side. To publish at a price low enough to guarantee a substantial sale, the quality of these books has deteriorated to the point where every illustration seems a faded wirephoto from the past.

Now at last Theatre Arts Books, with the cooperation of the International Theatre Institute and Belgium's Elsevier Press, has faced the issue squarely with a sumptuous volume, "Stage Design Throughout the World Since 1935." The reproductions in color and in black-and-white are first-class, and the price of \$17.50 is "first-class," too. The handsome anthology contains abundant selections from twenty-three countries with a brief evaluation of the trends in scenic art in each by a writer from the nation under discussion. In general, the national differences are less striking than the differences between individual designers. This is particularly true of the American section, where the European influence is strongly in evidence. This may be partly because of the shameful omission of such designers as Peter Larkin, William and Jean Eckart, Harry Horner, George Jenkins, Ralph Alswang, and Raoul Pene du Bois in favor of presenting more than one design by several designers whose contributions are less distinguished or less representative of our theatre. Yet the collection is impressive, and most so when the designs are most simple. Jones's "A Moon for the Misbegotten," Gorelik's "Desire Under the Elms," Mielziner's "Winterset," and Aronson's "The Gentle People" are designs of which any nation could be proud.

The most exciting designs in terms of spatial experimentation come in the German section (one must include Teo Otto, whose designs are under Switzerland in this category). It would seem that the old expressionism in which inner and exterior forces are indicated by exaggeration, distortion, and extreme use of symbolism has given way to a more practical concept. The aim of the best German contemporaries seems to be the capturing of the fantastic and fragmentary nature of postwar life. In keeping with the times, plot and

social forces in need of reform have lost their primary importance. A modern play's dramatic events only serve to recreate life's ironies and absurdities, its hopeless insecurities and its directionlessness. This is reflected in scenery able to transform itself rapidly from one fragmentary state to another and which provides a spatial architecture that describes the profound truth of the human condition instead of the shallow reality of literal backgrounds. It should be noted that Germany is not alone in this. Mielziner's "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" is an experiment in this direction. And French designer Max Ingrand's *total theatre* scenery for "Christophe Colomb" goes even further by creating a constantly fluid setting evoked from minute to minute by the will of the actors.

The French section is also notable for its quality. Because the French have no union restrictions to discourage first-rate artists from working in the theatre, we find the likes of Picasso, Carzou, Dufy, and Clavé creating scenery with strong individual styles. Of course, in practice some of these decors may overwhelm the play. The ideal compromise between art and practice is found in the late Christian Bérard. For M. Bérard's designs have a theatre life as well as a pictorial life.

This is why scenic design books should work toward presenting more photographs which show actual stage-sets in action. Since the best scenic artists paint as much with lighting as they do with opaque pigments it is only through a series of color photographs of a set in action that we can really judge its effectiveness.

"Stage Design Throughout the World Since 1935" is a step in the right direction. It challenges the richest nation in the world to publish an album of its own with similar quality. Perhaps with the cooperation of the theatrical unions, designers can be permitted to have their sets photographed for the record without a stagehands' charge for photo call. Perhaps a foundation or an advertiser would help underwrite part of the printing costs. And perhaps an American publisher with modern marketing methods can promote a sale large enough to bring the price down to \$10. Until this happens the ITI volume will do admirably.

—HENRY HEWES.