

the zones. The unimportant decision made by the minor official, who was concerned only with finding ample barracks and adequate storage facilities in prime bases back in England, prevailed over all the power and prestige of the American President.

One step directed the next down the road that led the Russians to Berlin. The U.S. Army sat on the President's directives while the State Department was kept completely in ignorance, for the President neglected to inform State, and the Army did not feel it necessary to do so. Our negotiators conferred with the British and Russians with blindfolds on. The British kept quiet, for they wanted that northwest sector, particularly the industrial Ruhr, in their occupation zone. Able men, like Professor Philip Mosely, working for State, realized the dangers in Rankin C when they finally got to see the map. Mosely proposed that a corridor linking the western zones to Berlin be cut through the Soviet Zone. After a long wait for an answer to his proposal,

he fought his way through the maze of the War Department and found the colonel who was handling the matter. He asked where the plan was. "The colonel opened a bottom drawer of his desk and said, 'It's right here.' Then he leaned back in his chair, put both feet in the drawer and said, 'It's damn well going to stay there, too.'"

There are pages upon pages of similar revelations in *The Last Battle*, as Ryan reconstructs the events that led to the Soviet capture of Berlin. He uses many well-known sources, such as the writings of Mosely, William M. Franklin, Alan Moorehead, and other historians of the period, but he also contributes to future historians his own research, including the handwritten minutes made by General George C. Marshall. The original research in *The Last Battle* would be the envy of any historian and well beyond the capability of even the best researcher. It does not discredit Mr. Ryan to report that he had the assistance of one of the largest, most skillful research

teams that ever worked on a single volume of history, the research staff of the *Reader's Digest*. Mr. DeWitt Wallace is "Connie" Ryan's guardian angel. Enthusiastically embracing the idea for *The Longest Day*, Mr. Wallace offered to finance the work and the research. The same aid was provided for *The Last Battle*. It resulted in the myriad anecdotes, descriptions of life in Berlin under siege, interviews with German and Russian survivors of the battle, the accounts of rape and brutality, contrasted with the kind and generous acts on both sides—all the human drama that makes this book marvelous theater and that will surely make an exciting motion picture and another fortune for the happy author.

Ryan's personal interviews make a valuable contribution to history, notably those in the USSR with the Soviet marshals. The Russians also gave him a treasure house of documents and maps, only a fraction of which are used in this book. One hopes that Ryan will donate

The Author: "I wish someone here would tag me with the cachet of historian," Cornelius Ryan said plaintively the other day, his Irish brogue barely perceptible. "I'm not challenging the great ones like Wheeler-Bennett or Bullock. I'm writing popular history. But it's accurate popular history, and the truth of the matter is it's the best there is. The French, British, Germans, and Russians take me seriously, but the hell of it is the Americans don't."

Ryan's beef is irrelevant. After all, *The Longest Day* is still selling enormously well in many countries, and it is read by schoolchildren, as well as by adults. *The Last Battle*, which required even more work (five years), reveals facts about the fall of Berlin that are available to the Western world solely because Ryan went to Russia, collared the Soviet marshals, and made them talk.

Ryan will write the screenplay for this book, as he did for its predecessor. What with Book-of-the-Month-Club, *Reader's Digest*, paperback, and foreign rights, Ryan stands to make a tremendous killing again. Historians usually don't.

No matter what posterity holds for him, right now "Connie" Ryan is a journalist, and his contemporaries regard him with a certain degree of awe and respect. He has carried reportage to an extreme, something that could probably only be accomplished with the resources of *Reader's Digest* behind him. (Research on each of the books cost \$60,000.) Ryan admits it.

"There is nothing new in what I'm

doing," he said. "It's only old-fashioned reporting." There is a little more to it than that. Ryan has adopted a diarylike style of describing a relatively brief moment in history which gives that event a you-are-there immediacy. Walter Lord first did it successfully in our time with his masterpiece on the sinking of the *Titanic*. Ryan gives Lord full credit, but he also likes to refer to Thucydides, Stendhal, and Crane as early birds in the same genre. Imitators bother him sometimes.

"A certain book about a certain European city during the war has a man on a bike pulling a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiping the sweat off his brow. Now, I maintain you can't possibly recall a moment like that twenty years later. I don't want my books to be taken as fiction, but as history—readable history."

To accomplish that aim in *The Last Battle*, Ryan accumulated in his Ridgefield, Connecticut, home and studio a dozen file cabinets with thousands of interviews, letters, maps, books, newspapers, and associated material regarding the final weeks of the siege. When you read that there was a knock on a Berliner's door March 21, you know it's literal and not fictional. When you read that a Berliner is one afternoon practicing air-raid procedure and lowering his dachshunds by rope from a balcony, you can be sure that it happened.

Ryan was born in Dublin forty-five years ago, studied music for a while, and then found himself in London, where he got a job as copy boy for Reuter's during the blitz. He then went with the London *Daily Telegraph* and

flew on many bombing missions with the U. S. Air Force. Ryan wasn't in Berlin during the battle for the beleaguered city; he was a correspondent for the *Telegraph* with Patton's Third Army. (Patton didn't get there, either.) After covering the hostilities in Europe from D-Day to the end, Connie Ryan headed for Tokyo, where he opened the *Telegraph* bureau and moonlighted as a stringer for *Time*. He reported the Bikini bomb tests and in 1948 came to the States as a member of *Time's* staff. Two years later he joined *Collier's* as a writer. When that magazine folded he had an idea for a book on D-Day. Simon & Schuster took it.

"I was so unsure of it," Ryan recalled, "that the day after I handed in the finished manuscript I went down to the *Saturday Evening Post* looking for work."

Maybe he is still surprised at his success. Today Ryan appears to be a combination of humility and confidence, of Irish friendliness and loquacious worldliness. A person with practically no formal schooling, he was pleased in 1963 to receive an honorary research fellowship at the University of Manchester.

"I had no academic accolades until that came along," he remarked with a grin. "The only piece of parchment I have comes from the music school in Dublin."

Now he and his wife, Kathryn, a journalism-school graduate who has been a major factor in Ryan's success, will start on another book, the subject of which will for a while remain secret.

—JEROME BEATTY, JR.

this material to a university that will make it available to scholars for more careful analysis than it is accorded here. For *The Last Battle* may contribute to a revival of old myths about the "great German General Staff." Implicit in the book, as written, is a strong case for the brilliance of such professional soldiers as General Gotthard Heinrici, who is said to have worked miracles holding off the Koniev and Zhukov forces as long as he did. From the book one might infer that the collapse of the German positions was due to the meddling and stupidity of Nazis like Himmler and, above all, the madness of Hitler. *The Last Battle* could become very popular with the most retrograde elements in Germany, who could easily distort and exploit the material as it is presented. This was certainly not Ryan's intention, but it may be the outcome of his insistence upon following the methods of the Greek historian Thucydides, whom he quotes in his epigraph. Thucydides set out to record as exactly as possible the battles of the Peloponnesian War, stressing eyewitness accounts. Ryan's use of this

scheme results in an exciting, fast-moving narrative; but it is one-dimensional, with little attempt to set the events into a context that goes beyond battle itself. The book would have had more value if such material had been presented not only in the style of a Thucydides but with his conceptual insights.

Politically sensitive readers may resent portions of *The Last Battle* which indicate a certain sympathy for the Berliners. Some veterans of those battles may, like this writer, raise an eyebrow and wonder what our comrade-in-arms meant when he dedicated this book to a German boy born in Berlin during the last battle who was killed on the Berlin Wall, which Ryan calls "the most tragic memorial to the Allied victory." Many Americans despise the Russians for building that wall, but it is a memorial to the failure of Communism and not a memorial to our joint victory over Nazism. A grateful reader can excuse Mr. Ryan for limiting himself in *The Last Battle* to exciting narration—avoiding analysis and conclusions—but he ought to have left it at that.

women of Haganah in their country's future.

For sheer excitement it is hard to choose between the exploits of the Mandate period, when resistance to the Arabs had to be organized despite and against British obstruction; the World War II period, when refugees had to be rescued, arms collected, and men trained without slowing the fight on Britain's side against the common Nazi foe; or the Independence period, when invasion by a mere six Arab armies in a land composed entirely of open frontiers was the single problem.

EARLY sections of the book deal mostly with adventures in plain and fancy dynamiting. In those days Mardor (now the respectable director general of Israel's Weapons Research Authority) was up to his neck in the secret doings—here blandly unveiled with a candor totally untypical of the normally super-hush Haganah—of such Hebrew-alphabetic agencies as "Phosh" and "Pom." These "field units" and "special-action units," with Mardor in various degrees of command, blew up a village headman's empty house as a warning to others against harboring Arab terrorists, blew up a slice of British pipeline to prove that the whole of Middle Eastern oil could be denied if and when necessary, blew up an armed British coast-guard vessel to weaken the blockade against illegal immigration, and even blew up a ship which the British were preparing to send, loaded with Jewish refugees, to Mauritius.

While World War II picked up speed, Mardor (rubbing underground elbows with Moshe Dayan, Haim Laskov, and others who later emerged as top generals of Israel's Defense Forces) ran in the desperate races to expand the population and to enlarge the arsenal of Palestine's vulnerable Jewish community against the impending showdown with the Arabs.

He established staging posts across the deserts for transport of Oriental Jews from remote Arab territories to Palestinian sanctuary. He arranged the spirit-ing into Baghdad of a radio transmitter to coordinate a self-defense system for Iraqi Jewry, which he munitioned. Through "Rekhes," Haganah's arms-procurement branch disguised as a "Flower Growers' Association," which Mardor headed, his teams bought weapons from compliant British troops, or stole them with the poker-faced complicity of Jewish troops under British command. He set up a human bucket-chain which cleaned out, hand-over-hand, the perimeter of one Royal arms depot during an air raid, and he actually drove his larcenous trucks right into another and loaded up with supplies during a pelting rainstorm. "Rekhes" outdid itself for *chutzpah* by operating

Underground to Independence

Haganah, by Munya M. Mardor, translated from the Hebrew by H. A. G. Schmuckler, edited by D. R. Elston (New American Library, 295 pp. \$5.95), unveils the secret activities of Israel's underground army from the period of the British Mandate through the early days of independence. Hal Lehrman wrote "Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow."

By HAL LEHRMAN

ARAB spies throughout Islam must have perished in the cold when smuggled copies of these marvelous now-I-can-tell-nearly-all disclosures by a real-life Jewish Bondnik showed up in Cairo souks and Baghdad bazaars. And it must have shaken Arab intelligence chiefs from Alexandria to Mecca to learn exactly how, for example, Jewish skin-divers dispatched a cargo of Syria-bound armaments to the bottom of Bari harbor; and when another ship with guns for Araby managed to make it as far as mid-Mediterranean, exactly how the engines stopped and mysterious strangers swarmed aboard from an innocent fishing boat, overpowered the crew, transferred them and the weapons to two Israeli corvettes heaving

by for Haifa, then sank the vessel. Prior to the book's publication, the Arabs had been officially and solemnly blaming that catastrophe (ticketed in Israeli archives under "Operation Pirate") on a Moslem agent who bought the shooting irons in Czechoslovakia but lost them, as well as his heart and his wits, to a "devil in the shape of an extremely beautiful Yugoslav woman," she having been, naturally, "a Zionist and a Communist."

Strictly speaking, Munya M. Mardor is no 007. This nice Jewish boy, who was nineteen when he reached Palestine from his native Russia in 1933 and promptly joined the Haganah underground army, considers food merely as either kosher or nonkosher, motors as just trucks, jeeps, and other contrivances to get away in, and a girl as only for marrying. Also unlike the hard-nosed James B. and imitators, Munya is a sucker for ideology and meaningful self-sacrifice. In fact, the one frailty in this otherwise trim and modest narrative is the reiterated theme (also belabored in ex-Premier David Ben-Gurion's foreword) of silent heroism in all who labored to prepare the Israeli homeland for its immediate defense and then for its survival against massive assault. The message would have been clear enough, or clearer, with just the terse account of the guile, sweat, muscle, blood, and valor invested by these unsung men and