

a simple view of power and leadership in which the actions at the top ramify neatly to the base. . . . While it is necessary to consider this power situation as transitional. . . . the transition to a fundamentally different political system will thus take years if not decades. Even the death of Mao Tse-tung will probably not change, basically, the fact that power resides in many hands and that doctrine has innumerable interpreters.

Both Mr. Barcata's and Dr. Lewis' works clearly are derived from meaningful study and research, and all students interested in Communist China and the impact of the Cultural Revolution on its future developments will want to read and ponder over them.

Reviewed by PAUL K. T. SIH

March to the Abyss

The End of Glory: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War II, by Laurence Lafore, *Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970. 280 vii pp. \$5.95.*

HISTORIANS have often remarked that World War II was not only far more devastating to humanity than World War I but also far less troublesome to the intellect, at least in the question of causation. Even today the background of the first war appears complex and fascinating to scholars who try to figure out how European rulers and politicians who wanted to avoid a general conflagration managed to stumble into one anyhow. The argument about the responsibility of states and statesmen, the very argument over whether this particular issue

should be raised at all, will be endless. By contrast, the background of World War II is as simple as it is horrifying, *i.e.* Hitler's relentless determination to have his way no matter what the price in blood and destruction. Indeed, now and then the German Führer almost seemed afraid of being cheated out of the sort of war that he craved. When the war finally did come as the obvious result of his behavior, many were convinced that the eventual opening of diplomatic archives would add very little to an understanding of the situation. Only details. Since the mid-1950's, by which time the primary sources had been scrutinized repeatedly, it has become quite difficult to present a convincing case for going over the matter once again.

Yet Laurence Lafore has just done so and with some measure of success. *The End of Glory* is as readable and succinct an account as any presently available. Whatever criticisms may be raised, it has a distinctive sauciness that many a reader will enjoy. It is not supposed to be a work of original research. Despite a number of novel observations it does not appear, like A. J. P. Taylor's book of several years ago, to be a work of broad interpretive revisionism. Rather it is the work of a man who probably likes the imaginative job of writing more than the arduous job of opening new mines of evidence. It is the work of a man who relishes the taste of his own style. He is delighted at his own flippancy and wants his readers to be so as well. Lafore's motivation here is perfectly legitimate. It merely happens that inevitably one's reaction to Lafore is going to depend on one's reaction to his style, not his viewpoint.

Understandably, some of the professionals will be distressed that Lafore seems more concerned about effect than about accuracy. Examples of this penchant abound. Looking at David Lloyd George and the British election of 1918, the author declares:

The voters were manipulated by a proletarian demagogue wildly avaricious

of power, backed by the frightened and ambitious grandees of a vulgarized Toryism.

Americans of about the same year arouse Lafore to even higher levels of descriptiveness:

Psychologically and diplomatically, they were frontiersmen, privateers singeing the beards of the kings who ruled the world order, a nation of Tom Sawyers turning a shrewd nickel, thumbing noses at the effete lords of the universe, protected by their oceans and their canny know-how from the consequences of their sassiness.

Farther along, the history of the Third Reich evokes a number of Laforisms including:

Hitler's [*Mein Kampf*] was the assertion of a necessary connection between racial superiority, German greatness, and his own mystical destiny to refurbish it as a result of a sort of Immaculate Conception in the womb of Germania.

Also:

The flames of German national dedication in the Nazi regime were like burning alcohol spilled on a concrete floor; they were brilliant and terrifying but they were all on the surface.

And finally a pointed lesson for the present:

The Austrian Nazi Party was adept at the now familiar methods of its kind: huge protest rallies against the reactionary government, non-negotiable demands, excoriation of the enemies of the German race, passionate denunciation of police brutality, exemplary beatings of assorted enemies, hoarse unisons of thousands shouting in hypnotic rhythms for Nazi power.

Very frequently an author who deals with the outbreak of war—any war—finds

himself almost automatically involved in a contest over the responsibility of the various personalities involved. Perhaps to gain attention he is tempted to play at sophistry in reallocating this responsibility as it has been understood in the past. Such is not the case with Lafore. Very effectively he presents a dismal story that has admittedly been told numerous times before. In the years 1935 and 1936, when the British and French still held an easy preponderance of power, they were at odds with one another about which dictator should be stopped. So none of the dictators was stopped. The French were willing to let Mussolini have Ethiopia. The British were indifferent to Hitler's rearmament of Germany. For too long a time both peoples proved forgiving about Nazi outrages if these were accompanied by Nazi promises of good behavior and cooperativeness in the future. In particular, the French, already immobilized by Maginot Line thinking, had no workable plan to sweep their forces across the German frontier to punish serious treaty violations. Instead, they were satisfied to counter Hitler's illegal gains with ineffectual diplomatic maneuvering, and before long they found themselves having to fall in line with the diplomatic course of Great Britain. According to Lafore, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and his entourage had a "definite creed." In the formulation of their appeasement policy they were sure that Hitler respected Britain and her governing class, that he had limited ambitions, and that he would be willing to abide by the obligations involved in a "general settlement" along traditional lines. This last is what the appeasers most of all held in view. Meanwhile, if there was to be war, let it be a war of Nazi Germany versus the Soviet Union.

In criticism of Lafore it might first of all be said that the ideas of Neville Chamberlain defy description much more stubbornly than those, for example, of Winston Churchill about whom there is considerably more evidence. Doubtless there will always

be some observers of Chamberlain who see him not as the designer of a "definite creed" but as an improviser, who in the very adverse circumstances of 1938 was virtually compelled for a while to hope that Hitler could be trusted. Because of British disarmament, for which all classes and parties were responsible, there was no suitable alternative to an experiment in appeasement. Perhaps the "definite creed" of Lafore might better be described as a kind of instinctive optimism that was finally dashed in the aftermath of Hitler's seizure of the whole of Czechoslovakia. As for a "general settlement," undoubtedly Lafore is correct in supposing that the appeasers dreamt of a day when France, Britain, Germany, and Italy, all harmoniously reconciled, could dominate the continent to the virtual exclusion of the Soviet Union, but at the same time a Soviet-German war, involving so many dangerous imponderables, would have been incompatible with a "general settlement" in any recognized sense. The strong desire of the appeasers for such a war is something that neither Lafore nor any other historian will have an easy time in demonstrating.

Apparently Lafore is not content with turning out a good fast-moving narrative portraying aggressive intention on the one side and supine reaction on the other side of the European situation. He is not content, in the manner of Carlyle, with leaving the grand design of history to be built by heroes, or to say anything of leaving it to be built by villains. He senses perhaps that numerous readers have a compelling appetite for historical sub-structure. They have to have "underlying causes" or else they think that their author is not authoritative. So Lafore pulls in economic determinism. Ultimately Hitler is shown as deciding in favor of war against Europe because the German economy was "overheated," while one may infer that somewhat earlier Mussolini decided on war against Ethiopia because the Italian economy was "underheated."

Lafore tries to salvage his position by

concluding that "the visions of *Mein Kampf* determined the direction of German policy, and economic stringencies determined their timing." This is an unhappy arrangement of things. Lafore himself has to admit that Hitler was no economist, and he produces no scintilla of evidence that Hitler thought of himself as being moved by the larger economic conditions that he, Lafore, is concerned about. So the assumption that these economic conditions determined the timing of aggression veers much too close to simple *post hoc ergo hoc* thinking. What makes the injection of an economic interpretation especially artificial is that throughout much of his treatment Lafore seems to suggest that Hitler acted when and as he did not only because of his fanatical ambitions but also because of his recognition of the disunity of Germany's potential enemies and his recognition of their moral and material weakness. Plainly, whether German economic prospects were good or bad, Hitler had motivation enough to be aggressive in the later years of the 1930's, all the more because he believed almost mystically that his own role and Mussolini's were indispensable for Axis success. In the timing of his operations, he believed as well that he had a special ingenuity in the art of taking risks that paid off handsomely. As far back as 1936 he had taken the supreme risk of reoccupying the Rhineland and had gotten away with it despite the doleful forecasts of his advisers. In 1939, despite his defiant talk of years and years of general war, he did not abandon the idea that his art would be true to him again. The appeasers in London and Paris, who had given way so many times before in better circumstances, would not stand up now and really fight.

Reviewed by BRENTON H. SMITH