

Fascism—East and South

Japan in China

SECRET AGENT OF JAPAN. By Amleto Vespa. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1938. \$3.

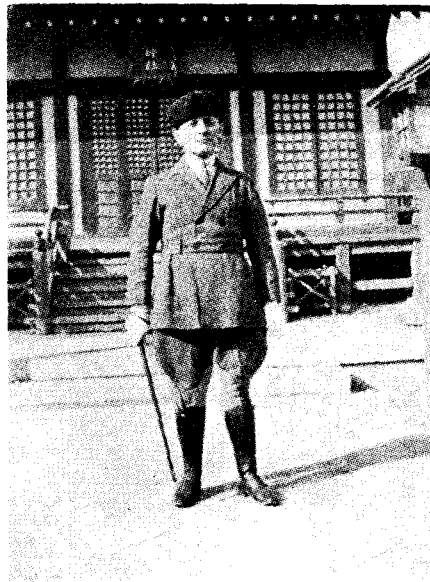
Reviewed by T. A. Bisson

UNTIL the horrors at Nanking were attested by missionary eye-witnesses, few Americans were willing to credit the degree of savagery exhibited by Japanese militarism in China since 1931. Informed observers were aware of the sufferings endured by the Manchurian people from Japanese rule, but this information never became generally known. An *exposé* of the Japanese system in Manchukuo, written by an Italian who acted for nearly five years as an official in its intelligence service, thus becomes a document of great historical importance. The fact that Mr. Vespa is a supporter of fascism and an admirer of Mussolini lends added weight to his evidence. An introductory note by Mr. H. J. Timperley, formerly correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in China, vouches for the authenticity of the author's revelations.

The personal history of Mr. Vespa is not the least interesting phase of his exciting narrative. In September 1920 he became an intelligence officer in Chang Tso-lin's service. When his efforts to stop the flow of illegal munitions imports into Manchuria from Italy raised difficulties with the Italian authorities, he became a naturalized Chinese citizen. As a result, the Japanese were able to force him to enter their own secret service early in 1932, on pain of threats to the safety of his wife and children. His escape to Shanghai was finally effected in September 1936, after the Japanese became aware of contacts he had maintained with Chinese guerrilla forces in Manchukuo. For six months he despaired of obtaining the release of his family, which was held as a hostage by the Japanese authorities. Eventually the Chinese guerrillas freed some Japanese prisoners in exchange for the release of his wife and children.

Only those who have talked with some of Japan's victims in Manchukuo can fully accept the picture which Mr. Vespa draws of conditions in that "independent" state. In stark horror, and in the almost unrelieved cynicism, savagery, and corruption of a military caste and its hangers-on, it recalls the worst practices of colonial exploitation in Africa. Mr. Vespa's main task involved control of the operations of Chinese bandit gangs—real bandits, not the Chinese guerrillas—who were utilized by the Japanese secret service for various purposes. These gangs wiped out Chinese or White Russian villages to make way for Japanese settlers, wrecked trains on the Chinese Eastern Railway before it passed into Japanese ownership, and

created "incidents" on the Manchurian borders which were attributed to Soviet troops. Agents of Mr. Vespa also spied on the activities of the Japanese gendarmerie and other police forces in Manchukuo. These latter were the chief rivals of the Japanese military for the "spoils" of the Manchurian conquest. Japan's police and army units made a regular business of kidnapping wealthy Chinese and White Russians, and subjecting them to incredible tortures until sufficient ransom was paid. The police and their *ronin* hangers-on racketeered on an enormous scale in opium, prostitution, and gambling, and levied tribute of all sorts on legitimate Chinese businesses. Opposition meant arrest, torture—often death. In military op-



Amleto Vespa in 1927

erations, whole villages were laid waste, the men killed, and the Chinese and White Russian women used at will by the Japanese officers and soldiery.

Especially illuminating is the record of some of Mr. Vespa's talks with his "chief," who vigorously asserted that the mission of the "chosen race" was to subjugate China, drive all white men from the East, and establish world dominion. The lies put out for foreign consumption were good-naturedly joked about among these Japanese officers. Their cleverness, however, did not match their brutality. Mr. Vespa carefully describes the measures adopted to hoodwink the Lytton Commission; when the Lytton Report was published, his "Chief" was summarily replaced. Japanese militarism has been scathingly denounced in the past, but no previous work has so convincingly revealed its actual lineaments and its threat to the rest of the world.

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"Peaceful Penetration"

THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR LATIN AMERICA. By Carleton Beals. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by ERNEST GRUENING

CARLETON BEALS shares with Samuel Guy Inman preëminence among American writers on Latin America. This timely book is his tenth within that vast field, not counting two novels and an autobiography dealing largely with Hispanic American experiences. The first half of this study is an excellent presentation of new material. It deals with the commercial and cultural invasions of the other Americas by Japan, Germany, Italy, Britain, Russia, and Spain. Four of these are marching triumphantly ahead. Only the British Lion is in retreat, and the Soviet effort is now negligible. Japanese sales are furthered by goods stamped "Made in USA", Usa being a Nipponese town rebaptized for an obvious purpose. German efficiency sends salesmen into remote jungles, leads them into social and cultural contact with natives which Mr. Beals contrasts with the inbred exclusiveness of the typical American colony in Latin American capitals. But conversely, he castigates the sinister effects of the Nazi hymns of hate and the injection of new poisons into regions traditionally tolerant. This campaign proceeds virulently by means of radio, press, subsidies, barter, and strong-arm methods. Mussolini's men have sold Peru their aircraft, trained its aviators, supplying perhaps five hundred war planes "within less than a day's flying from the Panama Canal."

"Fascism is at our door in bloody earnest," writes Beals, and its invasion of Latin America "has been carried out swiftly and brilliantly." Most interesting is that its greatest gains have been not on its Nazi or Italian fascist sectors, but through its Franco front—by way of rebel Spain. Mr. Beals affirms that peace or war in the Western hemisphere is more likely to be decided on Spain's battlefields than in Pan-American conferences, and that Franco's successes have gone far to consolidate the fascist forces in Latin America, because, obviously, the currents between Old and New World Hispanic cultures have been long established. Mr. Beals emphatically views our "neutrality" policy in Spain as helping fascism both there and in Latin America. He reiterates that its states are not democracies, and is highly critical of the illusion, propagated by American statesmen, that they are. That they are not democracies is correct; that dictatorships, varying ruthlessly or benignly, operate under republican forms, is true. But his generalized denunciation of those governments as "run by cut-throat dictators" is not justified. It is cer-

tainly not true of Alfonso Lopez of Colombia, of Lopez Contreras of Venezuela, of Arosemena of Panama. The fact is that among Latin-American people there is and has always been an underlying aspiration for freedom, which these very president-dictators are the first to recognize, as their efforts to demonstrate that they have popular support, reveal. Thus far, at least, with the exception of a brief totalitarian interlude in Paraguay, no president in Latin America has made a virtue of dictatorship, has deliberately, in European fascist style, denounced democracy. Mr. Beals elsewhere admits as much when he says that whenever the people of Latin America "have been given a chance to express their true opinions, they have indicated clearly that they have no sympathy for fascism, but desire more democracy and more liberty." Mr. Beals's objections notwithstanding, it is difficult to see, therefore, why the contrast between those common aspirations of the peoples of the Western Hemisphere (imperfectly realized, of course, even within our own United States) and the frankly boasted and deliberately undertaken destruction of all liberties in the totalitarian states, is not a proper subject for emphasis and a legitimate basis for a rapprochement between the Americas.

The second half of Mr. Beals's book deals largely with those relations, and here this reviewer must register considerable dissent. His criticism of much in our past policies is just, but his treatment of our subsequent attitude, our "good neighbor" policy, varies from cutting sarcasm to high praise, so that he can be quoted favorably or adversely. The result is not an average; it is a collection of nullifying contradictions.

Take his initial chapter "The Good Will Racket." He says: "No portion of the globe has endured the unasked good-will ministrations of righteous Americans more than Latin America. . . . Liberals, missionaries, concessionaires, newspapermen, bankers . . . students, women, pacifists, labor leaders, socialists" (he names thirty-five categories in all) "have flooded Latin America with saccharine words of friendship and this country with the true facts about our neighbors." Caustic irony this! But the cap fits no one quite so well as Mr. Carleton Beals himself. His final chapter, "What Does Latin America Want?," tells them and us what's what, discloses what they seek and should seek. But is the Beals medicine to be spewed out as "saccharine," or his efforts stigmatized as "a racket"?

There are a few factual errors. On the whole, however, this is a pretty good piece of combined factual and editorial journalism. It would be a better piece if Mr. Beals exhibited a little more tolerance and serenity, a little less assertiveness and asperity.

Ernest Gruening, director of the Division of Territory and Island Possessions, U. S. Department of the Interior, is the author of "Mexico and Its Heritage."

Spaniard to the Marrow

GOYA. By Charles Poore. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by OLIVER LARKIN

BEFORE seeing Goya dismembered by specialists and his works isolated from their context under the microscope of research, both layman and student would do well to read this simpler and more broadly designed book by the assistant editor of the *New York Times Book Review*. It would have been easy to melodramatize the cape-and-sword aspects of Goya. Instead, Mr. Poore swiftly and reasonably tells the story of the painter's life, distinguishing between substantial fact and those charming inventions of the *leyenda Goyesca* that are "truer as atmosphere than as truth," and managing to do so without clusters of footnotes. Brief word-portraits bring Goya's sitters before us: Maria Luisa; her lover Godoy who "conducted his decisive campaigns on a field no larger than a counterpane"; the Duchess of Alba, whose importance in Goya's life is reduced to normal by her being confined to one chapter. Events like the Second of May, which became subjects for Goya's pictures, are described as vigorously as though they had taken place yesterday,—which, in a sense, they did, since Spanish history has repeated itself in rather literal fashion. The author's account of those years of famine and destruction from 1808 to 1814 which inspired the "Desastres de la Guerra," reads like a dispatch from this morning's *Times*.

Mr. Poore wastes few words on such hardy stereotypes as "Spanish individualism." He writes, "if Spaniards are in-

dividualists, so are the people of any other country under the sun. If they show it more it is because, in default of just governments, the individual has so often been forced to look to his own fists for survival. Civil disorder is a mark of desperation, not of exuberance." The pages of this book crackle with phrases as pat as they are witty. Mr. Poore describes the Bourbons as "those strange victims of technological unemployment." The later plates among Goya's "Caprichos" have a "surrealism that makes sense." In the painter's province of Aragon, "the people learn early to take bread from stones." Of Goya's teacher, the academic-classic Mengs, Mr. Poore says that he worked upon "the sort of antiquity-haunted principles art employs when, suffering from plastic anemia, it has least vitality and invention of its own." He adds, "naturally, we all learn from the past; but Mengs wanted to move into it." Goya's difficulties in painting horses are summed up by saying that the results were "more epic than hippic" and of Velasquez, it is remarked that he "gave all his Philips their look of poached nobility."

The author, whose admiration for Goya and whose decade of research have given such freshness and conviction to the book, would scarcely claim to supplant the numerous scholars who have gathered, during a century, the materials on which it is based. "Goya" best serves as introduction to the works of art themselves, because it helps one to understand the conditions in which they were produced, and the kind of man who produced them,—a man who was still creating masterpieces in his eighties. Mr. Poore's Goya is not the solitary genius



From Goya's "Disasters of the War." "The author's account of those years of famine and destruction from 1808 to 1814 . . . reads like a dispatch from this morning's *Times*" . . .