

Beating a Retreat into the Future

AS WE GO MARCHING. By John T. Flynn. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. 1944. 272 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by HAL BORLAND

JOHN T. FLYNN says in the second paragraph of his introductory note: "This book is about fascism in America." With that warning he polishes off his introduction and rushes on to German history and, on page 166, just about two-thirds of the way through the book, gets down frankly to the case of America. From there to the end he thunders through his jeremiad. And he closes his book by tossing a bibliography of just under 200 items into the reader's presumably chattering teeth.

Mr. Flynn is a reading man, obviously. He is also a writing man. He wrote "Country Squire in the White House"; it is the only other Flynn book listed on the fly leaf of this volume. He has also written lively historical and economic studies. And he will be (or should be) remembered as the author of a number of remarkable statements issued by the directors of the America First Committee in the months just preceding December 7, 1941.

If one knows Mr. Flynn's writings, there are few surprises in the present volume. Not even the last few sentences are surprising. After detailing his history, drawing more parallels than there are on an acre of graph paper, uttering countless judgments and indicting one policy after another, he sums up by saying: "I did not undertake this book in order to outline a program of action, so that this is not the place to indicate such a program. My only purpose is to sound a warning against the dark road upon which we have set our feet as we go marching to the salvation of the world and along which every step we take now leads us farther and farther from the things we want and the things we cherish."

Briefly, Mr. Flynn's argument is that America is well on the way to totalitarianism and that the major forces at work today are hastening us toward that end. All his Italian and German history is presented for the purpose of drawing parallels. Mr. Flynn finds substantially identical patterns in Italy and Germany, and he arrays his American history to fit these findings. He does it very adroitly. I suspect that he could also, if he had a mind to, build similar parallels between our history and the story of the fall of ancient Rome. That would be a good performance, too.

Out of his European history he

evolves this general definition of a fascist government:

It is a government whose powers are unrestrained. It has a leader who is an absolute dictator responsible only to a party of the elite. Its economic system is based on state control of production and distribution. Investment is directed and regimented by the government. A federal borrowing-and-spending policy is instituted. Militarism is an inevitable part of the system because it drains the labor mar-



John T. Flynn

ket and creates an armament industry. Imperialism follows as a part of the militarist policy and to keep the people willing to make personal and financial sacrifices.

"Where these elements are found," he says, "there is fascism, by whatever name the system is called." And he proceeds to find these elements in America.

History is a fascinating study simply because the reader can find so many contradictory events in it. Go through those events, and you can single out an assortment to prove almost any thesis you choose. Weight certain facts, slight others, and you have whatever you want. American history may be no different from European history in this respect, but the past fifty years have seen so many cross-currents that it seems peculiarly susceptible to a variety of interpretations. That's one way to account for Mr. Flynn's findings.

The apt interpretation, however, has its dangers. He warns against imperialism as a potent factor in the dangers ahead. Yet he traces American imperialism back forty-four years, to a gaudy "white man's burden" speech made by Albert Beveridge in the Senate early in January of 1900. Imperialism, he says, got us into this war and inevitably will get us into other wars.

"We are at war," he says, "and we are at war in Asia because we possessed the Philippines." But he neglects to explain why it took forty-two years for that speech of Beveridge to get us into war out there. One wonders just how critical such a situation can be when there is such a time lag between cause and effect.

And while one ponders, one remembers something else Mr. Flynn once said about the way we got into this war. It was in the form of a warning, which he uttered in October of 1941, just after the *Kearny* was sunk by German torpedoes. "The war party," Mr. Flynn said then, "is praying for these attacks. They are praying for the sinking of American vessels with the American flag on them and American seamen in them, in order to arouse the American people to a war fever."

Of course, he could have meant all along that "the war party" was just holding the Philippines as an ace in the hole, to be used in case their prayers for more attacks in the Atlantic went unanswered.

Imperialism, and the war caused by the Philippines, however, are only one item on Mr. Flynn's agenda. Economics interest him even more, particularly red-ink economics. The spectre of future debt service is, to him, the ultimate proof that the end of the world is in sight. Sometimes the less learned among us shudder at those billions, ourselves, and wonder where the interest is coming from. But when we do, we get to thinking about the way the Axis was lunging through Europe and Asia and into the Aleutians and even into Hawaii a couple of years ago, and we decide that maybe there are worse things than deficits. Even when we get bogged down completely in those unfathomable income tax returns, we still are of that mind.

Then, of course, Mr. Flynn quails at the spectacle of Government control of production. There, too, we can understand some of his fears. Fortunately, there are a good many others who don't believe in over-all controls except in war time. His point even loses its punch today when we look at what the American factories have done. Mr. Flynn doesn't mention that. Perhaps he is still of the same mind he was in June of 1941, when he said, among other arguments against our getting into the war, that we seriously lacked war equipment and that "it will take years to get the supply needed to equip the vast armies that will be needed for the job these war-makers are talking about." It did take "years." Two years, as a matter of fact. And even before the end of those two years we had enough material to

clear the Axis out of Africa and send them scurrying up the Italian peninsula.

But perhaps we are skirting Mr. Flynn's major point. He says there is a powerful group in the Government which is intent on making and keeping the United States of America a totalitarian state. He says that Congress has abdicated. He says the President has been given the power of the purse. He implies that in case of future crisis, the States may even rush through a constitutional amendment putting complete dictatorial powers in the President—look, he says, at the speed with which the Eighteenth Amendment was ripped out of the Constitution, when an earlier crisis came along.

Now in all these matters, Mr. Flynn arrays parallels by the dozen. He cites his authorities and he draws his conclusions. You can believe in his fears, or you can pass them up. But typical of his argument is the one which he advances to prove his contention that Congress is being pushed out of the picture. Not so long ago, he says, there was a concerted drive to discredit Congress. He doesn't say where that drive originated. He does say that the newspaper columnists were drawn into the plot. And he cites some bitter words of Raymond Clapper to clinch his point, saying that Clapper helped the plot along. In point of fact, Mr. Clapper's bitter words at that time—and they were strong, eloquent words—were essentially a plea for a strong Congress that would stand on its own feet and do its job. He cracked down on the weaklings and called for guts and integrity and the kind of Congressional backbone that makes constitutional, representative government work. And Mr. Flynn cites those words of Raymond Clapper, without quoting them, as a sample of the campaign "to discredit Congress."

We need critics. We need men with the courage to stand up in meeting and bawl hell out of us now and then. We also need men who not only know what's wrong, but who have some ideas about how to get things back on the right track.

Mr. Flynn has bawled hell out of us for some time now, and he has pointed an accusing finger in all directions. But when you get right down to it, his thesis seems to be that the world is going to pot, has been headed there for the past fifty years, and that the United States of America is in the last stages of democratic disintegration. And apparently he hasn't any idea what to do about it; if he has, he has pretty well kept it to himself. He says in so many words in this book that there isn't any program here.

Maybe it's just that he is in a

perpetual state of discouragement. A little over two years ago—in September of 1941, to be exact—he asked: "Is any material or spiritual thing of ours here in America involved to such a point that you are willing to raise vast armies, send them throughout the world and cripple your whole economic and social system for years in the effort?" America felt that the

answer was "Yes!" Japan emphasized that answer for us. We risked the future, because we thought a lot of things, both material and spiritual, were worth fighting for—if you can call going to war under those circumstances risking the future. But Mr. Flynn seems still to be of the same opinion, at heart, that he was less than three months before Pearl Harbor.

Vanguard of Reconquest

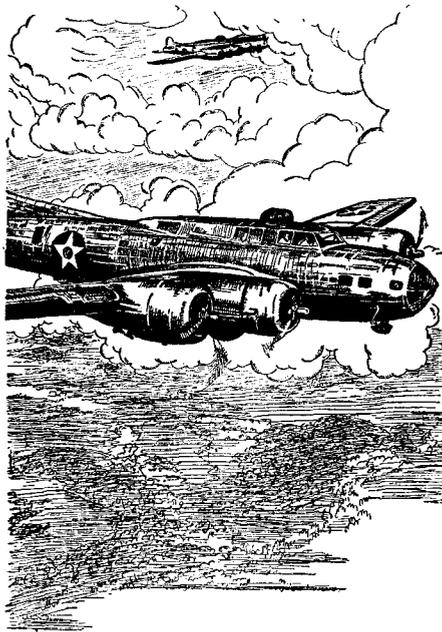
WINGATE'S RAIDERS. By Charles J. Rolo. New York: The Viking Press. 197 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by
CAPTAIN C. BROOKS PETERS, USMC

ORDE CHARLES WINGATE is a brigadier in the British Army. Slightly more than two years ago he was a major, not just another professional soldier who had attained his majority through length of service, but a man with a considerable reputation for daring strategy and tactics gained in fighting terrorists in Palestine and Italians in Ethiopia.

In the late spring of 1942, when the campaign in Burma was approaching a disastrous climax, Field Marshall Wavell had Wingate sent out to India to appraise the causes for the British defeat in that campaign, to "fathom the secrets of Japanese jungle warfare, and to plan a campaign which would be the vanguard of reconquest of Burma."

"Wingate's Raiders" is the history of that guerrilla campaign through which General Wingate led a body of several thousand highly and specially trained troops to test the efficacy of the jungle tactics he had evolved and simultaneously to destroy valuable enemy-held installations in Burma.



Departing India afoot, committed to avoiding even jungle trails when in the vicinity of the enemy so as constantly to be in the position to outflank the Japanese, Wingate's Raiders marched more than 1,000 miles in a trek which took them from Imphal in Assam across the Chindwin River, through Burma to and beyond the Irrawaddy River, and to within one 100 miles of the Burma road and then back to India.

General Wingate wished to test, among other principles, the practicability of taking ordinary troops "born and bred for the most part to factories and workshops" and by special conditioning and training building a force capable of meeting, and beating, the enemy in jungle warfare. He wished also to experiment with the feasibility of supplying a sizeable body of men exclusively by air-drop, thus rendering his communication lines invulnerable, and to test the extent to which it would be possible for a field commander to direct and coordinate by radio the activities of small groups of his force scattered at considerable distances through the jungle.

The hazardous journey undertaken by General Wingate and his men is recorded in considerable detail in "Wingate's Raiders." Unfortunately the author of the volume, Charles J. Rolo, was not along on the trek. He has culled his information from official confidential reports and from conversations with two of the officers who participated.

Mr. Rolo has not quite succeeded in making his tale live. It is largely impersonal, a recountal of the route followed by the expedition and the major obstacles which it encountered. It conveys none of the terror which is an enemy-infested jungle and to this reviewer seems slightly detached from the horror which is this war.

For those interested in the personality of General Wingate, "the New Lawrence," the book is pregnant with anecdotes and photographs. Mr. Rolo gives copious evidence to substantiate his claim that General Wingate is "an eccentric, with the reforming zeal of an evangelist and the intellectual fervor of an Old Testament prophet."