

The Book Trail

SIDNEY J. ABELSON

The New York Sunday News would have us believe that "there are too many people in Europe." Now this esteemed daily does not insinuate this conclusion; it asserts it, forthrightly and full-blown from the collective editorial mind of its high command: "There Are Too Many People in Europe." These very words captioned a recent editorial which for lack of brilliance, wit, accuracy, good taste, appropriateness, scholarship and logic has hardly an equal in all the burgeoning files of newspaper opinion.

"That is the real trouble with Europe," the editorial assures its 3,500,000 or more readers, "that there are simply too many people in Europe for the basic plant to take care of in comfort." Maybe there are also too many people reading the News for the good of that paper's bright minds—but that is another question.

The vicious dissemination of this absolutely unsubstantiated conclusion—that over-population is at the root of economic or social problems—is one of the high crimes of current journalism. In spite of the contrary conclusions of specialists who devoted lifetimes to research in the field, in spite of the very obvious evidence displayed by such nations as Switzerland, Belgium and Holland, that density of population has no inevitable relationship with poverty or other social problems, in spite of the further evidence furnished by Hitler and Mussolini who cynically disregard the simplest logic by crying out at the same time that their countries are over-populated and that they need more babies—in spite of all this evidence and more, supposedly mature writers continue to spread the word that over-population is the basic evil from which we suffer.

In refreshing contrast to the intellectually negative position of the News is this passage in Walter Millis' *Why Europe Fights* (William Morrow & Co., Inc. \$2.00): "It may

be said that in a sense there was no 'reason' in the spring of 1939, for another great European war. There were no vast mechanical 'causes' driving the nations to battle, in the same way that... drought and famine once caused populations to migrate over the earth. There was no struggle for 'survival.' People were not starving to death in any of the great powers; and even if they had been, there was no possibility that by fighting a major war they could seize the food they needed. There were no resources which even the poorest of European peoples could hope to conquer in such a war that they could not have got the use of much more cheaply and easily in other ways."

These indeed are the conclusions to which all must come who make a sober study of the facts. Why then, since there was no "reason" did war break out? Because the basic human problem is the problem of the individual and this fact is brutally ignored by "statesmen" who make it seem, for their own reasons, that there are "national" and "racial" problems. If the goings-on of European "statesmen" were offered as fictional drama on the stage the result would be comedy, not tragedy, so ludicrously incredible are the connivings, the dealings and double-dealings of these men who rush from chancellery to chancellery in tail coats and top hats seeking to outwit each other. They write high-sounding phrases on expensive rag paper duly stamped with seals of high authority—and it seems most important, and is!

But the importance is that of catastrophe, not salvation. These comedians of protocol who would be patriotic redeemers are for the most part knaves, scoundrels or fools—and the sooner the intelligent mass of mankind realizes this the better.

It is this story of the diplomatic events leading up to the tragedy which Mr. Millis tells so well in *Why Europe Fights*. From time to time he does go cautiously behind the political histrionics, mostly for quick glimpses. However, it was not his intention to be exhaustive but rather to write "a review of ... sal-

ient features" and in this objective he has succeeded admirably. His book is smooth, economically written, factual and carefully organized. It is indeed a book which intelligent people should keep constantly at their elbows so as to be able to look at it at all times and be reminded of the hard historical truth it sets forth: there is no hope for mankind in war or diplomacy; our salvation must lie somewhere else.

* * *