

- BOOK REVIEW -

SPAIN'S ORDEAL

Robert Sencourt.

(Reviewed by Charles McQuaid, '39)

The Spanish revolution conducted by Francisco Franco has been the occasion for the publication of many books, some in support of the revolutionary movement, and probably as many others singing the praises of the republic. Of the former group, "Spain's Ordeal" must be considered as one of the most authoritative, as well as one of the most interesting on the subject. The sub-title, — A Documented Survey of Recent Events, — aptly describes the work.

Mr. Sencourt is no stranger to Spain or Spaniards; his pen has treated the subject in a previous book, "Spain's Uncertain Crown." This was an account of the Spanish monarchy from 1808 to its fall in 1931. The present book is a continuation of the first, giving, as it does, a detailed account of affairs from the last days of the reign of Alphonso XIII to the second winter of the civil war, that is, to the winter of 1937.

The account divides itself naturally into two parts. The first includes those troublesome years from the crisis of the monarchy to that of Franco's uprising. Part II is a detailed history of the war in as far as it can be obtained from acute observers and reliable secondary sources.

The first section is strictly a general survey, introduced for a better understanding of the problem at hand. The author reviews briefly the political developments which brought in turn the republic and the revolution. The machinations of Russia with respect to the Spanish people and the Church are laid bare, and an analysis of the nature and reaction of the Spaniard is made to explain the effect.

Part TWO is entitled "During the War," since it treats of events from the opening of hostilities to the second winter. Mr. Sencourt follows Franco from Morocco to the audacious capture of Sevilla, and from there, as a base, along his sweeping advances to the outskirts of Madrid. Then the winter engagements about Malaga and the victorious march on Bilbao the following summer, which resulted in control of the northern coast. The narrative con-

cludes with the victory of Teruel, one of the decisive battles of the Spanish War.

But "Spain's Ordeal" is more than a bare historical representation of current events in the Iberian Peninsula. Intermingled in the chronicle are chapters giving the inside story of what went on behind the scenes at the non-intervention conferences, and which expose the real motives of nations endeavoring to make Spain a pawn on the chess board of European political affairs. One chapter, *Sinews of War*, reveals how General Franco managed to conduct his war and meet the huge expenditures it inevitably occasioned, in spite of the fact that he was without resources on that July day when the revolution broke out. The leaders of many nations could learn much from a study of Franco's economic policies.

The chapter that leaves the most vivid impression after the book has been finished and laid aside is the one which treats of the defence of the Alcazar. In the history of modern war-fare, there was probably no more heroic and apparently more foolhardy resistance put up against overwhelming odds. Mr. Sencourt's treatment of the incident does full justice both to the stubborn patriotism of the defenders and to the equally persistent efforts of the besiegers, and leaves the reader with a graphic picture of the siege that will be made immortal in the pages of history.

And so "Spain's Ordeal" adds another chapter, though incomplete inasmuch as it treats of but the first two years of the war, to the tragic history of Spain. It is written for the layman, unversed in the intrigues of European diplomacy, and is so even more welcome to the average reader. Its easy flowing style, and the sincere attempt to be without prejudice or bias are also points in its favour. As a readable book on the current Spanish question, we can do no better than recommend "Spain's Ordeal," by Robert Sencourt.

FLESH IS NOT LIFE

Hilary L. Barth.

(Reviewed by Somerled Trainor, '39)

If a very popular and fairly modern young lady were to be expelled from college considerable interest would be aroused among those acquainted with the event. It is

precisely such an incident that Barth uses as an introduction to his novel, "Flesh Is Not Life." Attracted by this beginning, the reader discovers in the opening chapter that the young lady's expulsion is caused by a bitter speech in which she depicts mass poverty and the greed of the Capitalist class. She immediately wins the reader's, if not Dean Scoat's admiration for her courageous refusal to retract or apologize. And so, in "Flesh Is Not Life" we follow the career of Tandra Sothoron, Charm Girl of Northern University.

This interesting story is centered around Miss Sothoron's search for what might be called the Right Life. Deeply touched by the misery of the poor, she devotes all her time and energy trying to find a remedy for existing labor conditions. The author has her fall in love with one Harvey Sothoron, a communist leader, but at the same time uses her as a mouthpiece to shatter all the tenets of Communism. Her romance ends in tragedy when Sothoron is caught in a fire and is burned to death. Passing from one stage of skepticism to another, she ultimately finds in Catholicism the solution of all her problems. The story ends with her reception into the Catholic Church, and her subsequent marriage to a Catholic friend, Brendan Grover.

"Flesh Is Not Life" in the main is a refutation of the promises of Communism. Generously sprinkled with logic (perhaps, too much so), the book is a combination of Catholic doctrine, philosophy, and a good story. The background is highly modern, and the characters truly belong to our age.

Like many books, however, it has its faults, one of which is poor writing. The author crowds too many arguments into a small space. Consequently the reader is abruptly and vaguely introduced to paragraphs of reasoning which end quite as abruptly as they begin. Then, too, the characters, especially Miss Sothoron, are clumsily handled; they lack personality, and resemble more mechanical gadgets, which spout reasoning from morning to night, than human beings.

The idea behind the book is a splendid one. Barth uses an attractive means of refuting pernicious theories, and of expounding what would otherwise seem dry principles of logic. We could do worse than read "Flesh Is Not Life," although in hands more skilled in the art of writing a much tastier literary dish might have been served.