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The Place of Fascism in European History

Review Author: Francisco Mallari, S.J.

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THE PLACE OF FASCISM IN EUROPEAN HISTORY. Edited by Gilbert Allardyce. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971. vii, 178 pages.

The young used to make the streets ring with "ibagsak ang fasismo!". What do they really know about fascism? Since it was an European experience, the popular conception of this movement is limited to chanting, flag-bearing columns of Italian and German youth, goose-stepping storm troopers, rumbling Panzer divisions and grotesque forms of violence and coercion. Unfortunately, this degree of understanding does not penetrate beyond the external trappings of fascism which has remained to the present a persistent puzzle even to scholars.

To explain the problem, historians have approached it from different angles and found it no easy task. In his introduction, the editor outlined the pitfalls confronting them. To fully appreciate the difficulties, one has only to pore over the clashing interpretations of authoritative scholars which the editor has arranged in "topical categories".

While its presentation of the problem and some of the interpretations may not gain wide acceptance, this book, with its recommended readings, will be a great help to students of history in deepening their knowledge of a controversial movement that not only turned out hellish institutions but also awakened Western man to the inadequacies of his traditional values.

It is hoped that a revised edition would include viewpoints dealing substantially with the religious dimension in order that more light might be shed on the nature of this "mal du siecle". Fascism, indeed, appealed to the "impulses of the inner man". And that phenomenon is fraught with spiritual implications.

Francisco Mallari, S.J.

TRAGIC CAVALIER. By Felix D. Almaraz, Jr. Austin: University of Texas, 1971. 206 pages.

It was a scintillating stroke of genius when Spain conceived of a buffer zone north of New Spain. This region, historically known as the Spanish borderlands, was to serve as a defensive perimeter to protect New Spain from foreign incursions. The brilliance of the plan and its execution stood out all the more in the afterglow of events as early as the 18th century when the Russians, the English and the French constantly threatened from the north and east. Against such intruders, Spain had held on to her colony south of the borderlands for three centuries and that was no little token of the effectivity of the buffer policy.

That this policy had weaknesses, no one can deny. Most serious was the cumbersome bureaucratic machine with its helpless, though sometimes heroic, human agents caught up in its sluggish grind. Nothing, for instance,