Security By Air Power

Wings For Peace, by Bonner Fellers, Brigadier General USA, Ret. 248 pp. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company. $3.50

Drawing upon his vast experience, Brigadier General Bonner Fellers has written a provocative book on the threat to the survival of the American people and the free world, if we should engage in a war with Russia. It is a passionate appeal for immediate review of our present military and foreign policies. He is alarmed at our danger, and dismayed by the stereotyped, outdated conception of warfare. He would make an about-face and exploit the enormous potentialities of air power. The Air Force should be put into first place, relegating the Army and the Navy to supporting roles, and it should be overwhelmingly strong. Such a concept would guarantee the security of America; it would offer greater aid and security to our allies; it is in fact the only means we have of defeating Russia; and it would provide adequate defense of this country without bankruptcy.

Since General Fellers is not an air man, his arguments carry particular weight. The author is a professional officer of high military attainments who has thought this problem through, and he supplies startling statistics to prove his thesis. We cannot defeat Russia with ground armies; neither we nor our allies have the necessary manpower, and we do not wish to have our youth needlessly slaughtered. It is, therefore, senseless to waste money, time, and effort in supporting NATO. The latter merely adds to our insecurity, because its costs reduce the possibility of having a larger air force. It is such a drain on the resources of all nations that our allies are dragging their feet and not doing their full share. NATO is a ground army conception and in that kind of war against Russia and her satellites the odds are against the free world.

Many officers, both American and otherwise, feel as does the author. Last year in Europe I heard air officers state that our Air Force would disappear from the skies after twenty-four hours of war, while everyone agreed that the ground forces would melt like snow on top of a stove.

The author discusses present military realities, treating in turn the ominous threat of the Red Air Force; the futility of the policy of containment (propounded by a civilian) which violates a fundamental principle of war that dispersion of forces is to be avoided at all costs; and the stubborn military tradition which causes the Pentagon planners to cling to a type of warfare practiced in both World Wars under completely different conditions. By contrast, he shows persuasively the new military capabilities which the airplane offers; our genius for producing aircraft in quantity and quality, the unique role of the airplane as the only military weapon which would be able to penetrate the heart of Russia and thus destroy its war industry.

Wings For Peace is like a clear beacon of thought in the rather murky and confused thinking that appears to dominate the universal military world. It carries a message of vital importance to the American people.

ROBERT C. RICHARDSON

The Industrial Age

Ford at Fifty: An American Story. 108 pp. New York: Simon and Schuster. $2.95

"The only history that is worth a tinker's damn is the history we make today," Henry Ford once said. This was a large statement, but Ford's pronouncements were not notable for their diffidence. A man who out of nothing can build an astronomic industrial empire, set up a near-billion-dollar foundation on the side, and revolutionize the living habits of a nation is not the sort of man who hesitates to speak his piece.

Ford at Fifty speaks the piece of the Ford Motor Company and of Henry Ford rather eloquently. "Two flies can manufacture 48,876,552,154 new flies in six months, but they haven't got anything on two Ford factories," wrote a humorist in 1913. By that time Henry Ford was well on the way to realizing his dream of a car that *all* Americans could buy. It had not been without difficulties and considerable opposition. When he started tinkering in the woodshed of his house, an automobile was considered the work of the devil. Proposals were seriously entertained that anyone driving at night should stop every mile and send up warning rockets. Farmers, now so completely motorized that it is hard to remember the era of the horse and buggy, in those days thought differently. "If a horse is unwilling to pass an automobile," recommended the Farmers' Anti-Automobile Society of Pennsylvania, "the driver should take the machine apart as rapidly as possible and conceal the parts in the bushes."

Ford brushed all such tiresome nonsense imperiously aside, survived a couple of false starts, and in the end made his name a household word. Though a fair number of foreigners in the twenties might have had difficulty naming the President of the United States, they knew who Ford was. When I was traveling before the war in Morocco my Arab driver, who spoke some French, always referred to our car as *"un ford,"* and it was useless for me to explain that this particular automobile was *not* a Ford. It went on wheels, blew out puffs of smoke from the rear end, and came from America. Therefore it was *"un ford."*

The present book has its hub in the town of Sacramento in California—where the inhabitants seem to require roughly one car to every one-and-a-half persons—but it is actually a commentary on the changes brought about in our social history by the mass production of automobiles. It is full of interesting and often surprising facts, figures, and people. A number of famous editors, writers, and photographers collaborated to bring it out, and unlike certain other all-star casts they have produced a winner.

Ford at Fifty might be termed a tribute to free enterprise. Only in a truly free economy, and perhaps only in America, could such things have happened. Though the book is ostensibly concerned with the fifty years of the Ford Motor Company, the tall lean figure of Henry Ford the man inevitably strides through it. One of his remarks struck me as having in these times an almost nostalgic simplicity. He made it when General Hugh Johnson was sent up from Washington to try and talk Ford into the NRA. Henry Ford listened silently to a couple of hours' dissertation on "economics." Then he stood up. "All I know," he said, "is that you people are making it awfully hard for a young man who is trying to get ahead in business these days."

JOHN VERNON TABERNER

Quiet Mysticism

The Explicit Flower, by Louise Townsend Nicholl. 49 pp. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. $2.75

Louise Townsend Nicholl writes poetry so restrained as to seem heard from a great distance. The title of her book comes from a poem called "Organist Practicing," and is characteristic of her competence and point of view:

> Organ, over and over go,
> Until the explicit flower blow,
> The flower that the stillness makes,
> Music the shape that silence takes
> When saturate.

Hers is a poetry of quietness and of the spirit, where the unseen as well as the unheard give meaning to the objects contemplated. It is a difficult kind of poetry to write and, as in the title poem, most of the verses succeed only moderately well in conveying the sense of regions and forms that are surely vivid enough to the writer. In "Empathy at Evening" she writes:

> At evening everything—a bush, a chair—
> Becomes aware;
> . . . the great world turns luminous and thin
> And sudden fragrance rises from the flower.

The fragrance of the flower is asserted, but it is not in the poem. And yet the poem as a whole does succeed in suggesting the delicate links between human beings and the rest of the animate and inanimate world with which they surround themselves and which they share in.

> We pass from room to room
> And what's not wood
> Partakes the purely human view
> Of what is good:

The night takes over and the imagery continues:

> . . . the great world again is massed
> Between us and the mystery.
> Even the brooding house will hardly keep
> Its vigil now, and beauty must abide
> Only within the mind, where soon will slide
> The paneled silk integument of sleep.

It is on the whole mystical poetry of a somewhat prosaic kind: "brooding house," "beauty must abide"—these are familiar tokens for such voyagings into the ultimate mysteries.

EUGENE DAVIDSON

Cardboard Hero

The Eagle and the Rock, by Frances Winwar. 371 pp. New York: Harper and Bros. $3.95

With the facile fluency which has endeared her to the readers of her earlier historical novels, Miss Winwar gives us the grand romance of Napoleon's life from his grave—the story starts at St. Helena—to his cradle at Corsica, as witnessed and told by Victor de Laurestan. A fictitious childhood friend of Napoleon and his confidant to his death, Victor has the happy ubiquity of a Lanny Budd. He is at Napoleon's elbow on the battlefield and in the bedroom, when he is crowned by the Pope and seduces Maria Walewska, when he has his last meeting with Josephine and his first with Marie-Louise, when he makes his futile attempt at suicide, when he is defeated at Waterloo.

More power to Victor! The novelist needs his like. However, he is rather a displaced character in this novel. As things are, the extreme loneliness of Napoleon's exile is an intrinsic part of his tragedy. His companions there were latecomers to his destiny; none of them knew the youth from Corsica or the victor of Italy or even the consul. The Rock of St. Helena wouldn't have been quite so rocky for the Eagle had there really been a Victor from the glorious past around—one who knew how everything had come about because he was in on it right from the start.

However, the real trouble with Victor is that he never sees beneath the surface. Presented as a scholar, he is distressingly short on thought and lacking in insight. Also his tale is reduced to a cartoon of the more flamboyant Napoleonic episodes; his Napoleon is a mere cardboard hero, as flat and static as they come.

For the last one hundred and fifty years historians and novelists have tried to understand and interpret Napoleon's puzzling genius and the meaning of his rise and fall. De Maistre thought that "he came directly from heaven like lightning." Chateaubriand called him the "Michelangelo of politics and war." To Léon Bloy his story was "the face of God in tenebrosity." Unfortunately Miss Winwar's novel at no point conveys such wonder