

Interlude in Despair

Robert Morgan

“WHILE I was writing this book the process it deals with reached a series of further climaxes in their logical development.

“It was difficult to keep my mind fixed on what had happened in July and September when what was happening in January was also part of the story . . . circumstances . . . so much a part of it that I could not ignore them and keep my study doors closed.”

So does Vincent Sheean, author of *Personal History*, characterize the germination of his 1939 non-fiction best-seller, *Not Peace but a Sword*—as damning a criticism of Nazi and Italian Fascism and the British Toryism which failed to oppose it at the critical moment, as has been written in the past four years.

Essentially Sheean's theme is bitter anti-Fascism, but the real strength of the book rests in the author's ability to paint concisely and vividly the unspeakable pathos of the masses of Europeans who have been blindly but unwillingly crushed under the boot of militant Fascism by betrayal in London and Paris. A considerable portion of the material is based upon the writer's experiences in Spain, although he does not fail to convey clearly the mute despair of the people of Czechoslovakia when they were traded on the block of appeasement.

SHEEAN is no mere reporter, nor is he the purely academic historian. He sees a story in its entirety, but since he is essentially a story-teller, he writes as one who is counting the pulse of humanity. His narrative style is much more digestive than the reader of historical material is apt to be accustomed to. The validity of his political or humanitarian views must be the subject of the individual reader's criticism, but there is little that one can find at fault in Sheean's cry for a decent stand by a humanity which recognizes the rights of man. His oft repeated phrase, “It is better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees,” may well sum up the focus of his attitude and the underlying philosophy of the book.