By REX STOUT

BOOKS and the war. When did the war start? 1914, Japan into Manchuria? 1939, Italy into Ethiopia? 1937, Germany and Poland to Spain? March, 1939, Germany into Czechoslovakia? September, 1939, Germany to Poland? June, 1941, Germany into Russia? December, 1941, Japan into Peiping? 

The record of books on the war is abundant; it is only that a part of the present world-wide hostilities, but if we mean the war, in its true chronological dimensions the record becomes infinitely worse. During the knife-wielding interminable one of the major objectives of Germany was to persuade us that she was Cinderella and we were the wicked sisters, and at least four-fifths of the books written and published in this country—those which have not been censored at all—did their best to help Germany out. Here and there, running wretchedly between covers such as those of Bernardotte Schmidt, but these were few and far between. Any one in the United States reading the hundred or more widely read books on the international situation would have been convinced that Germany was misunderstood, misjudged, and that all about the world was well; but the comment may be permitted that the men who wrote most of them, consciously or unconsciously, feebly deceived and misinformed their fellow-citizens. And it was too much to expect that the guiding spirit of at least one or two of our large publishing houses might have taken the trouble to insert a little of the facts of life and make them purchasable in book stores.

Apparantly it was. I think it is fair to say that during that period—roughly from 1914 to 1917—the writers and publishers of books failed more utterly and spectacularly to fulfill their most important function than in any comparable period since the invention of movable type.

Then, what? Much. If anything, worse. Oh, there were books which didn’t like Hitler, or President Roosevelt, or Mussolini. There were books which thought it was naughty of the Japanese to tell the Chinese that they should not sail the Yangtze and march into Peiping; there were books which deplored the

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The Unarmed Are Choice Food for the Tiger.

of one of the prime ingredients of the poisonous German hast—

the industrialists and cartels. They are the kind of Germans for whom individuals like a Bis-marck or a Wilhelm II or a Hitler are merely the hired help.

"Europe and the German Question," by F. W. Faurester, covers more territory, both spiritually and chronologically. If any American cares enough about what happens in the next twenty or fifty years to read one book, and only one, this is certainly it. Faurester, now over 70 years old, was born and bred a Prussian, and was for many years an outstanding educator in Germany. He ought to know and he does know. In 1943 he offered his knowledge in this book to the people of America and 3,409 of us bought the book.

Dr. Richard M. Brinkner has written a book called "Is German Incurable?" which will be published the first of April. It will probably start a controversy. Dr. Brinkner, a psychiatrist of high professional standing, first describes in detail the symptoms and characteristics of an individual man or woman afflicted with the disease called paranoia and then proceeds to the thesis that the German people, as a whole, have displayed similar symptoms and characteristics for many years in their dealings with other peoples. It is fascinating, persuasive, and a good tough job.

It might be suspected, since I made extended comment only on these three books, that I share with the Germans their conviction that the German Master Race is the only bunch of humans worth writing about. Not so. There are several other books on various other subjects that are equal-ly vital to an understanding of this world at war, but it is im-

possible for me to comment upon them because they have not been written—at least they haven’t been published. Here are:

1. At dinner tables and street corners Americans are arguing whether we should take part in the organization of the world. We might as well be arguing whether sunshine, meeting a solid object, should cast a shadow. One book, well enough done, could drive home that we no longer have any choice in the matter. On that December day in 1933 when that weird contraption of the Wright brothers stayed in the air for forty-nine seconds it became completely impossible for the people in Chicago to dissociate their affairs, in war or in peace, from those of the people of Chungking. If you say we have grasped that fact, I say we haven’t. If we have, why all the argument, and why all the obvious preparations of the isolationists to try to drag us back into that hole, with their wiseacres about Hofstot and TVA on the Danube? Having a Senator Wheeler, a Mr. McCormick and a New York Daily News, we need a book.

2. Since the world is now so small that it will inevitably be organized, who is going to organize it? Hitler? The conflicts between fascism and democracy (by whatever names they were called at the moment) have always been localized. The area was the Eastern Mediterranean or the Iberian Peninsula or the Continent of Europe. Henceforth it is the world and cannot be anything less. There will no longer be new lands to flee to from oppression, as there were for the Pilgrims of 1620 or the German revolutionaries of 1848. Therefore it is vitally necessary that all of us shall understand the true

nature and meaning of those controversial concepts of human society, fascism and democracy, so that each of us will be able to say, "This is my side. I am for this." We need a book.

3. While there are plenty of Fascists, too many for comfort, in all parts of the world, including ours, there are only two countries, big and powerful enough to threaten world domination, where the fascist conception of society has prevailed for so many decades that the people themselves may fairly be said to be fascists. Japan and Germany. Our chief concern is Germany, because only a minority of us are under any delusions regarding the Japanese, while a large majority of us still believe that the Germans are on the whole people of good-will, temporarily misled by the Nazi gangsters. It does no good for me to say that that opinion of the Germans is utterly false. Who believes me? But a book could do it.

We need other books too, but this is supposed to be a report, not a requisition. I have not been going around peering at shoulders, looking for chips, but I think it is demonstrable, and, to put it mildly, discreditable, that during the third and fourth decades of this century the writers and publishers of books failed miserably, and there is no present evidence that they are either prepared or inclined to take up the slack. Of course no publishing house would hire Jeremiah for an idea man, but at least both publishers and writers should realize that, whereas they, like every one else, had formerly to keep up with stage coaches and railroad tracks, they must now to keep up with airplanes. If they don’t, it is quite possible that in the near future there will be no books at all worthy of the name.