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## Tragic Cavalier

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,

could match the futility of the life of a devoted lieutenant in the field, responsive to the realities of frontier life, but directed by an imperious and unimaginative superior in a faraway capital who in turn was directed by another superior in faraway Spain with little or no understanding of the complexities of colonial life. One such lieutenant was Governor Manuel Salcedo of Texas who gave his life for God, King and country.

This well-documented volume is unique in many ways. First, the author treats of the troubled era of Hispanic Texas, a rich area of study, but unfortunately glossed over or viewed from a different perspective by scholars; second, he dared to assess Manuel Salcedo differently from other authoritative scholars; and third, he viewed the events from a Spanish vantage point.

Readers looking for an exciting historical work like W. L. Schurz's *The Manila Galleon* would be disappointed with this book. Like the Texan wasteland, it is dry in most parts, and it is so detailed that, most likely, only someone of the same calling would appreciate the "long hours" which the author had spent in digging up and piecing the details together to produce this bit of tragic borderland history.

Francisco Mallari, S.J.

THE CHURCH AND REVOLUTION. By Francois Houtart and Andre Rousseau. New York: Orbis Books, 1971. 371 pages.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus quoting Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet of the poor and the oppressed, announced that he was anointed to preach the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and to announce the year when the Lord would save his people. As Latin American Christians emphasize today, Christ is the liberator. His message: liberation from sin, both personal and social.

The Church is the prolongation of Christ in space and time. Its message, therefore, is nothing less than that of Christ, of liberation; its mission, Christ's mission of liberating mankind from the forces of oppression, individual and institutional. But at a time and in the light of the liberation movements in many parts of the world which are attempting to set a new course of freedom and of fuller humanity for their peoples, how has the Church measured up to its mission?

"It is impossible," Francois Houtart, the noted sociologist of Louvain, states, "to live in today's world without being aware of the tremendous underlying thrust of social and cultural change of which the revolutionary movements are a sign. It is impossible for a Christian not to see the relation between the Christian message and the work of liberating mankind. At the