

THE RADICAL APPEASER

By ELIZABETH PAKENHAM

Neville Chamberlain by IAIN MACLEOD. Muller, 30s. QUITE recently an elder statesman — one of the young men who opposed Munich — remarked bitterly: "The tide has turned with a vengeance. Appeasement is roaring back."

It is true that we are in danger of being cut off on our left by A. J. P. Taylor's devastating "Origins of the Second World War" and now on our right by Iain Macleod's Neville Chamberlain, while before us the horizon heaves over Berlin. In our own dilemma we can appreciate Chamberlain's.

Then, Czechoslovakia was the far-off country of which Chamberlain said we knew nothing. Today the name has changed, but the cry is the same: "No war for Berlin."

Both then and now we are aware of a choking dualism in our feelings. Determination that no concessions should be made to threats. Relief whenever something can be conceded.

For this reason alone a new life of Neville Chamberlain is well timed, and the author well chosen. Mr. Macleod's present political responsibilities, the choice before the Government he ornaments and the Opposition he faces—these things add poignancy to a story which will evoke in readers who never knew the 1930s an awe-struck recognition: "We have been here before."

In stating the Munich case, Mr. Macleod marshals the familiar arguments with skill and lucidity. But when he attempts to defend

his hero on the authority of fresh material, he is not so successful. Notable examples are the break between Chamberlain and Eden (Did Chamberlain go behind Eden's back?) and the meetings between Chamberlain and Hitler. In what sense did Chamberlain trust him?

It is impossible to accept Mr. Macleod's thesis that Chamberlain was coolly and deliberately buying time and not peace. The contemptuous Left-wing view that he was an "omniscient" old man fooled by Hitler is even less acceptable.

The truth is that like many who lived through those wracking days, he veered between despair and hope. One moment he was making "the last desperate snatch at the last tuft of grass on the very edge of the precipice" (Chamberlain's words). The next he was plucking the flower safety out of the nettle danger. Those of us who have survived into 1961 can sympathise.

Kindly Notes "Man of Munich" is a name which will stick. But it reveals only part of Chamberlain. A faint sunset glow, we are told, warmed the last weeks of his public life. His colleagues wrote him kindly notes; even the Labour leaders, he believed, found "that I am a different person from what they supposed."

It is Mr. Macleod's aim to present this "different person" to a new generation. His achievement



With Hitler at Godesberg, September, 1938.

is impressive and the resuscitated image of Chamberlain, the radical social reformer, convincing. But though this book is handsomely produced (it weighs up to half a pound heavier than volumes of greater length) it can without unkindness be called a light-weight. The story runs to barely 300 pages. Mr. Macleod never dons the prophet's mantle, the poet's velvet or even the jester's cap. He reaches the end of his eminently readable, efficient and fast narrative in a pair of shorts and running shoes.

The terseness of the performance brings into sharp focus the grandeur and misery of Chamberlain's life. When he retired in October, 1940, to die next month, the Press "tributes" hurt him deeply. They failed to notice, he said, "a human tragedy somewhere in the background."

What was this tragedy? It went far beyond Munich. Briefly, it was that of a man dedicated to changing the world for the better, who disliked and was disliked by those who served the same cause. He possessed neither Balfour's liaisons with Left-wing intellectuals nor Baldwin's cosiness with trade unionists. Yet he did more for social welfare than either. His gift for antagonising Labour was only rivaled by his great father Joe's for making the Irish hopping mad.

Fond of Spending Neville was a born radical, almost a revolutionary, one who found the name Conservative "odious," who liked "spending public money much better than saving it," who thought—50 years ago—that trade union leaders should sit in council with employers and workers on boards of directors.

In practice he found himself at loggerheads with reformers from Lloyd George to Lansbury; he ignored Keynesian finance and squeezed the social services into the strait-jacket of deflationary budgets. His shuddering horror of war would have earned him an honourable place on any Committee of 100; his duty was to prepare his country for war and to inspect the barbed-wire and pill-boxes he loathed the sight of.

Mr. Macleod has done well to derive many of Neville's qualities from Joe. Both had the same restless energy, the same passion for constructive change. He might have added that they had the same compulsion to do things their way, the same attitude for detecting fools and not suffering them gladly. Neville died reading "Middlemarch," in which he

had marked a consoling passage: "I call it improper pride to let fools' notions hinder you from doing a good action." Neville's pride, call it proper or improper, sprang from his awareness of Birmingham and the clan behind him—a phenomenon unique in history. All of them shy and reserved, they knew their personal limitations. But both Joe and Neville failed to see the limitations of Birmingham. They returned to it (especially Neville) like Antaeus, when they ought to have found refreshment in newer talents, younger men.

Owed to the Clan Capable of being humble as individuals, the Chamberlains were proud as a clan. Neville quaintly described his Premiership as, "this strong, a draught for the ethos which the country owed it to the clan." Unlike Austen, Neville remained clanish to the end. He tried, disastrously, to run Whitehall as a department of Birmingham. He hated the social ceremony attached to the Foreign Office. He burked at Austen's Garter and refused his own. Only in death did he make a concession which Joe had declined: his ashes rest in Westminster Abbey.

But the inscription in the village church at Heckfield where he died harks back to something more deeply rooted in Neville, the Darwinian. "Write me as one that loves his fellow men," runs the line from "Abou Ben Adhem." Every Chamberlain child learnt that poem at his mother's knee. It expressed perfectly an ethos which, to borrow the words of Lord Shaftesbury, served man more and God less.

Lurking Suspicion Yet, after all, this was not the whole story. Somewhere in the clan's consciousness lay a suspicion that undiluted Chamberlainism—businesslike, dogged, unflinching, xenophobic—would prove too strong a draught for the age that followed Victoria's.

Neville's generation; brothers and cousins, married people utterly unlike themselves—charming, sociable, outgoing, Joe began it with his American wife, Neville's wife, Annie Chamberlain, brought radiance into his life and also made him "put something human" into his speeches.

Arnold Bennett once wrote that there are no public anxieties, only private ones. All Neville Chamberlain's anxieties were public.

Always on the Move

By PETER FLEMING

Well Informed Circles by ANTHONY MANN. Cassell, 16s.

THERE was a time when the superior type of foreign correspondent was a sort of vagrant eminence grise. He would, writes Anthony Mann in Well Informed Circles, "disappear from human ken for six months." At the end of that period three solid columns of black type would appear beneath the heading: "Intelligence From Asia Minor—Ali Again Active."

It was on these lines, as readers of Sir Harold Nicolson's "Some People" will recall, that Dr. Malone operated. But although Malone was still active in the 1920s, the profession which he graced was already in decline.

Since then, it is true, the foreign correspondent has featured as the hero of a large number of films; but it seems to happen more rarely than it did, and Mr. Mann's disarming account of his own far-flung career in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH'S service throws valuable sidelights on a profession which most people outside it still regard as vaguely romantic.

Not Too Serious

Mr. Mann does not belong to the "I Was There!" school of reminiscence newshawks, and resolutely declines to take himself or his assignments too seriously. His gentle but excellent sense of humour is seen at its best when he is describing such huge international bureaucracies as F.A.O.

After outlining the career of an acquaintance who, having served first as Deputy Adviser on the Traffic in Women and then as G.S.O.I. Hashish with the International Narcotics Agency in Tangier, landed an even more distinguished appointment connected with dehydrated whale blubber, Mr. Mann writes:

"It is a distressing thought that capable fellows like this, carving brilliant careers for themselves in the civil service of the world, should be sniped at by jealous critics who are themselves barely capable of serving one country at a time."

A slightly more astringent note is struck in his macabre description of life in the Press Camp at the Nuremberg Trials, but he maintains an unruffled urbanity throughout his account of what it was like to be interned in Denmark during the war.

Among other things, the internees had to sign an undertaking that "any intercourse with the inhabitants will be limited so as not to surpass what is inevitable. No political matter will be discussed during intercourse as mentioned above."

Some of Mr. Mann's varied experiences were better worth relating than others, but all are told in the same pleasantly throw-away style, all illumine some odd corner of the world, and all can be read with pleasure.

S. W. ROSKILL on a famous sea battle against the French

Black Dick's Day

The Glorious First of June by OLIVER WARNER. Batsford, 21s.

THIS is Oliver Warner's third contribution to the Batsford British Battle series, and fully confirms the impression gained from the earlier ones that, in the field of the sea fights of the Napoleonic Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, he is unsurpassed.

The tactical manoeuvres and preliminary skirmishes far out in the Atlantic on May 28 and 29, 1794, whereby Lord Howe inflicted substantial losses on his adversary Villaret-Joyeuse (only to have them replaced by the lucky arrival of reinforcements) are, with the aid of excellent diagrams, made absolutely clear. And even the layman can easily follow how, on May 29, although the French Admiral saved his rear ships, he sacrificed the vital weather-gauge.

Close-Range Mêlée

After a day and a half of fog the morning of June 1 found the British fleet well placed to break the French line and produce the close-range mêlée which Howe desired. The result was the capture of six of the 26 French ships of the line, and the sinking of one more.

It is an interesting coincidence that the bones of that ship, the Vengeur, must lie on the ocean bed only a few miles from the position in which the Bismarck was sunk after another long series of battles on May 27, 1941.

Over the failure to pursue the beaten French fleet Mr. Warner is sympathetic towards Howe; for the four days of fighting and manoeuvre had left the 68-year-old admiral totally exhausted. He holds that his First Captain (or Chief of Staff as we would call him), Sir Roger Curtis, should have shown less circumspection after the battle was over.

But the same can surely be said of the junior Flag Officers present, and it is certainly the case that Howe, unlike Nelson, did not encourage initiative among his subordinates.

Grain Ships Escape

What is here called "the supreme moment" actually came off Brest on June 8. Montagu's small squadron was then driven off and, as the main British fleet was not pursuing Villaret-Joyeuse, his surviving ships and also the precious grain convoy from America which he had been covering, and on which the survival of France and the admiral's head both depended, made harbour in safety. Thus the French, for all that they had been out-maneuvred and outfought in battle, achieved their strategic purpose.

The Glorious First of June is a good deal more than a bare description of the fighting on both sides, for the author is at pains to do what he regards as rather belated justice to a great admiral who has been ignored by biographers ever since Sir John Barrow's "Life" appeared in 1838.

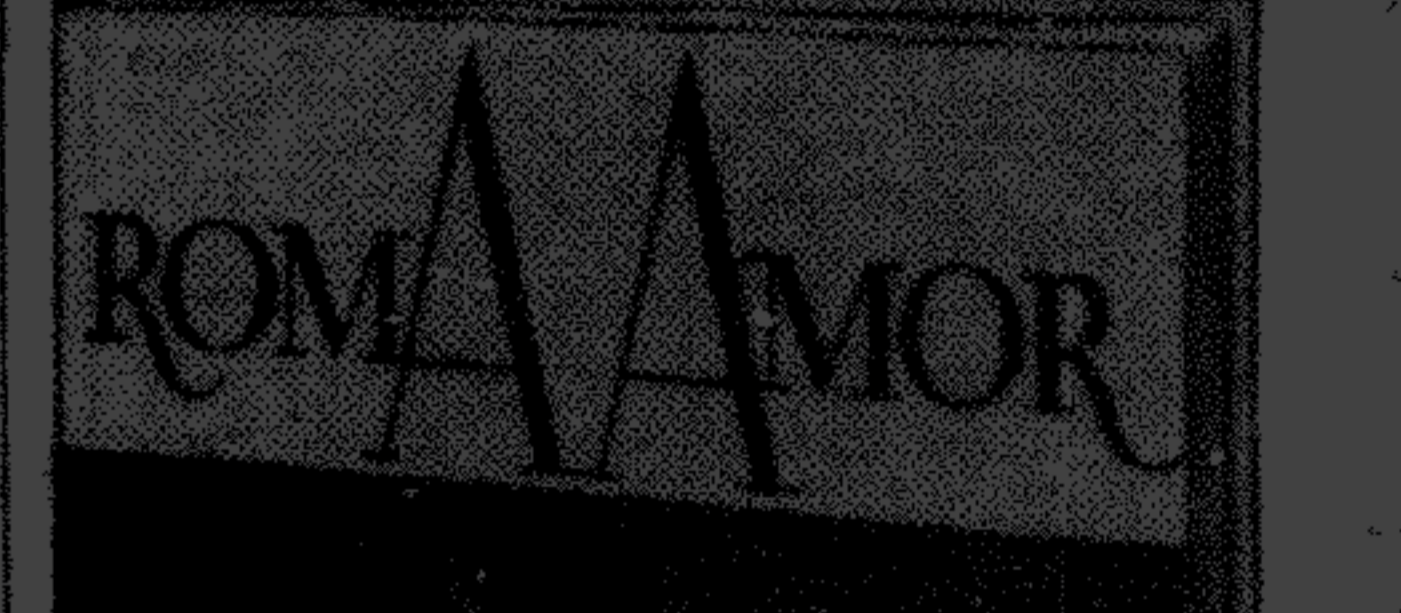
"Black Dick" was, he shows, a very shrewd judge of character, and his knowledge that some captains might show less than the

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FICTION No Silver Lining By FRED URQUHART FRANCOISE SAGAN, Wonderful Clouds. Murray, 10s. 6d. H. E. BATES, The Day of the Tortoise. Michael Joseph, 7s. 6d. FRANCIS POLLINI, Night. Calder, 20s. ELIOT GEORGE, The Leather Boys. Blond, 16s. SUSAN YORKE, Captain China. Macdonald, 15s. EDWARD LINDALL, The Killers of Karawala. Hutchinson, 15s.

SINCE her sensational success with "Bonjour Tristesse," the phenomenon of Françoise Sagan—fast-car driving and the rest—has intrigued millions. Critical acclaim as well as financial reward has greeted her books, and it is not only the public which finds her "wonderfully readable."

Yet her fifth novel, Wonderful Clouds (translated by Anne Green) seems to me on all counts disappointing. It is a dreary story about two trivial people who can't make up their minds whether they are in love or not. Even the fact that they move rapidly from Florida to New York and then to Paris doesn't give them the happiness one might expect.

Josee, married to Alan, a rich, handsome young American, is so bored by his jealous interest in her past that she runs away from him in New York, and flies home to France. Alan catches up with her at a Paris cocktail party, and they live together again.

He becomes a painter to amuse himself, exhibits his work, and is taken up by Laura Dort, a middle-aged patron of the arts. While Alan is painting, Josee sits in her car in a square, gazing at a romantic-looking tree, and then has a brief affair with Marc, an old flame.

Bernard, Josee's closest friend (who also appeared in her third novel, "Those Without Shadows") is not far wrong when he says they "lead an idiotic life, you [Alan] because of God knows what tiresome complex, Josee through sheer spinelessness, which is much worse." Unfortunately, the emptiness and redundancy of their lives are only too painfully impressed upon the reader.

The three elderly crazy sisters in H. E. Bates's The Day of the Tortoise also lead useless lives, but they are eccentric enough to

Spongiers in the House By FELICIA LAMB To Love and to Cherish by BARBARA GOOLDEN, Heinemann, 15s. Unhappy girl, tired of jealous home snags for spend-thrift Old Etonian father and brother, marries for comfort. Still unhappy because she cannot return husband's devotion and O.E.s continue to sponge. Double tragedy clears the air and cheers her up. Clever story, clever characterisation. Background slightly dated. Cry My Spirit by KAY BAKER, Bodley Head, 13s. 6d. Depressing account of life in East End high-pressure dress shop and mental hospital. Lattis just preferable, as natives friendly. Narrator escapes both to tell harsh, tragicomic tale.

The Ivy Tree by MARY STEWART, Hodder, 16s. Girl impersonates long lost hair to Northumbrian estate. Crosed love. Attempted murder. Will Grandfather change his will? Exciting double twist-story with doubles. Fine evocation of Roman-Wall country.

Leo and Rosabelle by BRYAN GUINNESS, Heinemann, 15s. Sweet little version of Beauty and the Beast, with hirsute hero living in luxurious seclusion and falling for gentle old-fashioned girl from Scotland. Fairytale atmosphere charmingly re-created. Modern world intrudes slightly, but not enough to break the spell.

The Traveller by GISELE PRASINOS, Harvill, 16s. Young Frenchwoman recalls war-time childhood as the wonders whether to leave husband for mother. Flashback on flashback, mixtures of time and person, make horribly involved narrative. Vivid picture of persecuted child's life in occupied Paris.

Yes, Giorgio by ANNE PIPER, Heinemann, 15s. Funny-erotic motel tour of America by sensible wife from Wales and Italian would-be great lover. Plausible account of feelings of good girl swept off feet but retaining sense of absurdity. Well-observed fragments of American background.

Francoise Sagan and that pretty well sums it up. The boys who wear costly leather jackets, roar through the streets on costly motor-bikes, and drink colas in cheap cafes with their gangs are the subject of The Leather Boys, "Eliot George," a pseudonym hiding the identity of a well-known woman novelist, has written a realistic and unsentimental study of two of these youths, Dick and Reggie, whose friendship develops into homosexual love before their attempt to rob a cinema ends in tragedy.

Their relationship is handled with delicacy and has an authentic ring; the portraits of Gran, determined not to go into a home, and her family equally determined that she shall, are taut, brisk and sometimes amusing; but the book falls off when the boys decide to join the Merchant Navy to be together, and it seems to me that the ending is weak and unresolved.

ON PAGE 10 SCIENCE BOOKSHELF By JOHN DELIN

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