

German Author Says Bring War Guilt Home To Nazis Or They Will Plan Another War

By TRUDI McCULLOUGH
(AP Newsfeatures Writer)

New York. (P)—Although everything written by Erich Maria Remarque, from "All Quiet In the Western Front" to "Arch of Triumph," his new novel, seems automatically to reach an enormous audience, there is one document of his that has not been seen by the public eye.

This German author, whose books were burned by the Nazis, wrote a report, at the request of the U. S. Army's Office of Strategic Service, on methods of reeducating the Germans.

Unless this is done properly, he believes it likely that Germany will attempt someday to wage a third World War. Prime objective of Remarque's reeducation plan would be to destroy the belief, which he says is still prevalent in German minds, that the guilt of war rests upon the Allies.

"It is more important to show them that Hitler started the war," he says, "than to show them pictures of concentration camps, which they only shrug off as 'falsifications' anyway."

"They can't shrug off Hitler's own actions if, at last freed from Goebbels' propaganda, they are permitted to see them truthfully for the first time."

First measure advanced by Remarque would be to point out the ways in which Hitler exceeded his program. "most Germans were with him in the move to return German minorities to the fatherland. But they must be made to see that when he took all of Czechoslovakia, instead of just the Sudetenland, that when he invaded Poland, he was not reclaiming minorities but departing completely from the program they sanctioned."

Point number two would be to de-glamorize the "invincible German soldier," showing that the German superman myth arose simply because no one else, at the time, was ready to fight.

"Thirdly," says Remarque, "they

maintain that the German soldier was never beaten, that Germany was beaten only by a superiority of materiel and production. By pointing out their own limited resources, it can be demonstrated to them that the German general staff should have known they would be beaten by materiel and production; that this 'super body' was at fault in not knowing it; that due to their geographical position in Europe they will always be beaten by it."

Eric Remarque, wounded five times while fighting for the kaiser, has been concerned ever since with war and war's aftermath. When his "All Quiet On the Western Front" was made into a movie, the infant Nazi party demonstrated outside the theater. Says Remarque, "the Nazis themselves regarded this as their first public demonstration, and they succeeded in closing that showing in Berlin."

In subsequent years no love was lost between Remarque and the Nazis. In a tavern skirmish in Berlin in 1932 he and two companions "did rather badly" to some party men. Seeing one of these men again in a Paris cafe just before the war gave him the idea for the revenge sequence against Nazi Haake, which reviewers have praised in "Arch Of Triumph."

Remarque, a handsome man of 48, who speaks facile, though not idiomatic English, and smokes 20 cigars a day, very nearly was turned aside from his early ambition to write.

His father, for whom he has a tremendous respect and affection, was a retired naval officer who didn't sympathize with literary leanings. He proposed to send the boy on a whaling expedition to the North Pole, which would have consumed about five years of his life and presumably changed his tastes.

His narrow escape from this fate is a source of amusement to Remarque today. He grew up dabbling in writing and in painting, and at 18 was drafted into the German army.

In the postwar unrest of defeated

Germany, he vaulted from one occupation to another. He taught school, turned stone cutter, toured Germany in a gypsy caravan and was a test driver for a Berlin tire company. By 1929 he had become a sports writer for an illustrated magazine.

"In Germany," he explains, "it was possible to be a newspaper man with a secretary or a newspaper man without a secretary. By never learning to type I took good care to be one with . . ." He still writes everything in laborious longhand.

Another of his father's arguments against the young Remarque's turning writer was that he would never be happy at it. "A writer" said the Senior Remarque, "should be 90 per cent writer and only 10 per cent human being. You are 51 per cent writer and 49 per cent human being." Remarque believes now his father was right.

One bit of his father's advice about writing has always stood Remarque in good stead. Said the navy man, "be very careful with your simplicity. If you lose it you will never get it back. You can get refined anytime."

This, Remarque believes, is the basis of effective writing. "A writer must keep for himself that look at life which a child has, as if seeing everything for the first time, but bringing it to his years of experience."

In 1932 Remarque built a house on a lake in Switzerland, and shortly found he couldn't return to Germany. By 1938 the Nazis had revoked his citizenship. He came to the United States and settled in Los Angeles, but announces, "I never wrote a line for Hollywood."

In the Park Avenue hotel where he now lives, the walls of his rooms are covered with original Van Goghs, Cezannes and Egyptian art.

Currently Remarque is working on two new novels at once ("sometimes I get out of breath—then I stop and work on the other one"), and rereading the works of Dostoevski, Stendhal, and Tolstoy.