

The Book Trail

A THOUSAND SHALL FALL

By Hans Habe

Harcourt, Brace & Co., \$3.00

This is the autobiography of a man who escaped death at the hands of the Nazis at the time of the Anschluss, enlisted in the French army when war broke out, served with the 21st Infantry of Foreign Volunteers, was taken prisoner by the Germans after the capitulation of France, made an adventurous escape, and finally landed on American shores.

According to Habe, conditions in the French Army were deplorable. Munitions were antiquated, but worse still, "... we were not sold out, but we were betrayed. ... A couple of corrupted generals can always be dealt with by a firing squad. But we had no corrupt generals ... They betrayed us without having exchanged a single word with the Germans. They did not want to fight against Germany. They liked Germany. Bought by the Germans? ... We delivered our country without even getting paid for it."

In the German concentration camp the prisoners learned something about the German army. Soldiers got a mark a day, those at the front two marks—20 or 40 francs, as against the 65 centimes a day of the French soldier. German soldiers had two uniforms—"two of everything, and everything first class." The French wore rags. "Your soldiers were herded together for soup like animals. You call that democracy. No thank you. In our barracks, everyone gets his meal and eats it comfortably in his room." But Habe tells also of the terrible tortures of the concentration camp; these were even more horrible for the Negroes than for the Jews.

The book takes its title from Psalms 97:7, which in the King James version reads, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thou-

sand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." "It" refers to terror by night, arrows by day, pestilence, and destruction. This immunity is promised to him (verse 2) who "will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." Righteousness as a fortress and refuge inspires little confidence nowadays; yet it would hardly have been less efficient than the Maginot Line. Maybe the Psalmist was right; perhaps of nations as well as of men we may say with Horace, "He who lives in uprightness and purity has no need for Moorish spears, or bows, or quivers full of poisoned arrows."

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