History

THE DEVIL'S HORSEMEN: The Mongol Invasion of Europe
by James Chambers
Atheneum, 1979
202 pp. $11.95
L of C 78-22055

The great Mongol emperor Genghis Khan first led his fierce horsemen westward out of Mongolia into what is now Turkestan in A.D. 1220. He encountered only feeble resistance. Europe lay ahead. By 1260, the Mongol Empire stretched all the way to the Carpathian Mountains, loosely encompassing what is today Russia, eastern Poland, much of Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, and the Mideast before it receded. Usually outnum-

bered, the superb Mongol cavalry forces relied upon shock, speed, and mobility to overwhelm their European foes. They used flag and torch signals to coordinate units and set up a kind of Pony Express courier system linking their new domains. They also exploited the West's weaknesses: the rigid tactics of its feudal armies; the quarrels be-
tween Pope Gregory IX and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II that prevented a united European front; the isolation of Poles, Hungarians, Bulgars. Yet repeatedly, as total vic-
tory loomed, the Mongols paused. Each time, the loss of momentum resulted from the death of a leader and ensuing squabbles over succession. In the end, concludes Chambers in this rich military history, the unruly Mong-
gols defeated themselves, sparing most of 13th-century Europe from Asian conquest.

MUNICH: The Price of Peace
by Telford Taylor
Doubleday, 1979
1084 pp. $17.50
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The very word "Munich" has come to signify not only appeasement but also willful capitula-
tion to an aggressor. In September 1938, Neville Chamberlain, Edouard Daladier, Adolf Hitler, and Benito Mussolini met in Munich to settle German territorial claims against Czechoslovakia. The resulting agree-
ment virtually gave the Nazis a free hand. Hitler expressed satisfaction; Chamberlain returned to Britain proclaiming that "peace with honor" had been preserved. It was a peace that would last less than a year. Win-
ston Churchill, then out of office, saw it clearly when he told Chamberlain: "You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor, and you will have war." Should the Western allies, ready or not, have gone to war to stop Hitler in 1938? This is the key question that Taylor examines in detail. Best known as a U.S. prosecutor at the 1945-46 Nuremberg war crimes trials, the author does not allow hindsight to blur the reader's view of contemporary perceptions—Allied memories of the slaughter of World War I, French political disarray, British unpreparedness. Yet, after weighing the evidence, Taylor concludes that "Chamberlain must be held primarily responsible for the parlous state of British arms in 1938 and 1939" and that the "British and French governments should have realized . . . that they could confront Germany more advantageously with Czechoslovakia in 1938 than without her during the next several years."

Half of the essays in this collection, written over the last 37 years, grapple with the Holocaust experience. Bettelheim himself is a survivor of Dachau; after immigrating to America in 1939, he served as head of the University of Chicago's Orthogenic Institute for autistic children. Having spent his career studying the "reintegration of personality," his concerns remain "autonomy, self-respect, integration, and the ability to form meaningful and lasting relations." In "The Ignored Lesson of Anne Frank," he postulates that extreme situations require extreme reactions: The Frank family was doomed because, while in hiding, they tried to carry on their normal lives instead of preparing for escape from Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. Elsewhere, Bettelheim ponders the complex psychological needs that led some Holocaust victims to cooperate with their captors and even participate in their own destruction. Those lucky enough to survive the death camps suffered what Bettelheim calls the "survivor syndrome"—severe, often debilitating guilt over having been spared.

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