

THE WINDS OF WAR, by Herman Wouk

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Herman Wouk, author of the Caine Mutiny, continues his high calibre of writing in The Winds of War. He introduces his impressive work by explaining the aim of his novel through a quote of Julien Benda:

"Peace, if it ever exists, will not be based on the fear of war, but on the love of peace. It will not be the abstaining from the act, but the coming of a state of mind. In this sense the most insignificant writer can serve peace, where the most powerful tribunals can do nothing."

Mr. Wouk weaves his case of characters into the dramatic, historical events that lead to World War II. He succeeds in mixing fact with fiction, and fictional characters with the major dominant figures of the period.

The main characters are the members of the Henry family. Victor Henry is a navy captain who dreams that someday he will be commander of a battleship. However, his dreams are cast aside when he accepts the position of naval attache in Germany. While in Germany, he and his wife meet Hitler and some of his most important generals. In addition, by the end of the story, he meets Roosevelt, Mussolini, and Stalin. (This seems to be the only unrealistic point in the novel--for a naval attache to meet each of the figures who will determine the immediate future of the world.) Henry has three adult children who also become caught up in the brewing winds of war, and together the Henry family meet Alistair Tudsbury (a British war correspondent), his daughter Pamela, Natalie Jastrow, Dr. Jastrow (a famous Jewish author), and his niece who are living in the outskirts of Rome.

Wouk, not wanting to leave the reader with a one-sided view of the war, creates Armin von Roon, one of Hitler's top generals during the war. General von Roon writes a book on World War II, World Empire Lost, which presents the German view of the war. It is Captain Henry who finds this book after the war and publishes it in English.

In conclusion, although this book is 1047 pages long, I would strongly recommend reading it. Once you get into the first hundred pages, the novel is almost impossible to put down. It ends with the invasion of Pearl Harbor, where the cast of characters are spread around the globe and some unanswered questions which could eventually lead to a sequel.