

today knows, to judge the force of Arab nationalism by the actions and statements of leaders of Arab states.

The Soviet Union, for one, has not made that mistake. But it has made another: it has made light of the fact that most Arabs profess Islam. During the past few years there has been a decided cooling between Arab capitals and Moscow for which there are more than political reasons. Moslem leaders warned against over-friendliness with the Soviet bloc from the start. As Soviet moves in the area became bolder, its propaganda more unequivocally anti-Moslem, and as more Arabs had the opportunity to observe Moslem life within the Soviet Union, many Moslem Arabs grew disenchanted. (The Soviet travel policy boomeranged so badly it was dis-

continued.) On top of the disenchantment came insults, which Arabs do not often bear with good grace, from the Soviet Union and from Red China. Wider Arab nationalist opinion has been quick to detect the change and quick to employ it to advantage.

Islam as a conscious basis for Arab unity has not been tried since its origin, and perhaps will not be tried in the future. Yet Ibn Khaldun expressed something which is well worth pondering. Very often, when and where it is unexpected and even unrecognized, Arabs are apt to act and react as Moslems. In doing so they simply reflect an age-old ambiguity in their own cultural heritage, an ambiguity which is not likely to change in function or importance during the years to come.

## Responses to Recent History

**The Strangled Cry**, by John Strachey. Sloane. \$4.50.

by James Finn

This book has several things to recommend it. First, it is the work of a practising politician who knows how to write, already a high recommendation. The essays which make up this book do much to support Trotsky's aphorism (which Mr. Strachey recalls to us) that "only a participant can be a profound observer." The section devoted to his writings on war reveals a close observer of even the apparently trivial and meaningless detail, an observer, however, who can place these details in a large and telling framework. This section, even more than the others, also reveals a man who is aware of the confused, the fallible, the human aspects of large historical movements, which seems so often to swallow up what is particular and individual.

The section devoted to "People" offers personal and incisive comments on the Webbs, Trotsky, Laski, Galbraith and concludes with a rather long essay on the tragedy of recent Germany and the part played in that tragedy by Dr. Hjalmar Schacht and Walter Rathenau. Never less than Mr. Finn is editor of *worldview*.

interesting, Mr. Strachey's comments here are too definite and personal not to arouse disagreement along the way.

The core of the book, however, that from which it derives its title, is a section devoted to Koestler, Orwell, Pasternak, and Whitaker Chambers. What may appear to be a rather mixed bag of authors is for Strachey a group of writers who are related in an essential way: they have all produced a literature of reaction. Mr. Strachey says that he regards "reaction" as a descriptive and not a pejorative term. But he adds that the literature of which he speaks is a reaction not only against Communism, but "against five hundred years of nationalism and empiricism; against, in short, the enlightenment. That is its scandal and its power."

More explicitly, the literature of reaction is powerful because it protests strongly against the failure of Communist rationalism to consider "the creativeness of personal relations, of aesthetics, or of religious experience." Its scandal is that it all too often points to the mysteries of social life "in order to dissuade us from even attempting to apply reason to society." It is beyond argument, I believe, that Strachey has isolated

what is, to all these authors, a central issue and a central problem. But for all its subtlety, force and candor, his reasoning is not satisfactory. For one, he writes as if mysteries are, or might become, totally comprehensible to reason, thereby confusing mystery with at best muddles or problems.

A quotation will reveal better than argument where his reasoning takes him. "If capitalist society had continued its many-sided decline into economic, social, cultural, and every other kind of decadence, then there would have been no proof that even Stalinist methods were unjustified in order to preserve a way out for mankind. All that could be said was that one was not prepared to accept those methods: to lie, cheat, murder, and in our case in Britain to betray one's country to Hitler, because there was no conclusive answer to an argument."

If Mr. Strachey is correct and the enlightenment, in fact, leads us to a state of such impotence, then indeed we must react and look elsewhere than to Mr. Strachey for our enlightenment. Except for Mr. Strachey's own argument I would feel it unnecessary to add that this does not imply a desertion of reason.

**The Paradoxes of Freedom**

Sidney Hook. University of California Press. 152 pp. \$4.95.

A well-known philosopher and teacher considers the nature and extent of human rights in a democracy, recognizing as their supreme arbiter only "the authority of human reason."

**An Alternative to War or Surrender**

Charles E. Osgood. University of Illinois Press. 283 pp. \$1.45.

"This generation is faced with the consequences of the imbalance between our skill in the physical sciences and our ineptness in the sciences of man," the author maintains. His remedy for this imbalance—"graduated reciprocation in tension reduction" (GRIT)—is given detailed presentation here.

**The Two Faces of American Foreign Policy**

Thomas Molnar. Bobbs-Merrill. 281 pp. \$5.00.

America's reliance upon the "political scientist" and "liberal ideologue" in matters of foreign policy are seen here to render her "incapable of dealing with modern forms of totalitarianism and ideological dictatorships." A program for strengthening the U. S. image and position is tendered.

**Kill and Overkill**

Ralph E. Lapp. Basic Books. 297 pp. \$4.95.

The numbers and kinds of nuclear weapons, their physical potency and political persuasiveness, are among the topics discussed by the physicist author. A final chapter contains a five-point plan for unilateral disarmament action by the United States.

**Breakthrough to Peace**

Introduction by Thomas Merton. New Directions. 249 pp. \$1.95.

The "Twelve Views on the Threat of Thermonuclear Extermination," as this volume is subtitled, are those of men prominent in a variety of fields. Among the individuals whose articles dealing with the conduct of the Cold War and Western defenses have been reprinted to form this collection are Lewis Mumford, Norman Cousins, Erich Fromm and Jerome D. Frank.

**Existentialism and Religious Liberalism**

John F. Hayward. Beacon Press. 131 pp. \$3.95.

The challenge of the existential view of the human condition to the modern liberal church and suggestions for response to the challenge are presented by the author.

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