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## WARNING FOR THE LUKEWARM

ARTHUR KOESTLER: *The Trail of the Dinosaur. And Other Essays.* Collins. 15s.

That we live in a time of politico-economic crisis and that our present situation is one "in which an unambiguous decision is vital for spiritual and physical survival" these essays urgently, even stridently, proclaim. Though some of them written several years ago were *ad hoc* lucubrations, scarcely worth a fresh presentation, the harder pieces in this collection—made together a redoubtable onslaught on political indifference. Those whom Mr. Koestler calls "the Little Flirts of St. Germain des Prés"—intellectuals who take as motto "Neither Communism nor anti-Communism"—are warned that their nonchalance is a menace to freedom. Yet in one essay Mr. Koestler himself comes near to taking up the position he attacks: in a revised version of an address delivered before the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950 he argues that, as a matter of history, seemingly all-important ideological conflicts just become meaningless in time. The pith of his thesis here is: "Every period seems to have its specific conflict which polarizes the world and serves as an ideological compass in the chaotic mill history passes it over with a shrug; and afterwards people wonder what they were so excited about." The dilemma withers away. At this point Mr. Koestler appears to prod himself:

It is necessary to qualify the statement that the apparently decisive conflicts of a given period tend to end in a stalemate and wither away. This did indeed happen in the past, but only in cases where the forces in the conflict were fairly balanced. This apart, Mr. Koestler is fairly consistent in his denunciation of those who still speak in "relative clauses," as he rather infelicitously puts it. Logically, he takes the side of Chambers against Hiss, and inferentially includes among the "Little Flirts" that part of the American public which asked with a shudder why ex-Communists like Kravchenko and Chambers could not keep quiet about things past and done with. These things, says Mr. Koestler, are not done with; what Chambers did was a service of great social utility, and objective judgment must in this case be kept separate from emotional bias.

Obviously, he is intensely in favour of the retention of the system of western defence on the present scale, and he blames Britain for obstructing movements for the formation of a political federation. The Churchill proposal for the unification of the British and French Empires in 1940 was unfortunately forgotten when danger was past. He has fears lest an apparently more forthcoming tone in Soviet policy should mislead

western politicians into one-sided atomic disarmament, though he penetratingly discounts the unqualified validity of massive retaliation. "Atomic weapons are necessary as a deterrent against atomic aggression, but ineffective as a deterrent against local and camouflaged aggression." That is why it will continue to be necessary to maintain vast divisions armed with conventional weapons; acts of aggression will continue to be veiled in disguises of varying plausibility, none presenting a decisive *casus belli*, but calling only for policing on the spot.

Much of all this is unprovocative; for all its soundness, it has been said so often before. Mr. Koestler's sincerity is certainly not in doubt, but it is not easy to avoid feeling a strain behind these writings, as if the working-out of the argument were forced. This impression is strengthened, first, by his employment of jarring and not very convincing scientific analogies—in "A Guide to Political Neuroses," in which it is said that for nearly every aberration of the sexual drive there is a corresponding type of disturbance

## SOCIAL REFORM IN INDIA

K. M. PANIKKAR: *Hindu Society at Cross Roads.* Bombay: Asia Publishing House. Rs. 4/8.

In this little book Sardar Panikkar has turned his lively pen and profound historical knowledge of his own country to a burning topic of Indian social reform. Since India became independent, strenuous official efforts have been made to remove the reproach of untouchability by legislative action; but in many parts of the country progress is slow, and the execution of the new laws lags far behind the designs of their framers. Everyone knows why; there is a deep-rooted conviction that the barriers which separate the untouchables from the rest of Hindu society are firmly grounded not in mere social observance but in religion itself. Many people who recognize the evils of untouchability hesitate to do more than pay lip-service to the crusade which the State has launched against it because they fear that its abolition would strike at the roots of the socio-religious fabric which holds society together and which has protected the Hindu religion from the assaults of other faiths.

It is the purpose of this book to reveal the fallacy which underlies this attitude by demonstrating that the social institutions of the Hindu people—of which untouchability is among the most characteristic—are in essence unconnected with their religion; and owe their present form to historical

## AMERICA AND THE WORLD

RICHARD P. STEBBINS, with the assistance of GRANT S. McCLELLAN: *The United States in World Affairs, 1953.* Introduction by Grayson Kirk. New York: Harper, for the Council on Foreign Relations. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs. 36s.

Rather less promptly than usual, but still with commendable punctuality, the annual volume on world affairs sponsored by the American Council on Foreign Relations has made its appearance eighteen months after the end of the period to which it relates. The record for 1953 has once more been in the competent hands of Mr. Stebbins. It is already possible to see 1953 in retrospect as the year in which the climate of the cold war became slightly less Arctic and the chilly blasts from either side slightly less piercing. It was the year in which President Eisenhower took office in Washington, in which Stalin died in Moscow, and in which the armistice was at last signed in Korea. To these events Mr. Stebbins adds another: the explosion by the Soviet Union of its first hydrogen bomb. A European writer would probably not have been tempted to include this occurrence among the harbingers of a turn for the better in international relations. But, in the American climate of opinion, it is plainly relevant. "Henceforth," writes Mr. Stebbins in signaling the importance of this factor, "the people of the United States, in common with those of virtually all other nations, would be compelled to live with the possibility of instantaneous mass destruction on a scale that no human imagination could adequately conceive."

Comparison with the corresponding British series, the *Survey of*

*International Affairs*, can hardly be avoided; and it should be said at once that the American series scores points for the promptness with which it habitually appears, for the simplicity, clarity and brevity of its presentation of essential facts, and for general efficiency in the organization of its material. On the other hand, it is fair to remember the fundamental differences between the scope and purpose of the two series. The American volumes bear the title *The United States in World Affairs*; and, while it is perfectly correct to say that American interests are now world-wide, so that a work which sets out to assess the role of the United States in world affairs cannot omit any part of the world, however remote, from its purview, the picture presented is none the less a picture of the world as seen from Washington.

This gives the American author a central focus, a unifying point of view, which is denied to his British colleagues. For, while it would be absurd to pretend that the British *Surveys* are innocent of national bias, they are in principle concerned with all international relations. Thus the *Survey of International Affairs* purports to treat relations between the United States and Guatemala, so to speak, on their merits, while *The United States in World Affairs* ignores, say, relations between Great Britain and Pakistan except in so far as these may from time to time impinge on American policies. This fundamental difference is also to be felt throughout, and largely accounts for the fact that the American series, within the more manageable limits set for it, achieves more satisfactory results than the British series in Asia.

of the political libido, there is, under the heading Fetichism, rather far-fetched argument about such things as Hitler's forelock ("mass-infatuation" and "a regression to primitive idolatry and totem-worship")—and, secondly, by too abundant generalization.

The most impressive essay in the book is that called "Judah at the Crossroads," in which he argues that since the establishment of the State of Israel "the wandering Jew has arrived at a crossroads." This long piece stands out rather for its cool and profound analysis of the spiritual condition of Jews outside Israel than for any overwhelming success in proving the case that the non-Israeli Jew must now choose between going home and assimilating with the Gentile; this need not be a failure, he writes, and he instances Spain.

More like the Koestler of *Darkness at Noon* is "The Shadow of a Tree," which was written for a special issue of *Collier's* called "Preview of the War we do not Want." Mr. Koestler journeys through a post-atomic-war Russia with characteristic skill.

causes which have stunted artificially the efforts of reformist movements by obliging them to strike out new lines for themselves instead of leavening the mass outlook by enlightened ideas. Among the more important of these causes is the excessive fragmentation of social impulses resulting from their limitation by the twin institutions of joint family and sub-caste. Sardar Panikkar argues that it is the sub-caste which has always been dominant; and that the traditional division of society into the four main castes is not so much an explanation of historical origins as an attempted rationalization whose aim was to curb the process of dissolution throughout a society already highly fragmented. This fragmentation was aggravated by the unregulated efforts at reform which assumed local and sectional forms and thus made the social structure even more chaotic.

The main hope for the future lies in the impossibility, under the conditions now growing up in the fields of politics and economics, of preserving that substructure of untouchables executing essential but menial functions upon which so-called orthodox Hinduism depends for its social institutions. Political power, increased prestige through community projects, and entry into the Services are transforming the position of the untouchables. A legislating State and a static society cannot coexist, as this thoughtful and excellent book demonstrates.

the somewhat unwieldy British volumes.

Given the plan, the lay-out is admirable, and the execution concise and workmanlike. The first chapter of the 1953 volume discusses "The New Era in Washington," the second "The New Era in Moscow"; it is not surprising that the first is both fuller and more understanding than the second. Then Mr. Stebbins passes the major areas of the world in review in turn, beginning with western Europe and ending with Latin America. Finally comes a chapter on the hydrogen bomb and a concluding chapter which covers the Bermuda conference of December, 1953, and reviews world prospects as seen at the end of that eventful year. The facts are throughout stated reasonably and persuasively, without recrimination and with a commonsense appreciation of differing attitudes. What may sometimes jar a little on the non-American reader is the whole-hearted and unashamed way in which the American angle of vision is assumed, as in the heading for the Latin American section, "Friends we take for granted," or in such a sentence as the following from the chapter on south-east Asia:

Thailand stood out as the principal bright spot in the area, maintaining close relations with the United States and supporting the American position in the United Nations even on issues which found most Asian and African States aligned against this country.

Indonesia, on the other hand, scores a bad mark for "stressing its 'neutral' and implicitly anti-American position." The blandness of the assumption that the true destiny of the small Asian country is to become a faithful satellite of the benevolent uncle may help to account for the slow progress results in the region for Asia.

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