

# Spotlight on Ironsides

CROMWELL AND HIS GENERALS, by Maurice Ashley; Jonathan Cape, English price 21/-.

(Reviewed by F. J. Foot)

CROMWELL was undoubtedly a military commander of genius. The author dedicates this work to his friends in the Cromwell Association and devotes the first quarter of it to the Dunbar and Worcester campaigns. As every schoolboy knows, the Scots army was shattered at Dunbar—13,000 were killed or captured for the loss of 30. A year later Charles II was in alliance with the Kirk. He engaged himself to establish the Presbyterian religion in England. (A distinguished editor has often reminded me by how narrow a margin it failed to become the State religion.) The invasion was defeated at Worcester. In Ireland, Cromwell's military genius was seen to extend to sieges and combined naval and military operations.

As to Cromwell's other qualities there is much difference of opinion. That he established order at home and was respected abroad is certain, but the order often resembled a wilderness and the stability ended with his life. On the whole, he kept the loyalty of his subordinates, but it may be said that they



were his sons Henry and Richard Cromwell, sons-in-law Ireton and Fleetwood, his brother-in-law Desborough, his cousin Whalley, and his former regimental subordinates. It may be asked whether this book helps to spotlight Cromwell's generals, and the answer is no. The fact of the matter is that it is not quite possible to portray Cromwell's generals without their master gradually pushing them out of the picture.

The Rebellion in England, like the Revolutions in France and Russia, threw

up a crop of competent generals. One school of thought claims that they were godly men, devoid of self-interest, the forerunners of the modern movement to abolish monarchies and second chambers and to dethrone bishops. The other side looks on them as monsters, in rebellion against their country, destroyers of cathedrals, dripping with the blood of executed Scots and Royalist prisoners and of the women and children of Drogheda, and getting pay which makes a modern general's scale look like pin money. Mr. Ashley has something to say for both points of view, but is on the whole a Roundhead. He does not, I think, give due importance to the numerous and contradictory religious animosities which had their bearing on the political background. That the attempt of the Scots failed was due to fanatical Fifth Monarchy men like Major-General Harrison, who believed in some interpretation of the Book of Daniel, which has convinced no one else before or after them.

The reader will probably have his own opinions, but will, I think, be interested in this point of view, which is competently presented within a small compass.

## ACCORDING TO PLAN

THE PATTERN OF COMMUNIST REVOLUTION, by Hugh Seton-Watson; Methuen and Co., English price 25/-.

IN the last three or four years, journalists and others have been trying to take a quick profit by exploiting what

appeared to be a popular interest in anti-Communism. The result was far more books than the market could bear; and, mainly because the books themselves often lacked substance, book-sellers (new and second-hand) became wary of the whole genus. Is Professor Seton-Watson's book another justification for such wariness? The answer is mixed.

The author writes of Communism as a revolutionary movement, not as an ideology or an economic theory, and is therefore concerned with the sequence of events where Communists have achieved political authority in Europe and Asia. He tries to show why the Communists succeeded. In doing this he gives a quick and fair thumb-nail sketch of the social background in the various countries where Communism is or has been a force and relates the Communist movement to that background.

The best part of the book is the description of pre-1914 Europe in its social, political, economic and educational aspects. The body of the book then deals in geographic areas with the periods after the First World War and the Second World War respectively. There is far too much of the Soviet Union and its personalities and not enough, for instance, on the Bela-Kun regime in Hungary; and the author admits himself that the Asian section is weak.

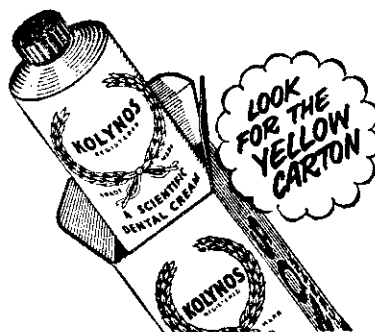
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