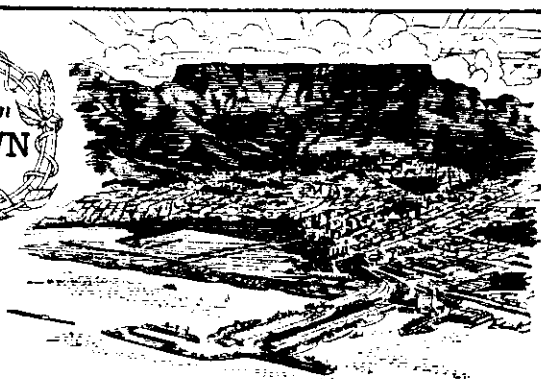




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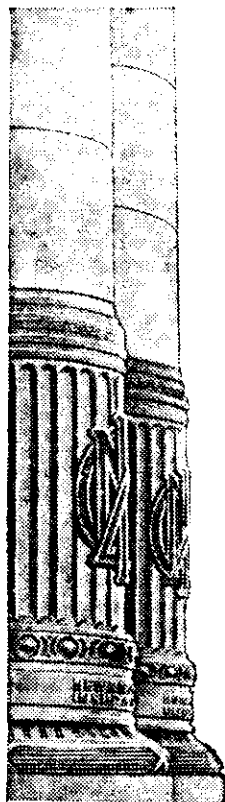
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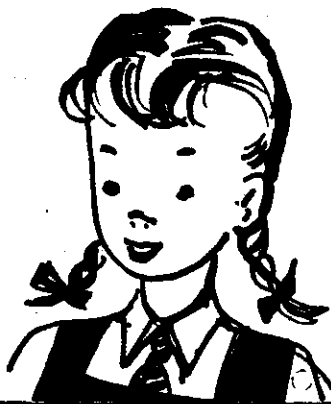
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Books

THE TEMPERED MIND

A TIME TO LAUGH, and Other Essays, by
F. Sinclair; the Caxton Press; 12/6.

(Reviewed by Walter Brookes)

IT is not an easy task to review a writer when one is an enthusiastic member of his band of followers. I know that there will be many who will be with me when I frankly admit that I am at a loss to think of anything to say against these essays; and I can only hope that the author will not think me an indolent or unctuous critic.

There may, indeed, be those who do not find here enough vehement support of socialism or private enterprise or the glories of the profit system or the wrongs of the working class; and even those who would maintain that the language of the man in the bar room or on the street corner would give a stronger tone of realism to what is said. Again I take comfort in the thought of the large number who appreciate Professor Sinclair's writing when I say that the essay should deal with matters of immediate topical or controversial interest only so that they may illustrate observations on the more lasting social and personal concerns of men and women. Moreover, the essay is a form which must bear the marks of scholarship, wide reading, and reflection—more so, I should say, than poetry or the novel. And its language should reflect this character. It is the product of what Bacon has termed "civil times," and today, it must be admitted, it is a less popular form than it has been in the past.

Professor Sinclair's easy and graceful manner of writing, his turn for presenting facts and points of view which are overlooked in our haze of conventional and ready-made thinking, and the cheerful and gracious air which characterises his work are well known. I shall try no harder to praise than to find fault with these essays. I find it more convenient and telling to quote the observations of a reader who had casually taken up his book and laid it down to remark: "You read these because you like them and not because you ought to. They are clever, but not too clever; you find well-turned phrases but no showing off." Such artless and spontaneous praise should please any essayist.

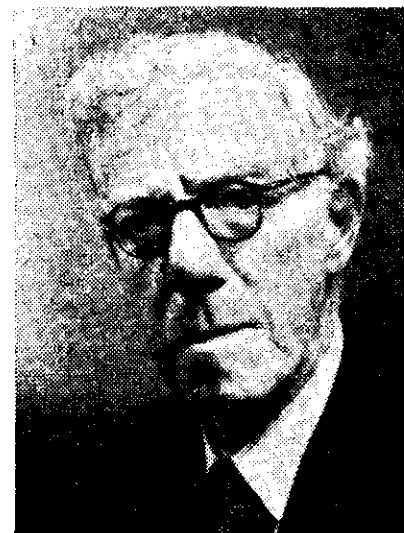
THE WARSAW JEWS

THE STARS BEAR WITNESS, by Bernard Goldstein; Victor Gollancz. English price, 16/.

THIS terrible book has a certain Old Testament quality. It is a narrative of oppression and massacre, the fate of the Warsaw Jews. If the language lacks the majesty of the Bible, the writer has the earnestness and faith of a prophet.

Bernard Goldstein, the preface tells us, had a long record as a socialist opponent of the Tsars. He was a moving spirit in the General Jewish Socialist Labour Union, the "Bund," an important body in Poland where a tenth of the population, before 1939, was Jewish. When Poland was overwhelmed by the Germans, the Bund came face to face with adversaries more formidable than Nicholas II.

The Nazis herded the Jews of Warsaw into a "ghetto" created for the purpose. Soon the herding inwards, which had assembled half a million Jews in a



PROFESSOR F. SINCLAIRE

"Well-turned phrases, but no showing off"

narrow compass, was reversed and the outward movement to the extermination camps began. When the ghetto population had fallen to about 40,000, those who remained, the most able-bodied, whose labour had been worth most in the factories the Germans had been running in the area, who had long known the fate of their friends, elected to fight rather than go meekly to death. The ghetto was secretly developed as a fortress with underground bunkers stored with food as well as with arms. The last evacuation order in April, 1943, was fiercely resisted. The magnificent fighting spirit of these desperate men earned them the attention of German tanks and artillery which, during several weeks, slowly blasted the ghetto into a vast heap of rubble. Some hundreds escaped through sewers to fight again, most for the last time, in the 1944 Warsaw rising led by General Bor-Komorowski, which the advancing Russians were unable to support.

Goldstein's own life of hiding, full of hair's-breadth escapes, the loss of friends, danger, hope and despair, is the theme of much of the book. His worst disillusionment was still to come. "Liberated" Poland was as anti-Semitic as the older. Also the Russian secret police kept a close hand upon all those who were not Communists. During the war they had executed the Socialists, Erlich and Alter; Goldstein feared he would soon follow them and escaped, largely by impudence and luck, to Belgium and the free world.

Perhaps the strangest reflection upon this chronicle of blood and misery is that it is not capitalism which is the major casualty in a liberated Communist democracy under the protection of the divine Stalin, but social democracy. Those moderate, idealistic, fair-minded men, historically so often the willing accomplices of revolution, are its first victims. Who runs may read.

—David Hall

PEOPLE OR PUPPETS

PLAYS ABOUT PEOPLE, by Peter Ustinov; Jonathan Cape. English price, 9/6.

WITH the enviable reputation already behind him of a topflight actor, playwright, producer and novelist, Peter Ustinov is even now barely thirty years

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 17, 1951.