

"Duke" Custis to win respect among his contemporaries in the only way he knows, by becoming president of his gang, the Pythons, and leading it to victory against a rival gang, the Wolves. As the key to both leadership and victory, Duke seeks to buy a gun from Priest, the very cool ex-president of the Pythons, a bearded hipster who flaunts a white mistress and traffics in crime.

The film, directed by Shirley Clarke, is technically brilliant. As the camera roams the wretched streets, it stops wherever the eye might stop, on the face of an old man, on a group of people listening to a demagogic speaker denounce the "white devils," and on children laughing, playing, watching. The camera pursues Duke through aimlessness, crime, flight, and a fleeting glory. It moves rapidly because Duke is always on the move, here rejecting the love of his family, there basking in the admiration of his gang and his gang's woman, the fourteen-year-old Luanne. When the camera leaves him at last, he is completely alone in this comfortless world. The wailing, pounding, crying music of Mal Waldron, played by Dizzy Gillespie, is a wordless commentator whose rhythms haunt the film. *The Cool World* is a remarkable thing to see and hear.

THE MOVIE is relentless in its revelations. Luanne longs to go to San Francisco to see the ocean. She is unbelieving when Duke tells her there is an ocean that can be reached by subway. When he takes her to Coney Island, she disappears, and he hunts for her on the empty beach, carrying a large stuffed animal under his arm. We never see Luanne again. Such scenes strip these kids of their toughness, shocking us into the most startling realization of all: they are children; they don't have a chance.

*The Cool World* attacks the white world without ever mentioning segregation. It condemns the treatment that has rooted most Negroes in virtually inescapable poverty, for it is poverty that forces Duke to satisfy his craving for leadership through a delinquent gang and makes idols of men like Priest.

All three films are in black and white.

## BOOKS



## The Captive Commanders

ROBERT P. KNAPP, JR.

THE SWORDBEARERS, SUPREME COMMAND IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, by Correlli Barnett. Morrow. \$7.50.

It is unlikely that the war of 1914-1918 will ever be exceeded in terms of sustained military slaughter. Man's earlier efforts in organizational achievement had laboriously produced monuments like the Pyramids, the Great Wall, and the Panama Canal, but warfare had never been waged on a systematic, industrialized basis. Not until 1914 had man been able to marshal every resource of the earth, every product of his skill, every avenue of communication, and every spark of human spirit to reduce the actual, desperate acts of combat to an unending series of futile and meaningless horrors, mere day-by-day transactions incidental to the massive industrial outpourings of the warring nations. Cool and assiduous minds produced manuals showing for every unit how many tons of ammunition were needed for "a day of fire," how many pounds of food for "a day of rations," how much hay, how much oats for "a day of forage," how many men for "a day of replacements" for the dead and wounded. From the sunny harvest days of August, 1914, to the bitter finish five grim Novembers later, no mind, no man ever successfully formulated a plan for decisive military victory. In no war before

or since were the supreme commanders of the military forces so powerless to influence the outcome of the struggle. Ultimately in each case and on each side, the commander's task became that of maintaining the status quo, rehabilitating his shattered troops, and restoring their broken lines of combat.

Correlli Barnett's brilliant and fascinating study is accordingly not so much an examination of the personalities of the commanders or of their careers as it is a trenchant analysis of the events in which they were caught and of the societies that produced both men and events. "The First World War," he writes, "had causes but no objectives." What he says of the German High Command in 1914 was by his evidence equally true of the commanders of all the belligerent forces. Fifty years before Hiroshima, the second industrial revolution of the latter half of the nineteenth century had created forces of destruction that man could command but not control. As the author observes of the generals of Imperial Germany in 1914: "Both individually and as a group they were as ill-equipped to lead this great machine [the German Army] as a seventeenth-century coachman would be to drive a Mercedes-Benz."

Mr. Barnett's history spans the entire war. He has chosen as his foci

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two commanders who led at the outset, the younger Moltke and Jellicoe, and two who were products of the war, Pétain and Ludendorff. The author's choice is a keen and perceptive one. The first two belong to the Victorian age that produced them; the second two, to the era that followed them. The First World War lasted four years. Except for Pétain, the periods of these four men's effective influence were even shorter, but among them they reflect nearly a century of history hinged on the pivot of the Great War.

In 1914 Germany faced war with a plan, Britain with a fleet, and France with an illusion. At the outset, only the German plan gave evidence of being adequate to its purpose, but it was the first to fail. With its failure went Moltke, a general who nearly ten years earlier had characterized himself as "too reflective, too scrupulous, and, if you like, too conscientious" to assume the post of chief of the German General Staff, which he held in 1914. With the war and attack on France hours away, Moltke was to weep in despair at the Kaiser's sudden mercurial obsession with the notion of throwing Germany's army against Russia instead of France. Moltke's tears were not those of a man denied his cherished dream. When events brought the Kaiser back to the necessity for attacking France, Moltke was "overwhelmed by the sensation of standing on the brink of a gulf." For Moltke, heir to an illustrious name in German arms, inheritor of the icy Schlieffen's design for annihilation of the French Army, was a man aware too late that he was the captive of events whose course he could not control, whose consequences he could not foretell, but for which he must answer to himself.

**W**E MUST WONDER, though, what history would tell us of Moltke had the campaign of the Marne gone according to German plan. Would the spectacle of the general and his vacillating emperor have ever been disclosed? A basis for speculation at least exists in the memoirs of the German generals after the Second World War. There is little of reflective misgivings in those accounts of the French campaign of 1940. Discordance and recriminations only be-

## In the Beginning

(for Steve Trefonides)

Out of doors the season dies, a fountain  
Ruffles in the wind. The great Museum  
Squats closer on its hoard and will not stir,  
Its squares of granite, speechless with fatigue,  
Imply the slithering pit, the shapelessly-  
Adjusting matter of the rubbish heap.

Webs of corridors and polished chambers  
Hold fast the howling turbulence of types,  
Caught against museum technique—dispersed  
In order everywhere on fragile trays  
Or draped or towering in enormous gloom;  
Human voice and footstep die.

A dozen tiny coarse clay animals  
Picked from a midden—hook-winged geese or hawks,  
A bull with pitted head free to move—  
Squat blindly. The remote curator speaks:  
"In the beginning there were toys, implying love . . ."  
Voice and footstep die away.

—THOMAS KINSELLA

gin after things start to go wrong in the Russian campaign. But there is no sure basis for comparison between the Kaiser and Moltke on the one hand and Hitler and his generals on the other. Moltke stood indeed on the brink of a gulf in 1914. Even as his armies marched to their fatal check at the Marne, Hindenburg and Ludendorff were routing and dispersing the ill-officered Russian masses at Tannenberg. Ludendorff clearly stands on the far side of the awful chasm that swallowed not only Moltke and his armies but the entire world of 1914.

As he stood on the threshold of a terrible new era, Moltke's self-confidence drained from him because he could see too far and could see too many of the dark uncertainties that lay before him. Confronted with the immensity of the task before him, Moltke was overwhelmed by the complexities of technique and detail that must be resolved if his nation was to triumph. Above all there came to him the heavy realization of the responsibility for the lives of the largest and most powerful host

that had ever been assembled. Ludendorff, in contrast, was the consummate master of detail and technique. Years later his wife was to observe that he "never possessed any knowledge of human nature." Faced by the imponderables of war, a dubious Moltke was compelled to reluctant acceptance of belief that the end justified the means. Ludendorff, with his mastery of the methods of war but not of the art of war, believed that the means were an end in themselves. Ludendorff failed as Moltke had failed, but spiritually it was a very different failure. Moltke died in 1916, broken by his own acceptance of his personal failure. Ludendorff died in 1937, refusing to admit personal defeat, embittered by his twisted conviction that he had been successively failed by his Kaiser, his country, and his erstwhile disciple, Adolf Hitler.

**N**EITHER Moltke nor Ludendorff ever held the post of commander of the German armies in point of title. That fact is an irrelevant detail, because after the campaign of the