

## The Machine vs. the Orient

*"The Arabian Peninsula," by Richard H. Sanger (Cornell University Press, 295 pp. \$5), is a report on some of the lesser-known parts of the Arab world—the oil coast, the deep desert, the high mountains of Yemen—by an official of our State Department widely traveled in the area. Here it is reviewed by Professor Emil Lengyel of New York University, author of a number of books about the Middle East.*

By Emil Lengyel

THERE is magic, evidently, in vast deserts where one sees much of nature and little of man. The Arabian peninsula has inspired some of the greatest travel literature in English: Burton's "Personal Narrative," Kinglake's "Eothen, or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East," and such modern samples as T. E. Lawrence's "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom," the Empty Quarter books of Bertram Thomas and H. St. John Philby, and Freya Stark's descriptions of the southern gates of Arabia.

Like his illustrious predecessors, Richard H. Sanger has fallen under the spell of the Arabian peninsula. Some pages of his "The Arabian Peninsula" rank with the great writing about this region, while all of them provide excellent reading.

Mr. Sanger's publishers describe him as Public Affairs Adviser of the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, formerly officer in charge of Arabian Peninsula affairs in the State Department. Less circumpectly, his listing in that Department's "Diplomatic Register" mentions also his background as a reporter for a newspaper syndicate.

In this book Mr. Sanger appears to have been working against odds, as his public position seems to have inhibited him from expressing his private opinions. Had his personality been allowed to show he might well have produced a latter-day "Personal Narrative." Nor could he allow himself to criticize Arab ruling circles or to write about the depths of misery of famished people in the shadow of fabulous wealth. But on balance these obvious drawbacks are outweighed by the merits of his book.

"The Arabian Peninsula" is devoted

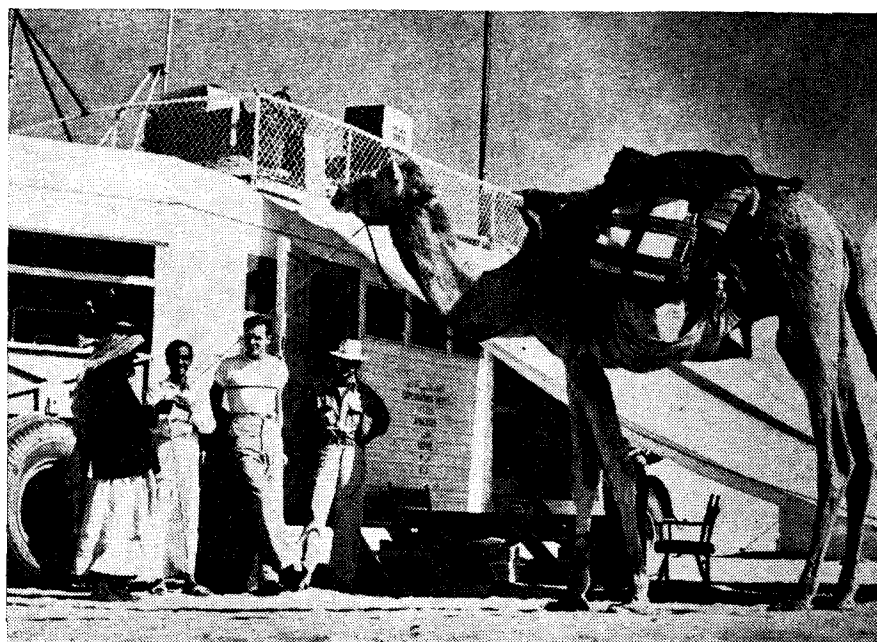
to regions which the traveler will not find on any Cook's tour. Some of Mr. Sanger's trips would have qualified him as an explorer a few years ago. Today the jeep and plane have cut down the field. The last unknown stretches of the world, Arabia's awful Empty Quarters, are now being approached by oil geologists. Mr. Sanger himself has penetrated into the hitherto little-known peripheries of the great Arab Quadrangle on the Trucial Coast of the Persian Gulf, and the Muscat and Oman protectorates. He has visited Yemen, which is less known than Tibet, even though it is situated along the Main Street of the World, the Suez-Red Sea route. He has seen the scorched wastes of the Hadramaut, where ancient cultures are buried in the sand. He tells his readers about Saudi Arabia and its new King, Saud al Saud, about the fabulous "Aramco," which is America's largest private investment in the Arab world. He does not overlook "Texas in Arabia," where the world's most pampered people, Americans, live in the world's least pampered region.

It all adds up to this: the irresistible force of Western dynamism has begun to overcome the seemingly immovable object of Eastern lethargy. The Orient has given the West its spiritual values

and the Occident is now conquering the East with its material values. The Machine is the world conqueror. Parts of Arabia have vaulted from the early Bronze Age into the late Atomic Age.

In this transformation many obstacles will have to be overcome: habits, traditions, social taboos, religious injunctions. Mr. Sanger writes about the young Saudi Arabian airport-tower expert who had to dispatch a weather report to the royal plane en route to the oil coast, when a duststorm wrapped it in noontime darkness. The report read: "Visibility excellent, ceiling unlimited." Intercepted in the nick of time by the American supervisor, the young Arab explained: "After all, this is His Majesty's country and I have no right to say it is not perfect."

Mr. Sanger has dug out some delightful pieces of early Americana relating to the Arabian peninsula. One of them is a letter of President Fillmore "To our Great and Good Friend His Majesty Seyed Syeed Bin, Sultan of Muscat and its Dependencies," in which the President of the United States wrote: "The Treaty between our countries is now the Supreme Law of the land . . ." referring to the earliest treaty between the United States and an Arab country. It is to be hoped that this disclosure will not set off another interminable investigation in Congress. Mr. Sanger is on less controversial ground in reporting that the national anthem of the contemporary Sultanate of Lahej in Arabia's deep desert is a medley of marches by the American band king, John Philip Sousa. It may also be mentioned in this connection that this book is written with an ingratiating sense of humor.



—Wide World

Ships of the desert meet—"the last unknown stretches of the world."

# The Rejection of West by East

**"Asia and Western Dominance,"** by K. M. Panikkar (John Day Co. 530 pp. \$7.50), is an Indian diplomat's interpretation of Asian history from 1498 to 1945. Harold H. Fisher, who reviews it below, is chairman of the Hoover Institute and Library, Stanford University.

By Harold H. Fisher

... the principle that the doctrines of international law did not apply outside Europe, that what would be barbarism in London or Paris is civilized conduct in Peking (e.g., the burning of the Summer Palace), and that European nations had no moral obligations in dealing with Asian peoples (as, for example, when Britain insisted on the opium trade against the laws of China, though opium-smoking was prohibited by law in England itself) was part of the accepted creed of Europe's relations with Asia. ... Till the end of European domination the fact that rights existed for Asians against Europeans was conceded only with considerable mental reservation. ... In fact, except in Japan this doctrine of *different rights* persisted to the very end and was a prize cause of Europe's ultimate failure in Asia.

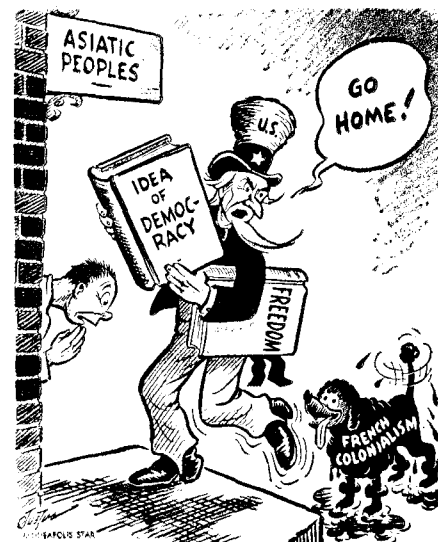
THE account of how the West came to set up, enforce, and finally abandon this doctrine of different and unequal rights, given by K. M. Panikkar, formerly Indian Ambassador to China and currently Ambassador to Egypt, in his book "Asia and Western Dominance," will be read with more appreciation behind the Iron Curtain than outside it. The author is not a Communist; in fact, he belongs to a class and a political party the Communists intend to liquidate when they get around to it. But Communists will find in his book a view of history that appears to support Lenin's theory of imperialism; they will find a sympathetic interpretation of Russia's Asian relations before and since the Bolshevik Revolution. These views compensate somewhat for Ambassador Panikkar's failure to recognize that the alternative to colonialism is Communism. To be told all this may irritate the Westerner who does not believe in the inevitability of Communism or the current Soviet version of Russian history, but it will do him a lot of

good, for Mr. Panikkar's views are held by a great many Asians in positions of influence.

Many will agree, for example, with his contention that Christian missionaries failed not only because of the strength of Hinduism and Buddhism but because they had an attitude of moral superiority, because they exalted European culture, and claimed to have a monopoly of truth while disagreeing among themselves as to which denomination had the real monopoly, and especially because missionary activity was identified with imperialism.

Mr. Panikkar believes that the great influence of the West on Asia, exercised principally during the last century, will remain strong even though Western dominance is ended. He mentions the significance of the "imposing and truly magnificent legal structure" and the principle of equality before the law. He speaks of the replacement of "Oriental despotisms" with republics, the growth of great cities with their complex administrative machinery of boards, commissions, committees, and citizen responsibilities, the integration into national states of vast areas like India and China, the introduction of new art forms, the spread of knowledge that caused Asians to realize that Asia was not the center of the world. The Western imperialists also introduced nationalism, which in time destroyed their dominance. Mr. Panikkar suggests that the unity inherent in the "racial arrogance of Europeans" aroused a countervailing unity of Asians, especially among the common peoples, who in spite of linguistic, intellectual, and other differences have common features in Buddhism, ancestor reverence, and family relationships. It appears to me that he may overestimate both the unity of Asia, with its explosive communal and particularist problems, and the unity of Western attitude and policy toward Asia.

NO ONE is likely to question the importance Mr. Panikkar attributes to the effects of World War I—"a civil war within the European community of nations"—in weakening the imperial powers and strengthening the Asian movements for self-determination. But, unlike previous civil wars within that community, the issues were transformed from imperialist vs. imperialist to democracy vs.



—Justus in The Minneapolis Star.

"Book Salesman"

autocracy and self-determination vs. imperialism, not only in Asia but in Europe and Russia as well. Mr. Panikkar mentions the importance of President Wilson's declarations, he emphasizes the significance of Lenin's formula that the self-determination of colonial peoples was part of a struggle against capitalism, but he does not note how the Communists down-graded self-determination by insisting that the "right of proletarian internationalism" is a higher right, and that only the Communists acceptable to Moscow are entitled to speak for those who have the right of self-determination. The Communists have given practical effect to this doctrine by attempting to overthrow the non-Communist governments of liberated countries such as India and Indonesia and by the imposition of Communist dictatorships on the captive states of Eastern Europe.

Mr. Panikkar's treatment of Russia as separate from Europe is sound, but his notion that Czarist imperialism was somehow gentler than the European brand and that the sovietization of the Central Asian republics was the work of Asians themselves is very bad history. It follows the current Soviet historical line, but it is not supported by contemporary accounts or by the Communist interpretation, thirty years ago, of Czarist conquest and Soviet reconquest of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Bad history or not, the inclination of many Asians to think the best of Russian relations with Asia, past and present, and to suspect the United States as the heir to European imperialism is one of the important facts of life of our international relations. Ambassador Panikkar, with skill and persuasiveness, shows why they feel this way. That is important for us to know.