

ment has grown, but that it has become a major factor affecting basic decisions and policies is more than doubtful.

In discussing "The U.S. and the Palestine Tangle," Dr. Agwani describes the series of pressures and miscalculations that finally led the American government to adopt policies which drained the reservoir of faith and good will that had taken so many years to fill. He concludes that the basic error lay in confusing "the Palestine problem with the wider issue of the rehabilitation of the European refugees," and in deciding an important international issue on the basis of domestic political expediency. It is in this chapter that he presents his views with greatest clarity.

In criticizing what he considers U.S. support of the remnants of British colonialism in the Arab area, the author does not give sufficient weight to the pressure of events in other parts of the world. After asserting that "British diplomatic craft" exploited "American sensitiveness to the 'communist menace'" he goes on to ask: "What could the United States gain by supporting the British position?" The answer is that, right or wrong, the U.S. felt it could not afford to sacrifice British support in other areas, no less important in the global picture. Actually, the U.S. was neither so subservient to British pressures nor so seduced by "British diplomatic craft" as Dr. Agwani seems to think.

The book also deals with questions of economic development and with the abortive efforts to organize a collective defense to fill the power vacuum left by the withdrawal of British and French forces. With regard to the latter, Dr. Agwani feels that more reliance should have placed on the local peoples, particularly the Egyptians.

The book has a good map. There are also appendices, tables and a bibliography.

A writer treads dangerous ground when he treats of actions and reactions still in a state of flux. He is not dealing with a phase of history that has a clearly discernible beginning and end, out of which he can make a neat package. He should, therefore, be careful of his evaluations, lest history prove him wrong. One must make allowances in judging those who write such books as this, but, in this regard, Dr. Agwani has acquitted himself well — to date, most subsequent happenings in the Arab World confirm rather than contradict his implicit prognostications.

As a study of Arab-American relations by a European-educated, non-Arab Muslim, this thesis is an interesting document; but it may be somewhat misleading to those who do not already know the subject thoroughly.

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**Mohammed and Charlemagne.** By Henri Pirenne, translated by Bernard Miall, New York, Barnes Noble Inc, n.d., pp. 293.

This book of 1935 has had a wide vogue in Europe and it is of such vital interest that even now it does not come too late before the American reader. The book was written by a man devoted to Carolingian and Merovingian studies and it is reviewed by a man whose

Arabic was acquired some forty-five years ago whereas his Carolingian studies have not flagged. In this magazine, then, it is only fair to remark that the title of this book may sound misleading. Muhammed is not the hero of the book at all; the effect of Islam is studied in as far as the world of Charlemagne has been its result.

Two now famous conclusions were reached by Pirenne in this respect. The Roman Empire in 400 A.D. and the Roman Empire in 650 A.D. did not present basic differences. The Merovingians did not destroy antiquity.

This negative thesis is the first. The second thesis runs: Islam made such continuity in the West impossible. It interrupted all interchange between East and West because the Western Mediterranean became a Musulman lake (p. 284). Hence, Charlemagne was forced into far northern, inner continental regions. There wholly new civilisation began.

In my own research, I have found Pirenne's thesis to be borne out by the facts in the law and the liturgy, the language and the literary character. Whether the "Musulman lake" was an absolute truth, seems debateable. However, the pressures from Islam cannot be denied; and their consequences should be part of any genuine story of the 8th and 9th century.

This question has been neglected too long so that Pirenne's thesis seems overdue. For a much more serious task looms before us as soon as we see the break-up of the ancient world as happening from 650 A.D. to 750 A.D. and let the insipid date of 476 disappear. How far are Charlemagne and Muhammed two, the two possible solutions of introducing the non-citified peoples, under the veneer of the Greek-Roman Polis-civilisation, to the worship of One God? Muhammed subjugated the polis to the simple faith of warriors. He freed the tribes from magic and devilry, from tatoo and vendetta. He cleaned but did not open their lips. Charlemagne kept the Roman Catholic veneer and his warrior-bishops changed its creed (filioque), its liturgy and its canons.

A new book, expected for fifty years and finally published in 1955, by George Misch, compares the Nordic and the Arabic pre-Islamic traditions of autobiography in the most fruitful manner. I am not a Spenglerian and I think that his giving to Islam the first and to the "Occident" the second millennium of our era is a fallacy. But it is a very different matter to ask why Spengler ever could hatch his preposterous scheme. Then the fault may have to be found with us who have not followed Ranke's suggestion in his universal history that the two roads of East and West were decided in 785 when Charlemagne prevailed over the Pope to drop Charles' only rival and to embrace wholeheartedly the Frankish tutelage.

Pirenne's book has forced upon us a more comprehensive vision of the Dark Ages, so called, during which the ancient polis began to be replaced by "the peoples" in the West as Henri François Muller has shown in his *Époque Mérovingienne* (1945), and where the superstitions of the tribesmen from Africa to India were at least blocked and largely eliminated by the simplifications of the Qur'ān. Hence it is my sincere conviction that the book should be made the stepping stone for a new approach to our heritage.

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