

EXTRA ! EXTRA ! ! Coming in January

at half price or free *

THE NEON HALO by Jean-Louis Curtis

Originally published at 15s; SFBC only 7s 6d

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has been set up. They leave the capitalists on Venus and return to Earth. This sort of political theme remained dominant until very recently. *The Circle of the Winds*, by A. Kazantsev, deals with the possibility of transforming the deserts and warming up the Arctic regions by causing vast meteorological changes between Novaya Semlya and the Behring Straits. This is all for the benefit of man. On the other hand, a mad American scientist has prepared to do the same thing, but using it as a weapon of destruction.

"To-day Soviet SF seems to be entering a new phase. It is designed, so they say, "to guide men, to light up rationally his imagination, and to show him the progressive way forward." Perhaps the best exponent is Ivan Efremov. His new novel, *The Heart of the Dragon*, tells the story of the *Tellur*, the Earth's first warp spaceship, which is seventy-eight light years distant from the Earth. It is seeking other inhabited worlds, the existence of which is known from radio messages. The novel is dull reading in terms of storytelling, but I found it exciting because of the intimate accuracy of its scientific detail.

"The new line is heavily underscored. When the crew of the *Tellur* return to Earth, 700 years will have passed. This gives some members of the crew a feeling of futility about their flight. They feel that by the time they get home time and space will have been conquered and they will return with obsolete and useless knowledge. The captain, Moot Ang, interprets their feelings: "We left the Earth the way dying men do. And when we return we will be backward men, with a mentality that belongs to the past." He then goes on to explain why they are wrong: "The development of knowledge, the accumulation of experience and study of the bottomless Cosmos must go on all the time. Otherwise we violate the laws of development, which is always uneven and contradictory."

"They must fulfil their duty, like all members of society, he goes on: "Because we reach hitherto unknown depths of space we shall have died for 700 years. Those who remain on Earth to enjoy all the pleasures of life there will never experience the great emotions of a man who has glimpsed the secrets of the development of the Universe. . . . You have no reason to be afraid of the future. Who knows, perhaps the grain of knowledge which we bring back to our

For many years we have been promising (threatening?) to offer SFBC members the chance to buy extra optional books at bargain prices, books which we can't fit into the regular bi-monthly lists for one reason or another. And here is the first, offered at half price and available in January 1960:

THE NEON HALO by Jean-Louis Curtis.

This book, in my opinion, ranks with *1984* and *Brave New World* as an imaginative and plausible forecast of the not-too-distant future and as a piece of serious literature. Written by a well-known French author, winner of the 1947 Prix Goncourt, it describes a world in which the USA and USSR jointly stand together against the yellow races. The cross of Christianity has been superseded by the iron triangle of Delta, symbolizing a religion of community, the rule of the police, the subjection of the individual to the collective. War has been abolished—or has it? Work, productivity, and efficiency are, or are supposed to be, the order of the day.

The neon halo surrounds the head of M. Laurent, school-master, who has devoted his life to the relief of sufferers from the effects of atomic explosions. Too late he discovers the uses to which he has been put by the masters of Delta publicity. The fate of Coulon d'Esclarmont, in whose veins runs the bluest of French blood, and who becomes a donor at the Institute of Parthenogenesis, throws light on a problem which to-day troubles even archbishops. Brilliant *entrepreneur* Philippe Mercade heads an organization to find novel ideas for an *élite* bored by the materialist prosperity of their lives, to whom there comes a young man with an idea of fatal simplicity. The exclusive club for the secret practise of idleness, eroticism, and individuality is exposed and taken over by the authorities for a rather different purpose. The final chapter deals with the sexual

moves of a rationalized community, and is not for the squeamish.

Place your order now, with Letchworth, for this book. Originally published by Secker & Warburg at 15s; SFBC only 7s 6d. It will be published in January.

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or A FREE COPY OF Jean-Louis Curtis's *The Neon Halo* (available from January).

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planet will contribute to a new advance in science, and make life still better for man."

Which all goes to prove that SF and Sif, like jazz, have entered the Cold War, though I doubt whether western SF will ever be much use to American propagandists. Mr Goldsmith might usefully explore the non-conformist, often radical, content and conscience of leading SF writers who seem to me (healthily) disenchanted with war and technological tyranny, and deeply conscious of the need for humanity to control (perhaps by the development of mental powers or new social institutions) the deadly technical powers at man's fingertips.