

science fiction news

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Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

SLAVE SHIP

by Frederik Pohl

(Dobson 11s 6d; SFBC 5s 6d)

IT IS one thing to teach dolphins to communicate with man, with their large brains and their observed altruistic behaviour, but (though in some ways easier) it is another matter to communicate with cows, rabbits, dogs and cats.

The world of *Slave Ship* is a world of hot cold war between the United Nations and a new religious power from old Viet Nam, the Caodais. So far they have overrun three continents, with only Europe and America to go. And American man-power is dwindling.

In Project Mako in Florida Lieutenant Miller, late of a U.S. submarine acting in enemy waters, finds his job as computer operator for tracing animal language dull indeed—but only at first. Quite apart from the astonishing results obtained by the team of scientists, there are ructions when Caodais prisoners escape from a local stockade, and, even worse, when the mysterious *Glotch* kills several people, it all but does for Miller.

Eventually he gets back to working on his beloved submarines, but this particular submarine is different: it is rigged up to be worked by animals, and Miller, with his friend Semyon, an eccentric but lovable little Russian and a disciple of Pavlov, sets out for enemy waters in the company of three dogs, a litter of puppies, various seals and chimps. As they travel they find that the cold war has hotted up still further, and, on finally landing on Madagascar, get caught by the Caodais. . . .

How the animals react in a dangerous situation when left on their own, and what surprises await the men and the one glamorous woman who accompanies them, bring the book to an exciting and quite unexpected end.

Noted in his short stories for his barbed satire, Frederik Pohl has certainly triumphed in this his acidly amusing, thoroughly preposterous but unnervingly realistic first novel.

ANOTHER WINNER . . .

Short stories are still rolling in from members as we go to press, some extremely original and well written, as the one we reprint below.

The Macrocosmic Game

by K. W. George

IT WAS the biggest laboratory ever. It had departments for every known science, and space for many more; so much space, in fact, that there were rooms no one had set foot in for years—if you wished to drift far enough down the echoing passages to find them. In one of these disused rooms Ghadd's hobby was in full swing. His interest was not exactly bacteriology: 'Micro-organisms', he'd say vaguely, and that was as far as anyone could get. He had evolved his own system too: his 'cultures' were in nothing like dishes. He set little balls of chemical compound—any mixture which took his fancy—revolving around a central heater, the lot held together by force-beams; and on these compounds he'd let loose various cultures—which nearly always died.

He used to meander along at night before he went off home to have a look at his cultures—perhaps bringing with him some more of his micro-organisms to set loose. He'd have a look around, inspect this, dispose of that, then eventually switch off the light and leave.

One evening he floated into his hobby-room, drifting from one apparatus to another, vaguely peering. He could not inspect the cultures properly—he hadn't the correct equipment—but things seemed far better than usual. There were at least half a dozen cultures doing well, although—disappointment—they were all similar.