

and which believe that the preaching of the gospel would be meaningless without political engagement.

There are two maps, some suggestions for further reading, and a small index, mainly of names.

COLIN CARR O P

FROM HIROSHIMA TO HARRISBURG by Jim Garrison. *SCM* 1980. pp x + 275. £5.50 p.b.

This book undertakes a large task. It describes the U.S. decision to develop the atom bomb and to explode devices over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Leaning heavily on Robert J. Lifton's *Life in Death* it outlines some of the physical and psychological effects of the Hiroshima bomb on the survivors. It traces the post-war developments – the arms race, the increase in the number of countries which have nuclear weapons or the potential for them; it looks at our present situation – on the assumption that SALT II will be ratified – in terms of number of warheads, delivery systems, and the probable effects of 'limited' and 'all out' nuclear war; and attempts to delineate the social and political psychology which feeds on and gives a boost to the arms spiral.

The book then makes an uneasy transfer to the subject of nuclear power, which it sees as inextricably wound up with the question of nuclear weapons. The writer looks at the levels of radiation we are likely to incur from the presence of nuclear power stations in our midst, at the danger of meltdowns and other nuclear accidents; he gives a journalist's eye view of the Harrisburg (3 Mile Island) accident, and outlines the nuclear fuel cycle, from mining to waste-disposal.

A third chapter tells of the death of Karen Silkwood, an anti-nuclear activist who by Garrison's account, was the victim of some very nasty counter-subversion work by private and federal agents concerned with the protection of the nuclear industry's status.

Two final chapters, on a more meditative note, look at the problem of psychic numbing (a sense of helplessness in the face of powers beyond our control; the term is borrowed from Lifton); and make a plea that we opt for the path of 'soft energy' and non-violence.

In what way is Garrison qualified to cover this field? He is not a historian or a physicist: his research is nearly always based on publications which one would have to qualify as secondary sources; I share a number of the writer's prejudices, but few of my prejudices feel any firmer after reading this emotive essay in 'investigative journalism'.

For instance, it is far from proven that there is, technically, a link between a country possessing facilities for nuclear power and the same country achieving thereby nuclear weapons capability. The level of enrichment required for uranium in the present generation of reactors makes it useless for nuclear weaponry.

Like so many campaigners against nuclear power, Garrison ignores the radiation effect of other energy sources: we are not confronted with a simple choice between clean energy and nuclear energy; coal is also a killer, if I may adopt his idiom.

But the book is not all bad: if the technical link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons is not proven, it is correct to see a certain link between the two in terms of what their development does in practice to the civil liberties of a country. The arms programme is a sort of Frankenstein which has outgrown, it seems, its master's power to control it; the warning from Garrison, hysterical though he is, that the same process attends the energy programme should, not be dismissed.

The positive comments on humanity as the criterion for assessing the appropriateness of technological developments, although very general, remind one that it remains very important to ask of any artifact what exactly it's for.

Like most nuclear products, the book should be treated with great care.

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