

à family of new immigrants into the Israeli economy as 10,000 dollars and the number of refugee families as (now) 310,000.

Even if one envisages peace, its character would depend on the answer to certain questions: would the emigrations of Jews from the U.S.S.R. be permitted, to bring hundreds of thousands of energetic and enterprising settlers to revive the pioneer spirit in Israel? Or will the greater demographic fertility of the Sephardis give Israel an Oriental character? Will Israel maintain her links with the West, or will her Russian minority take her into the Soviet orbit? Will Israel be the common fatherland of the Jews of the whole world, or a country like any other, the country merely of the Israelis themselves? Depending on the answers to these questions (but M. Alem is careful not to say which answers!) the Near East will either be divided into two worlds, foreign to each other, or peace will be prolonged by a federation between Israel and the Arab states. Many in Israel, including Ben Gurion, would welcome the latter solution, but it would demand great realism on the part of the Arabs and discretion on the part of the Israelis. There would be initial disappointments, particularly since the economies of the two sectors are only partially complementary. Israel could not compete on the Arab markets with European, American or Japanese goods of superior quality and lower prices than hers. The industrialization of Egypt could bring about competition between her and Israel. But in the long term an Arab-Jewish symbiosis could give greater prosperity to the Near East.

Most conflicts end by war in which one side is the victor and imposes its will on the other. In the present case, the new factor, U.N.O.,

imposes a difference: it can stop the fighting, but not establish peace. The relations between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. complicate the equation. And our impatience to see a solution falsifies the time scale appropriate to this problem. The conflict between Jews and Arabs has its roots in antiquity and is linked to the destiny of Israel. The birth of a Jewish state in Palestine is an event in world history which must be inscribed in the perspective not of a generation or of a century, but one, two, even three thousand years. Jews and Arabs are two irritating and fascinating peoples, who have so far shown each other their first characteristic. What harmony would follow chaos, what freedom would follow bondage, if they undertook to fascinate each other. . . .

M. Alem ends thus, with a rhetorical flourish . . . and, given the facts, it is difficult to do otherwise. Perhaps there is one chink of light which M. Alem could not have seen: Arabs and Israelis have in fact talked together. There is no reason for Israel to abandon her demand for direct bilateral negotiations, since without them no peace would last long. And, in a sense, they have begun to take place, since Arab notables of considerable standing (Palestinians and Jordanians, not Syrians or Egyptians) have met under the aegis of the magazine *Israel Today* and spoken with considerable—indeed alarming—freedom. If people like the former Jordanian Ambassador to London, Anwar Nusseiba, and the newspaper editor Ibrahim Khaldi, are prepared to sit down with Israelis and exchange views, then some solution other than renewed hostilities is possible, however remote it may seem now.

LOUIS ALLEN

#### EN CHINE AVEC TEILHARD, 1938-1944, by Claude Rivière. Editions du Seuil Paris, 1968.

This book has a three-fold interest: Claude Rivière ran the French broadcasting station in Shanghai under the daunting difficulties of the Japanese occupation, and the book is therefore, unintentionally perhaps, an interesting sideline on life in the Far East during World War II. But she was also very friendly with Teilhard, and her account of his conversations with her make up the *raison d'être* of her narrative, together with his letters, written during the period when he was composing *Le phénomène humain*. This is why her book is crucial to an understanding of Teilhard, though it may seem a lightweight beside the many tomes of philosophical analysis that have been lavished

on him. Shanghai had a curious war-time existence. Life was hard for the Chinese, but there had always been large foreign populations in the city, and those whose mother-country was not at war with Japan were not too badly treated. Because of the agreements negotiated with France over Indo-China, the French were to some extent favoured, and Mlle Rivière took advantage of this to circulate news from Saigon and Chungking clandestinely. (A footnote, presumably by the editor Jean de Beer, on page 71, states quite inaccurately that the Japanese took over control of the French concession, including the radio, when the French in Indo-China 'fomented a revolt

in March 1944'. The Japanese take-over in Indo-China was in March 1945, and the French fomented no revolt, although they did put up a short-lived armed resistance.)

I have always felt that Teilhard's view of the Chinese was cursory and superficial, largely because, in spite of his long sojourn in their country, he never troubled to learn their language. Indeed it is not the Chinese who seem to interest him in Shanghai, but the problems of the thousands of European refugees. And then his book, which Mlle Rivière read in two nights, in spite of its neologisms and great difficulty. Her account of what this meant to her is not surprising, since it confirms what has been my impression over a good deal of what Teilhard has to say. When people speak of a 'new dimension' brought into their minds by his work, it is not so much a contribution of new ideas in themselves, but the collective poetic vision which sustains them together. 'The great enrichment Teilhard brought me', she writes, 'is that he transformed most of my dead ideas into living ones. In particular, he confirmed and fortified my hope and my mainstay; the belief in the primacy, the everlastingness, of Mind. And in addition, Fr Teilhard gave to my life, which was being nibbled away, eaten up by everyday necessities, what was most missing from it, and has an inestimable value: *spiritual Altitude*. The Earth, planetized, has since become for me a grandiose vision. *Le phénomène humain* appears to me like some vast Poem, Poetry being, as Novalis said, absolute Reality.'

Teilhard had met thousands of Chinese, had lived with them on archaeological expeditions often in very primitive conditions, as well as mixing with the young intellectuals in Peking. But his views were very sombre and hopeless as far as China was concerned. 'No promise of progress, no ferment, nothing budding here

for the Humanity of tomorrow', he wrote to the Abbé Breuil in 1923, 'Absence of thought, or thought which is aging, or childish thought' (to his cousin in the same year), 'A down-to-earth mentality, inert, hostile to foreigners, primitive beings, good and affectionate, but curious, clinging, indiscreet, just like savages . . .'. Even if one dismisses these as the first reactions of someone irritated by the lazy incapacity for change which he might have witnessed in 1923, Mlle Rivière points out that fifteen years in China did nothing to change Teilhard's views. 'He never integrated himself into the "yellow world"', she writes. 'He felt himself an exile in China, "cut off from his native block", from that white race whose primacy he affirmed.' 'In an obscure way', he was writing to her as late as 1943, 'we aspire to the White Earth. *There* is the true bud of humanity.' It is not surprising, then, to find him both acknowledging the immense scientific debt he owed to China, in terms of the vast scale of work it offered him and so enlarged his thinking, and at the same time to hear him declare that, with the exception of one or two excellent friends, 'I tell you frankly I love the Chinese out of Christian obligation, and by an effort of will. They are "my neighbour"; but I feel little attracted to most of them. Their vision of the world is the antinomy of mine. Their thought is static, turned towards the past. It has no contribution to make to the progress of humanity, to its spiritual ascent, and these are, as you know, my only pre-occupation and my great hope.' But there is one phrase in the book which sums up the value of Teilhard, and redeems this curious blindness: 'The world is either absurd or divine.' The choice faced by modern man could hardly be put more plainly.

LOUIS ALLEN