

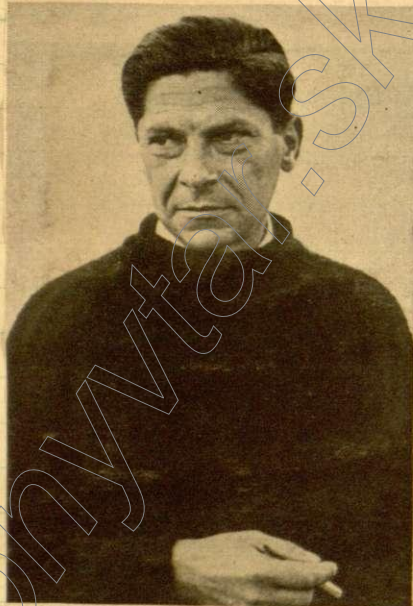
1955

## Care & Feeding of Dinosaurs

THE TRAIL OF THE DINOSAUR (253 pp.)  
—Arthur Koestler—Macmillan (\$3.50).

In a London club not long ago, a doddering ancient buttonholed an odd-looking chap, said to have once been a Hungarian, of all things, who had just written something or other against Communism. "Well, young man, I am glad that at last you have come round to see reason," snuffed the old member. "I myself knew 25 years ago what Bolshevism means, and it's never too late to repent."

The younger character was Arthur Koestler, now 50, and he found the old man's attitude highly irritating. U.S. readers who, unlike Arthur Koestler, have never been Communists, may share the



AUTHOR KOESTLER

"Pray for time and play for time."

old gentleman's complacency; but if they do, they will be missing a bet from one of the world's liveliest intellectual tipsters.

**The Unpopular Side.** Like Socrates, Koestler is a man with the disconcerting habit of following arguments where they lead. This latest collection of his essays (more notable) *The Yogi and the Commissar* reveals that Koestler is still looking for an adjudicator in the long debate in which, as in *The Right to Say No*, he habitually takes the con. People pro-anything get short shrift from Con-Man Koestler. Yet Americans should find themselves stimulated by this tough controversialist. Some examples of Koestler's talent for taking the unpopular side of an argument:

¶ In *Judah at the Crossroads*, he tries to close his accounts with Zionism with the advice that Jews should either go to Israel or renounce their religion and stop praying, "Next year in Jerusalem."\* "The mission of the Wandering Jew is completed . . . There must be an end to every calvary." For his "apostasy," Koestler—born a Jew in Hungary—was called an anti-Semite in Britain's *Jewish Chronicle*, where his argument also appeared.

¶ In *Chambers, the Villain*, he pours irresistible common sense on the woozled thinking of those who argue that Alger Hiss may have been guilty, but still scorn Whittaker Chambers as an "informer." Says Koestler: "To talk of betrayal [by Chambers of Hiss] where loyalty would mean persistence in crime [is] to defend the agents of an evil regime on the grounds that those who denounce it are no saints."

¶ *The Seven Deadly Fallacies* (e.g., confusion of Left and East, the anti-anti attitude) and a brilliant *Guide to Political Neuroses* (e.g., collective amnesia, eternal

\* The traditional toast at the end of the Pass-over meal.

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adolescence) are probably his most valuable essays—and most highly calculated to inflict flesh wounds on those odd fellows who, sometimes without knowing it, still travel with the fellow travelers.

**Goodbye, Cassandra.** Koestler's main theme: the big issues that agitated intellectuals for two generations—right v. left, capitalism v. socialism—have today become less relevant than they were. The great issue now, as any man of reason must see it, says Koestler, is relative freedom v. absolute tyranny. As for the notion cherished by the left that private property is the chief obstacle to human progress and brotherhood, this has in fact been answered by the Soviet Union, which has set up in the name of socialism a more hypocritical and merciless tyranny than any state in history could match, lie for lie, bludgeon for bludgeon. Yet this is a fact which, as Koestler admits, his fellow intellectuals in Europe have still not swallowed.

If they ever learn their lesson, it will not be from Arthur Koestler. He has had it. Says Koestler: "This . . . is a farewell to arms . . . I have said all I had to say on these questions [that have] obsessed me, in various ways, for the best part of a quarter century. Now the errors are atoned for, the bitter passion has burnt itself out; Cassandra has gone hoarse, and is due for a vocational change."

As to what the vocational change might be, for a man who is proud that his books have been burned behind him, the reader must guess. And who is the dinosaur of the book's title? It is man—especially, perhaps, old humanistic liberal man—who is due either for a mutation of species or extinction. Says Koestler: "Once we hoped for Utopia; now, in a chastened mood, we can at best hope for a reprieve; pray for time and play for time; for had the dinosaur learnt the art of prayer, the only sensible petition for him would have been to go down on his scaly knees and beg, 'Lord, give me another chance.'"

