

ers' control of industry or Marx's concept of alienation

Sir Karl Popper's essay, the only one not written specifically for this book, was translated from a script to a broadcast originally addressed to a German audience. He denies there are laws of history, be they mechanistic, dialectical or organic. "Emancipation through Knowledge" is his theme. His ideal of our self-emancipation through knowledge rests on discovering our own errors and the errors of others. This is not the same as the ideal of mastery over nature, which marxists adopt. Self-criticism and self-emancipation are only possible in a pluralist or open society, according to Popper.

However, marxists do not reject the idea that progress in knowledge is made by recognition of error as well as recognition of success. Marx's view that our opinions are determined by class interests does not negate this view. Marx investigated society and found that in class societies, class is a constant factor in forming opinions. His view was scientific. Classless society, the true open society cannot be achieved by universal tolerance of each other's differences if this means reconciliation of class interests.

The principles of Humanism, that is scientific method in approaching nature and society; reliance on man to make his own history; universalism in morality and so on, are encompassed by people of many diverse views.

In a recent survey by the *Australian Humanist* which drew 256 replies, Humanists in Australia were found to comprise: 11.4% Radical (including 1.5% Marxist, .8% Communist); 55.8% Reformist; 55% Moderate; and 24% Miscellaneous.

Among all these, there would be a more or less general agreement about the aims of Humanism as presented in

*The Humanist Outlook*. Where the differences lie would be in the way we are to proceed to achieve a world which is "founded on reason and the belief in the value and dignity of man."

BARBARA CURTHOYS

## **PRAGUE SPRING, by Z. A. B. Zeman. Penguin, 169 pp., 70c.**

THE AUTHOR of this slim book about the events in Czechoslovakia during last year is a Czech migrant who re-visited Prague after 20 years of absence. This absence is probably the reason for the major draw-back of his book concerning the democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia.

The analysis is based on very good general knowledge of Czech historical background and on much factual material given mainly by the Czech press. The author uses quotations from Czech dailies and weeklies in the right context and it is obvious that he has studied Czech reality for many years.

But his observations are limited by his long absence from the country. He places the beginning of the *Prague Spring* in the year 1967. Living in Czechoslovakia he would probably have realised that the great intellectual movement of the Czech and Slovak nations started 3-5 years earlier. Czech literature, film, theatre and art generally broke the barriers of Stalinism in the years of 1962-1964.

Zeman sees *Prague Spring* purely as intellectual reform. He gives a good picture of the journalists and writers' world. His analysis of the student movement is rather vague in facts and atmosphere. Z. A. B. Zeman doesn't write about the workers and the farmers who had their own specific reasons and motivations for challenging Novotny's regime.

We could recommend *Prague Spring* for reading mainly as an informative book with plenty of what in Australia are unknown facts, details, data and figures. The readers certainly will appreciate the short chronology of Czechoslovak events given at the end of this useful book.

ALES BENDA

(Mr. Benda, a journalist on the Czech paper "Youth Front" visited Australia as a guest of the Young Socialist League in May this year.—Ed.)

**ON ESCALATION:  
METAPHORS AND  
SCENARIOS, by Herman  
Kahn. Penguin,  
300 pp., \$1.65.**

HERMAN KAHN, a mathematician rumoured to have an IQ of over 200, once referred to himself as an "amateur strategist". But since the conditional acceptance of his style of strategy by the US administration he has moved into the lucrative and powerfield of prediction and pontificating — his Hudson Institute team is now "investigating" the twenty-first century. However, in greater measure even than similar general theories of the Buckminster Fuller/Marshall McLuhan type, Kahn trades in errors of fact and in generalisation so loose it can be shown to be untrue (see the discussion of his first two books in *Dissent*, X, i, 1963).

*On Escalation* is a work so crowded with characteristic Kahn shortsightedness and general lack of political awareness it becomes difficult to know where to begin discussing them. As in his earlier works these faults stem primarily from the type of anti-sentimental stand he adopts, for by facing the fact that we must think of what would be involved in nuclear war he forgets individuals or societies completely and assumes, in their stead, a potential public tolerance of widespread disaster. Thus

"Today our strategic forces are so hardened and dispersed that many analysts believe the US could give the Soviets days to try to destroy these forces and they would not be able to do so. Therefore, there need be no rush for the President to retaliate. He could wait until the attack was finished and then decide on the nature of the retaliation. For example, he could communicate with the Soviets to find out if the attack was accidental or deliberate before striking back. (p. 65)."

As though to underline the naivete of expecting the necessary tolerance of such a situation, Kahn, at other points in the same book, lists both Pearl Harbor and the sinking of the *Lusitania* as "intense" (i.e. likely to start a war) "crises".

But it seems Kahn's style to be so rash. For instance four pages previously he is similarly naive before the US Government "Line" on the Tonkin Gulf Incident. After quoting a single article from *The Washington Post* of 10/7/64, headed "US Reprisal Raids on North Vietnam Kept as Last Resort," Kahn writes:

"Since the above was obviously 'leaked', it was likely to be understood by Hanoi and Peking as semiofficial, if not official. It would be difficult to give a more detailed, specific and expository threat and account of the theory. However, the extent to which such stories may have influenced the behaviour of Hanoi and Peking is an open issue. It clearly did not prevent the later attack on US destroyers in Tonkin Bay."

To have leaped from any one report to this conclusion would have been absurd, even had the report been dated as late as July 31. In fact the 23 days between the report and the Tonkin Gulf Incident included separate appeals for a reconvened Geneva Conference from the Soviet Union, U