

already seen ; but more subtle changes have certainly been going on. The unions, once the management ladder of the able working class boy, are that no more ; while higher wages and the growth of employer paternalism has made the opposition role of trade unionism harder than ever to sustain. The unions may no longer have the internal dynamic to keep themselves abreast of the times. The last election, even if not this otherwise perceptive book, has warned them of what may be the consequences.

When the Moon Was Blood *The City that Wouldn't Die*

By Richard Collier.

Collins. 256 pages. 16s.

"THE statutory period of silence having elapsed, it is now permissible to reveal that the editorial and publishing offices of *The Economist* were entirely destroyed in a recent air raid. What made the disaster worse was that the printing works in which the paper has been produced since it was forced to migrate by the Great Fire of London on December 29, 1940, were also completely destroyed in the same night. *The Economist* thus found itself without a home, without a printer, and without any preparation for the next week's issue (with the sole exception of one short galley proof carried away by mistake in a compositor's pocket)."

The quotation is from the issue of *The Economist* dated May 24, 1941. The reference is to one tiny local incident among the violent and fiery happenings in London during the brightly moonlit night of May 10th-11th—much too tiny to find a place in Mr Collier's splendidly evocative and admirably documentary reconstruction of the Luftwaffe's last and heaviest mass fling against the British capital before turning eastward to Russia in the following month. The blitz on London was really over when this devastating assault was, almost whimsically, mounted. This awful night, which Mr Collier so convincingly and so movingly describes by his spot check from person to person on what actually is remembered of what went on in the close ambit of the relentless bombing and fire-raising, had no place in any rational pattern of warmaking.

It was the night when Hess (irrelevantly) came, when the House of Commons as well as the Queen's Hall went up in smoke—and, above all, when the water ran out. "Incredibly," Mr Collier records, "the whole city locked in by a triangle of water was as dry as the Sahara." Bombarded by high explosive which broke the water mains one after another, blanketed by the simultaneous hail of incendiary bombs that started countless fires, guarded by only one fire-watching householder or business firm out of every four that should have been there, and protected by a fire service which was not rationalised and centralised until after this final big blow had been brutally struck (another article in the same issue of *The Economist* of May 24, 1941, dealt with

brigades on a regional basis under national control), London was wide open that night. "Sergeant's Inn, too, had caught, but the caretaker had locked up for the week-end and taken the keys." It was from Sergeant's Inn that *The Economist's* offices in Bouverie Street, beginning with the precious, burnable library, caught fire in the Sunday morning of May 11th, after the raiders had gone.

The tale is one of the ordinary human qualities writ large—unintended great courage, fear among even the bravest, simple good sense and comradeship, cowardice and sheer escapism. It is so well told, from what those in the target areas can now recall, that it could be taken as the epitome of what a community when challenged can, and cannot, do—from the routine, dogged bravery right down to the dodging of the column by the colleagues of the brave to the beastly looting and the febrile celebration of the many more thoughtless ones.

Was it important, strategically? Air Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, in charge of the fighter plane defence, said that "We should soon have been inflicting such casualties on the enemy's night bombers that the continuance of his night offensive on a similar scale would have been impossible." It was, all the pundits agree, a dead end. But it was, nevertheless, a ruinous and frightening night—more potent in what it did to some Londoners in a few hours than the new attacks three years after, when the allies were on top, with the frightening V-bombs.

It was fashionable then, and still is, to swap bomb stories. Up to, and including, May 10, 1941, Londoners (with bows to Warsaw and Rotterdam) could boast of their bludgeoning. But the war went on. What the RAF did in 1943 to Hamburg or the American Air Force in 1945 to Dresden, to say nothing of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, showed how ephemeral, and ultimately how pointless, such boasts can be.

Attack on Philosophy

Words and Things

By Ernest Gellner, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell.

Gollancz. 270 pages. 25s.

IN the course of his sweeping attack upon the current philosophical movement, which he chooses to call "Linguistic Philosophy," Mr Gellner divides the members of that school into High Churchmen and Low Churchmen. The former pay all their attention to ritual ; the latter confess to insights into higher truths. Oxford philosophy is mainly High Church, the more passionate disciples of Wittgenstein Low Church. On certain criteria the division might have been made the other way round, but on any criterion Mr Gellner is himself an extreme anti-clerical. His attack is caustic, often perhaps malicious, and sometimes amusing ; and the more

in caricature, and he has done everything to expose the iniquities of philosophical gamesmanship as he sees it. Every counter-move has thus been already charted, like a ploy in a game of chess : any reply would, for him, only confirm the errors and the emptiness of "Linguistic Philosophy."

Mr Gellner regards the movement as built upon four pillars, four theories about language, all of them false. The first three of these are concerned with forms of argument from our ordinary use of words ; the last is the theory that general assertions about the use of words are impossible since the uses of words are various. This account of the matter is very dubious. Mr Gellner's expositions are sometimes inaccurate ; his criticisms are nearly all on a very general plane. Like the true anti-clerical he is impressed by the form of what he is attacking and pays special attention to the declarations of faith which his opponents make, rather than their good works. In the course of his argument one rarely comes to grip with a discussion of a specific philosophical problem. Even the differences between the members of the movement are regarded by Mr Gellner merely as indications of the silliness of the movement. Linguistic philosophers are thus not allowed that right to differ which even members of Plato's Academy possessed.

It would be quite wrong to compare the iconoclasm of Mr Gellner's attack with, for example, A. J. Ayer's "Language Truth and Logic." For Mr Gellner has no rival theory to put forward. He makes incidental remarks about certain problems about the nature of the world, which Linguistic Philosophers are reputed not to see, but what these problems are he does not specify. Constant repetition of general criticisms without the backing of a rival theory becomes tedious, especially when disguised as sociology.

Many will no doubt greet the book as the long awaited revelation concerning the Emperor's New Clothes. But philosophical movements can be judged only by their results in dealing with specific problems. There is, in fact, nothing so boring as talking about philosophy rather than doing it. To say this is, in Mr Gellner's view, to employ a gambit which he has already noted. It nevertheless remains true. Mr Gellner's work is a brilliant if somewhat patchy and long-winded satire. As a contribution to philosophy its merits are much less obvious.

Watershed of Imperialism

Good-bye Dolly Gray

By Rayne Kruger.

Cassell. 552 pages. 30s.

LINGOISM was not killed stone dead by the Boer War. But it almost was. Within a few years the Act of Union pointed towards the development of an empire that was based on something more than the right of conquest. In this sense "Black Week," the British army's shattering defeat at