

Bookshelf choice

Blockbuster, by Stephen Barley, (Hamish Hamilton, £3.95). Thank goodness this is just fiction, otherwise a maniac would be demanding film as an alternative to blowing up a wrecked ship loaded with bombs and other explosives, with a huge slice of Essex being shattered to smithereens and a tidal wave galloping up the Thames and threatening to engulf London. Utterly impossible, of course, but a book spattered with thrills and surprises and delightfully free from the pseudo-intellectualism which seems to have eaten its way into so much of today's literature. No need to tell you to read it to the end. Once you've started, you can't help doing so.

The Battle For Tolmers Square, by Nick Waters (Routledge and Kegan Paul, £2.95). You'd think it impossible to write an interesting account about a row between Camden Council and various other "bods" including squatters, about how a corner of London should be developed. But architect Waters has the magic touch with words which enables him to attract you through more than 200 pages. Some shouted "Offices" and others yelled

"Housing" — and the two-way tug resulted in the area going to pot, symbolised by the local cinema closing down with *Die Slowly, You'd Enjoy It More* as its final film. At the moment, it looks as if business interests will turn the square to office use. But declares the socially-conscious Waters, "the struggle continues."

Skull-Face, by Robert E Howard (Panther, 60p). Horrific characters from the weird world dreamed up by the creator of Conan people this Volume 1 omnibus of nightmare tales.

The Israel-Arab Reader (Bantam, £1.25). Another in Bantam's series of political analyses, this is entirely a selection of documentation, written or spoken, by leading figures in the Middle East saga. It begins with the biblical prophecy *House of Jacob, come let us go* (to a new land) and covers every aspect of Zionist aspiration culminating in the founding and

fight for survival of the State of Israel. And, of course, with the words of its antagonists. No sides are taken, for this is a book for the earnest student of history.

Collecting Antique Furniture, by Peter Johnson (Hamlyn £2.95). A well illustrated book which sets out with the best intentions to show us what to look for when buying antiques. What one really wants to see, the distinguishing things that make the price difference, eg size, finish, hinges, legs, feet and so on should have been listed to help the reader. Instead, the book degenerates into a summary of different furniture periods. Interesting enough, but could have been miles better considering that the author, who works at Phillips, the famous London auction house, has it all at his fingertips.

Two African Statesmen, by John Hatch (Secker and Warburg, £6). Biographer Hatch's regard for Kenneth

Kuanda, Zambian President since 1964, and Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania since 1962, is so total he believes they will be measured by historians alongside Gandhi, Nehru, Castro, and Mao. Both men are offering an alternative, he says, to the "aggressive, competitive world which has grown out of industrial society, whether capitalist or Communist." They have nailed their colours fully to the mast of socialisation, he adds. Nyerere — son of a clan chief who before his death at over 80 had 22 wives and 26 surviving children — is an intellectual with an Edinburgh University background. Kuanda, music-loving son of an African missionary, is an ex-poultry farmer who coined the electioneering slogan "an egg a day for every Zambian." In the African struggle to defeat colonialism, their roles have been of top importance. But had they at any time to upset odds like those stacked against Gandhi, Nehru, Castro and Mao?

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