

PIONEER OF THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL, THE IDEAS OF EMMANUEL MOUNIER
by Michael Kelly. *Sheed & Ward*, London, 1979. pp 182 £12.50.

Michael Kelly has written a short and very expensive book on Mounier that derives ultimately from a Warwick thesis. I take it his point of view is rather more to the left than Mounier's was: as one of the generation for whom he was a major influence and a former subscriber to the journal he founded, *Esprit*, his account of Mounier's *oeuvre* seems to me to be substantially accurate and just. He sets Mounier in the context of French *integralist* thought and shows how with Maritain, he opened the way for French Catholics to move to the left. Mounier was prepared to go further than Maritain, of course, and equally of course, this was much more than a French matter. The French opened the way for the whole Catholic community. Mr Kelly is a bit hard on Mounier's inability to work out a consistent position on, or a viable relationship with, the French Communist party. In those days – of Stalin and Maurice Thorez – the Communist party could not be ignored, as it largely is by the *avant-garde* of the left these days. Stalin and Thorez and lots of lesser red monsignori did not make fellow-travelling very easy, and I think there was

more important principle and less 'elitism' in Mounier's complaints on this score than Mr Kelly allows. In general he does not give the feel of the period in the way that Dr Petrément did in her biography of Simone Weil. But he does point to some important facets of Mounier's influence. Now largely digested in France, he is still a living thinker in those countries, both in eastern and south-western Europe and South America, where Catholics are obliged to accommodate themselves to authoritarian and hostile governments. It is interesting to know that as early as 1937 Mounier accused Pius XII of cowardice in not condemning atrocities by Hitler and Mussolini. I noticed only one slip. Marc Bloch was not a marxist historian (p 103). He was the founding father of the *Annales* School and thus, I suppose, a sort of pioneer structuralist, but a marxist, no. I wish Mr Kelly had written a more substantial account of Mounier's thought and I wish it could have been cheaper and more accessible which is, I suppose, bourgeois wishful thinking. What we have, however, is well worth while and Mr Kelly deserves our thanks.

ERIC JOHN