

REVIEWS

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

TOWARDS THE CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION. (Gollancz; 6s.)

Messrs. Gollancz throw a wide net in their zeal for man's welfare. They have caught a number of gentlemen, all belonging to the United Church of Canada, who in a series of essays, philosophical, theological, ethical, biblical and economic, bravely attempt to formulate the Christianity for the New Society. It emerges as an enlightened evangelicalism with a vivid sense of the sins of Capitalism. The authors, with what is perhaps a colonial sense of history, are dominated by two bugbears: the Protestant business-man and Fascism. It is their reaction against these hated phenomena that conditions the shape of their Radical Christianity. The suppression of Fascism is to be the business of Politics. "The political task of our generation is that of preventing the rise of the totalitarian state in the remaining countries of the world and of saving civilisation from the devastation of war brought on by the desperate imperialist excursions of the fascist state." (p. 169.) Hence, presumably, the interest taken in Christian Politics by the organisers of Left enlightenment. Thoroughly modern, they are not unaware of the Thomist revival and the author of the first essay writes well on liberty, using Maritain. But one feels that it will be used merely to flog Fascism. English Left-wing courtesy is amusingly illustrated in the essay on *The Marxist Challenge*, in which the author after showing the points of contact between *real* Christianity and *real* Marxism, rather surprisingly remarks: "The Christian cannot, even if he would and this were the only alternative, join the Communist Party. He is debarred by a condition which would make him repudiate his Christianity." From which the publishers hurry down to a footnote, written for the English Edition by John Strachey: "I know of no such condition. The Communist Party welcomes Christians into its ranks." And if Mr. John Strachey re-read this book, he would still fail to see the condition. Sincere as they are, the authors play up to anti-capitalism and anti-fascism to such a degree that their Radical Christianity bears no resemblance to the Christianity that Marxism detests. Their limitation to merely the anti-acquisitive elements in the doctrine of Christ serves only to make their Christianity a useful element in their publishers' campaign.

It is interesting that when one of the authors indicates the religious public he hopes to reach Catholics are not mentioned. Faced with the Leisure State to which both capitalist and

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socialist thinkers are logically forced to tend, the author of the final essay, *The New Society*, shows an astonishing facility in twisting certain Christian truths into line with current views. He succeeds only in compressing even Christ into the narrow limits of a best-seller. Christ becomes a futile prophet of the Ethic which only the Machine could make possible. Religious genius, he explains, was too busy with the spiritual ethic to work out its material implications. "It is part of the limitation of the Gospels that they ignore the technical problem" (p. 266). We are still so near to the industrial revolution and the machine age which it has prepared for us, that it intoxicates us. "Its more profound significance still escapes us. We are not yet aware that because it has ended the long centuries of scarcity it has at last brought within our reach the ethics of the garden, that it has laid the material foundations necessary for the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 270). These ethics, "which cast a moral stigma on worldly care will prove to be a brilliant forecast of the release of man's spirit in the machine age" (p. 279). All of which goes to show that the authors of this book have failed to deal either with Christianity or with Revolution.

CEOLFRIID HERON, O.P.

REORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY. By Oswald von Nell-Breuning, S.J. English Edition prepared by Bernard W. Dempsey, S.J. (Coldwell; 15s.)

THE CONDITION OF BRITAIN. By G. D. H. and M. I. Cole. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

THE PEOPLE'S FRONT. By G. D. H. Cole. (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.)

Reorganization of Social Economy is a bulky volume, comprising some 450 pages of very useful if somewhat tedious word-for-word commentary on the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. As is the way in word-for-word commentaries, there is a tendency to vain repetition and to much labouring of the obvious, while real problems suggested by, when not contained explicitly in, the letter of the text are apt to be ignored. (An instance is the very superficial treatment of the Encyclical's teaching on property.) The author is an economist rather than a theologian or philosopher, and in his handling of the more specifically economic implications of the Encyclical he is at his best. In general, his interpretations are sound, almost recklessly safe—and quite unimaginative. Nevertheless, the book should be found very useful by all whose task it is to expound the Encyclical. Had it been compressed to about one-third its present