

REVIEWS

SOCIALISM, NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL. By Franz Borkeuau.
(Routledge; 5s.)

'The fact is,' says Dr. Borkeuau at the beginning of his final chapter, 'that labour internationalism has so far proved one of the most futile ideologies ever cherished. The real trend of things has gone exactly counter to it, and the labour movement itself has had over and over again to bow to nationalist trends not only because it was not strong enough to counter them, but because they coincided with its own most urgent interests.' A completely new internationalism is, in his view, necessary, an internationalism that far transcends all existing party outlooks. 'The world will not be reconstructed by labour or by the Tories, by capital or by the Proletariat. It will be reconstructed by the United States and by Britain in ever closer union.' To Labour is conceded only the possibility of finding such an order 'easier to promote' than the Tories are likely to find it.

It is always difficult to review fairly a short and controversial book by a learned writer. The task is not made easier on the present occasion by the emotion or amalgam of emotions under which Dr. Borkeuau appears to be labouring. For example, his chapter on 'Socialist Internationalism before 1914' condenses into thirty masterly pages information that students might pursue in vain through a dozen histories. Yet no sooner has he to catch sight of Soviet Russia than his voice rises to a scream, though whether because of that country's alleged loyalty or disloyalty to traditional Marxism never securely emerges. And in his treatment of the British Labour Party he becomes so obsessed with the nationalistic attitude adopted by British Trade Unions towards European refugees that he hopelessly confuses two elements that every undergraduate knows how to distinguish in the British Labour movement—the Trade Union and the other strand.

The Trade Union aspiration is admittedly selfish, that is to say group-selfish or sectional. Noble sacrifices have, no doubt, been made for it by countless individuals, but it carries no universal message, nothing of wider import than the ideals of other particularist groups, be they nations, sects, or non-proletarian classes. It is probably true that nine-tenths of the consciously-initiated improvements in British social conditions during the last hundred years have been effected, directly or indirectly, by Trade Union pressure. Nevertheless—and Dr. Borkeuau does well to emphasise the fact—the inherent selfishness of Trade Unionism sets a limit to the service that it can render humanity. More particularly, its habit of looking upon

its own national state and central government as the ultimate sources of all relevant benefits determines the choice of Trade Unionism in favour of short-sighted national as against long-sighted international advantage whenever the clash between them is ineluctable.

But it is far otherwise with the British Labour Party, at least with the British Labour Party at its best. It is sometimes said that because the British Labour Party is in a measure financed and controlled by the Trade Unions, therefore the Party is no more than the expression of the Unions. It would be as true or untrue to make such a statement of some provincial academic institution struggling to preserve, and not infrequently preserving, standards of integrity in spite of being financed or controlled by local business interests. How define the residuary ethos of the Labour Party stripped of its Trade Union sectionalism? Not in terms of class: that would be too narrow. Not in terms of vague Progress or crude uplift: that would be too wide. Socialism, whether under its equalitarian or its nationalising aspect, has something historically very much to do with it. Yet the Labour movement, admittedly born and nurtured in protest against the inequalities and tyranny of private capitalism, is not mere protest. Its essential spirit may well irradiate and reform new stages of British social economy long after capitalism as we know it, and even socialism as we propound it, have passed. That spirit is founded on the conviction, starting with the under-dog, but spreading far beyond him, that all the evil and suffering in the world spring primarily from the exploitation of man by man, and can be exorcised only when the power of man over man is broken and replaced by the rule of the community as a whole.

There is an element of utopianism here, of course, which derives from an imperfect appreciation of man's inherent frailty and lays in store for the zealots an endless chain of disappointments and disillusionments. Every Labour meeting, grand or humble, starts with undiminished faith that they will be many leagues nearer the Just City by the end of the evening, and within the hour their chances of getting there will seem to the cold observer to have noticeably receded.

Be that as it may, the creed may well challenge comparison with any mundane ideology, alike as an engine of material improvement or as a spur to selfless sympathy with all who toil and suffer, white brown, yellow and black. Those who hold the creed are singularly free with criticisms of their own leaders and current strategy, and they will doubtless profit from some of Dr. Borkenau's sage criticism of their international technique in the past. For the sake, however, of his *Andrew Undershaft* dream of a world ruled by Anglo-American commercial individualism, they are not likely to abandon their own long-standing, if never properly articulated, determination to build a new world from the bottom upwards rather than from the top down. And indeed why should they? Among contemporary layers

of civilisation a hierarchy of power is one thing, a hierarchy of merit quite another. Full expression must be given to the first in organising an International Police; and to the second in keeping that Police Force in its place and in deciding the ends for which it is to be used.

FRANK PAKENHAM.

REAL LIFE IS MEETING. By J. H. Oldham. (Christian News-Letter Books, No. 14. Sheldon Press; 1s. 6d.)

Mr. Oldham examines here 'the desperately urgent political task which is laid on us at this moment of history—the task of finding a real alternative to a totalitarian society; a society which, whether Christian or not, is at least *compatible* with the Christian understanding of life, and in which the Christian heaven is free to do its work.' I am told that others have found his treatment of things illuminating, and it is with some reluctance that I record a contrary experience. His book seems to me disjointed and his arguments hesitant of direction. He designedly spends a good deal of time on summarising other men's ideas—those of Buber and Professor Macmurray on the human person, of G. A. Morgan on Nietzsche, of Mannheim on modern social techniques; but he lacks the precision of thought and language necessary for a unified and coherent exposition. He seems to shift his position without due warning; one is often not sure whether he is considering individuals or communities, Christians or good pagans, principles meant as universal or notions suitable to the English temperament. His generalisations are vague, their applications uncritical.

Two quotations will illustrate these weaknesses. 'A reawakened sense of the common life as the sphere in which God's will must be done, the opening of our eyes to the spiritual significance of the British tradition of public service, local initiative and voluntary effort, evoking the resolve to build new social structures on foundations already given, would infuse fresh energies into the body politic and crown our resistance to tyranny with positive meaning and achievement from which the whole world would benefit' (p. 19). 'There must be certain fundamental values which will be consciously encouraged in every possible way, while behaviour of a contrary kind, such as that characteristic of the Nazis, will be discouraged and repressed.' (p. 78).

A refreshing interlude in an otherwise unsatisfactory book is a chapter contributed from outside on 'The Gospel Drama and Society.' This is by Mr. Mairet, who considers the Gospel story as a presentation, dramatically and 'in the round,' of the problems of our times as of all others, and as a power to influence the imagination as well as the conscious intellect, suggesting right thoughts, even in moments of inattention. This is an admirable little study.

WALTER SHEWRING.