

THE ILLUSION OF THE EPOCH. Marxism-Leninism as a Philosophical Creed. By H. B. Acton. (Cohen and West; 18s.)

COMMUNISM AND CHRISTIANITY. By M. C. D'Arcy. (Penguin Books; 2s. 6d.)

The sight of an academic philosopher dissecting Marxism cannot but remind one of a theoretical physicist gingerly handling the parts of an atom bomb. Professor Acton performs his chosen task with remarkable patience and detachment. The unkindest comment that he allows himself at the end is that 'Marxism is a philosophical farrago'. Well, we all knew that, and the statement has something of the effect of an anti-climax, but its flatness is only the excess of a virtue of exact objectivity and the avoidance of overstatement which characterizes the whole book. In four chapters Professor Acton examines Marxist realism, Marxist naturalism, historical materialism and Marxist ethics. His most fundamental criticism is that Marxism represents an uneasy marriage of scientific positivism with the Hegelian dialectic. Hegel is a traditional metaphysician at least to the extent that he wholeheartedly admits the adage *omne ens est verum*; the business of the philosopher is to exhibit the universe as intelligible and, specifically in the case of Hegel, to exhibit a changing universe as intelligible. But the essence of positivism is to be content to begin with a world of brute fact in which any elements of intelligibility to be discovered are fortuitous alleviations of the *primaeval* darkness.

Marxism tries to have it both ways by combining the supposed advantages of the positivist rejection of metaphysics with the claim to possess a universally valid formula in the principle of the dialectic. The opposition of these two sides of Marxism is brought out in a different but complementary way by M. Merleau-Ponty in his recent book *Les Aventures de la Dialectique*. We must in the end ask for either more metaphysics or less. There is no reason why Marxism should stop as it does as a dogmatic materialism instead of a more comprehensive realism unless it be content to stop sooner as a radical agnosticism.

While Professor Acton's book is a model of temperate and exact analysis and criticism, he confines himself to criticism and has no explicit alternative to offer. Fr D'Arcy, of course, offers an alternative. He also is temperate and sympathetic in exposition and criticism. His method is to set the pictures of communism and of Christianity side by side and to invite the reader to judge which is the more complete interpretation of human life and destiny. In his treatment of the Christian case he might perhaps with advantage have laid more emphasis on the doctrine of the Fall. However many difficulties of detail that doctrine may raise for the theologian, it seems already on a phenom-

enological level to add a new dimension in profundity which makes the Christian view evidently more complete and realistic than any merely progressive theory. In the light of the Fall, Marxism appears as only another example of the pathetic arrogance by which man seeks to raise himself above his condition by his own ineffectual efforts and ends by plunging deeper into the abyss. At times Fr D'Arcy's graceful humanism seems not altogether commensurate with his only too urgently practical subject. He might be a finished product of the Christian Renaissance like Sadoletto at odds with the crudities of the new Lutheran heretics and puzzled by their arbitrary limitations. But the reader may well be expected to be sufficiently intelligent to perceive in the end that the all-embracing capacity of a Christian humanism is evidently a far richer and deeper kind of civilization than any mere positivism or mere materialism.

D. J. B. HAWKINS

ONE FRONT ACROSS THE WORLD. By Douglas Hyde. (Heinemann; 18s.)

Mr Douglas Hyde's new book is in some sense a sequel to *I Believed*, and in its own way it is no less important. In *I Believed* he described his disillusionment with Communism and his discovery of the Catholic Church. In the present work he describes his search for the answer to Communism and his discovery of it in unexpected places. The answer is not at all spectacular but it is perhaps the more impressive for this very fact. He has understood that the conflict with Communism is fundamentally a struggle for the souls of men and he has realized that it is in Asia and Africa, where the future of the world is being largely determined, that the conflict is most acute. He has therefore turned his attention to the missionary Church to try to discover for himself what is being done in that sphere to counteract Communism.

His travels took him over Africa, India, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Hongkong and Japan. His stay in most of these places was short, but he is a journalist with a quick eye for the relevant facts and he succeeds in giving a vivid impression of the situation in each country which he passes through. But it is his stay in Korea which is really significant. Mr Hyde learned to love Korea and its people in the time he spent there and he was able to study his problem there at close quarters. The result is a document of real value on the history of the Church in that country and on the general situation in the Far East. He got to know intimately the Mill Hill Fathers, who are largely responsible for the missions in Korea, and his record of their sufferings and achievements is impressive. But through them he also got to know the Korean Catholics and he has written a wonderful story of their faith and heroism. It is a story of suffering under almost overwhelming difficulties from the time of the