

Reviews

Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution

by José Miguez Bonino, Hodder & Stoughton, 1975, 158 pp., £2.50.

The perspective from which Dr. Bonino has written is candidly disclosed in his preface. "This book is written from the point of view of a person who confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour. This is his centre of gravity and everything else is seen (in intention, at least) in relation to it . . . A second presupposition belongs to the level of history: as a Latin American I am convinced . . . that revolutionary action . . . is imperative today . . . Still on another level lies the presupposition that . . . the socio-analytical tools and the insights of Marxism are, however corrected or reinterpreted, indispensable for revolutionary change."

The book is not, however, another essay in the growing literature of the theology of liberation, to which Dr. Bonino has already made a contribution with his *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age*. Nor is it a contribution to the academic "Christian-Marxist Dialogue". It is an examination of grounds on which the existing empirical "strategic alliance" in some Latin American countries between Christians and Marxists can be intellectually and morally justified. It examines the difficulties and how they might possibly be overcome. The apparatus of massive academic scholarship cannot be deployed in a relatively short work based on public lectures; but the book is a serious study for example of the prophetic understanding of God in history, of Marxist atheism and humanism, and of the significance of love in the lives both of "Red heroes" and "Christian martyrs". Firmly rooted though he is in Latin America, Dr. Bonino knows the European and other literature, and by friendship and travel knows something of the Marxisms of China and Africa as well as Cuba.

This is a very different range of ideas and experience from that of most of those who are involved in, or concerned for, the Churches of

Eastern Europe; and it may therefore be difficult to believe that Dr. Bonino and his like can be serious, or if serious, can be sensible. It is important therefore that what Dr. Bonino has to say be absorbed and critically evaluated by those whose experience of Marxism has been bitter and whose church situation hardly encourages convinced and eager co-operation.

Equally, the Western reader in the North Atlantic culture and its cultural colonies elsewhere needs to make sure that when he describes some social phenomenon as "Christian" he does not merely mean "the liberal democratic capitalist affluent semi-Christian society that I have got used to in the last hundred years". And since, to be frank, in the West the unconscious idolatry of our own ideology is even commoner among Evangelicals than among other types of thoughtful Christian, it is of great and welcome significance that *Christians and Marxists* is based on the first series of London Lectures on Contemporary Christianity, chaired by the Rev. John Stott, designed to stimulate Christian thinking on burning issues of the day. I hope that the great authority of Dr. Stott will secure for Dr. Bonino's book the careful examination that may be needed by a thesis that requires so much change not only in theory (which is hard enough) but in *praxis* (which is much harder).

DAVID M. PATON

Our Hope (*O nashem upovanii*)

by Father Dmitri Dudko. YMCA Press, Paris 1974, 274 pp., 36f.

Father Dmitri Dudko organized question and answer sessions in his church in Moscow. This book is an account of those sessions. The questions and answers seem to be extremely unsophisticated, sometimes even primitive. Let us look at some of them briefly. One questioner asks: "We have only one God. Why then are there so many religions? . . . Which is closest to the truth?" Father Dmitri replies: "Yes, we all have only one God, but we believe in Him in many different ways because of our sins and errors . . ." (p. 14). Again, "What is confession? - Confession reveals what is happening in your soul." (p. 37). But behind the apparent simplicity an expert eye can perceive a complicated and intricate picture of religious life in Moscow, not only *as it is or as it has become*, but I would dare state, *as predicted* in the later writings of Vladimir Solovev. Father Dmitri's book is in fact devoted to one problem: how to escape the all-pervading and destructive influence of a soulless and cynical society? How to survive spiritually? Canonical and dogmatic questions are not the subject of this book.