

overlooks just how final this last word is. One may think that he is simply calling for moderation in passing moral judgement on human affairs—as indeed he is. But he is also calling for judgement. That this judgement should be cautious and generous is wise counsel, but it does not affect the ultimate need for judgement. One can see this more clearly if one re-states Mr. Berlin's thesis in different words, in the vocabulary of religious faith rather than that of

an urbane humanism. It has, in fact, already been done many times. As, for instance, in the following passage by Simone Weil:

He who does not realise to what extent shifting fortune and necessity hold in subjection every human spirit, cannot regard as fellow-creatures . . . those whom chance separated from him by an abyss. . . . Only he who has measured the dominion of force, and knows how to reject it, is capable of love and justice.

Irving Kristol

FOOTBALL AND CULTURE

ENGLISH culture, T. S. Eliot has remarked, embraces elements as diverse as 19th century Gothic churches, boiled cabbage cut into sections, and the Cup Final. Of these the Cup Final is pre-eminent, a state occasion of sport, first attended by the King in 1914, but long before then a popular festival to which spectators "came in all their glory" from distant parts of the country, many of them visiting London for the first time. But the Cup Final is merely the crowning event of the football year: from August to April nearly half-a-million Englishmen play football regularly, more than a million spectators watch Saturday football matches each week, over seven million people regularly submit their football pool coupons, and several hundred sports writers and analysts write about nothing else but football. Neither boiled cabbage nor Gothic churches, the 12th of August nor even cricket are anything like so popular. To many Englishmen, football is not an element in national culture but life itself.

Mr. Morris Marples has written an excellent social history of football,* which goes far to explain why the game has secured such a hold on the community. The hold is relatively recent, and it can be considered, in the first instance, as the most prominent feature of the awakening of interest in organised games—as opposed to field sports—which began in the first half of the 19th century and has gone on to spread

throughout most of the world. "Soccer" can be played without overmuch instruction on any ground, in any clothes, or in any climate. It is a natural universal religion and like many modern secular religions its message was first proclaimed in the English public schools. Its rule-makers codified the game in the middle years of the century: by 1880 it had acquired such powerful controlling organisations as the Football Association (1863) and the Rugby Union (1871); by the end of the 1880's it had acquired its full-time professionals, its special vestments (shorts only became general about this time), its penalties for breaches of discipline, its missionaries in foreign lands, and its national Cup Final, when "a northern horde of uncouth garb and strange oaths," as the *Pall Mall Gazette* described it, would descend on London. The last innovation to be accepted was the authority of the referee: there were occasions in the 1890's, even in London, when "the growling and exhibition of discontent to which referees are subjected after a game is over is most painful." In time, growling was to grow far more ominous in the missionary territories of South America, and the English referee was to stand out as the most representative English contribution to the success of the game.

IN FACT, England made a far more distinctive contribution. It provided the world not with one football game, but with two—eventually with three—and the two games were not so much alternative sporting codes as specialised

* *A History of Football*. By MORRIS MARPLES. Secker and Warburg. 21s.

products of the English class system. "Soccer" was the popular game, quickly emancipated from its public school origins and adopted by the masses. Without the growth of cities and the introduction of the Saturday half-holiday, it might have stayed confined to a few "gentlemen" who were conservative enough to prefer dribbling to running with the ball. As it was, a new industrial population clamoured for games to watch as well as to play, and new working-class clubs met the demand: Middlesbrough, still active in 1954 though in a sadly languishing state, was inaugurated in 1876 at a tripe supper, Rotherham United under a street lamp.

The first national token of working-class control over the game was the victory of Blackburn Olympic over the Old Etonians in the Cup Final of 1883. Three weavers, a spinner, another cotton operative, an iron worker, a master plumber, a picture framer, a dentist's assistant, and two disguised professionals beat the cream of the gentlemen of leisure by two goals—only, it is fair to add, after extra time. "Soccer" passed into the feet of the working classes and has remained there ever since: when the King or Queen attends the Cup Final, and the Secretary of the Football Association is nowadays usually knighted for his services, it merely shows that Democracy has arrived.

"Rugger" travelled by a different path. Although a group of northern towns adopted a distinctive code of their own (Rugby League) and the services of professional or half-professional players, the parent Rugby Union steadfastly set its face against professionalism. It captured most of the public schools and later the grammar schools, attracted middle-class rather than working-class players, and made a cult of the "courage, self-sacrifice, unselfishness, and devotion" of the game. Relations between the Rugby Union and the small but vigorous Rugby League express most of the frigidity of the English class system. "Soccer," by contrast, is not so much challenged as ignored or dismissed. When its abuses are attacked, it is not so much a game which is in question but a whole view of society.

IT is possible, as Mr. Marples does, to go beyond contemporary social argument and trace the history of football back through the Fall of Rome, the Dark Ages, the Renaissance,

and the Puritan Revolution. One of the most interesting parts of his book, perhaps because it is least expected, is that which treats of origins. As is proper in most branches of historical scholarship, the origins are in doubt. The ensuing battles between the learned men of football bear little relation to the battles between football teams or football fans: indeed, they would appeal more to Mr. Eliot than to Mr. Matthews, Mr. Whitaker, and Mr. Vernon. One school of thought discovers a Roman origin of the game, a second—more plausibly—a Norman, and a third—more imaginatively—sees the beginnings in a pagan ritual.

The third theory is much the most fascinating. According to it, football began as a fertility rite. The ball was the sun; it sometimes had to be buried in the ground (compare golf) rather than booted into the net; it was frequently brought out only at Shrovetide; it was kicked about in more than one part of the country by teams of villagers, one consisting entirely of married men and the other of bachelors. There was even a remarkable match at Inveresk, which took place annually in the last years of the 18th century, between married women and spinsters. The married women always won. Mr. Marples collects scores of interesting examples to support the fertility theory. He even quotes a more surprising variation of it, the view that the ball represented not the sun but the head of a sacrificial beast. A game played at Haxey in Lincolnshire at Epiphany had as its object the securing of a roll of sacking or leather known as the "hood," and rival communities battled for it. The hood represented half a bullock and the prize was the agricultural plenty the winning of the hood would bring.

The charm of the sacrificial animal theory is that it mysteriously conveys the impression that the Bull Fight and the Cup Final can be explained in the same terms. There were other remarkable theories which were propounded by footballers themselves and not by outsiders. When at Kingston-on-Thames, in 1790, a group of several persons was accused of riotous conduct in playing football, its captains pleaded in justification that they were celebrating the anniversary of an ancient victory over the Danes, when the Danish leader's head had been kicked about the streets. This theory was sufficiently plausible and patriotic to secure their acquittal.

UTILITY, not Antiquity, was the final argument which was to prevail in the successful victory of football, but it required an industrial society to plead effectively for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. As late as 1796, when a Derby footballer was drowned after a *mêlée*, the local jury condemned street football as "a custom which has no better recommendation than its antiquity (and is) disgraceful to humanity and civilisation, subversive of good order and government, and destructive of the morals, properties, and very lives of our inhabitants." "We have unanimously resolved," the Mayor and Justices added, "THAT SUCH CUSTOMS SHALL FROM

HENCEFORTH BE DISCONTINUED." But no fiat of an unreformed corporation could permanently hold back the victory of England's greatest mass game, although the game had to pass from the street to the field before it could reasonably be encouraged. The true secret of its success lies not in the dark region where myth and history meet, or in the first Elizabethan age when the tragic hero of a play could proclaim "I am the very foote-ball of the starres," but in the social history of the last hundred years. Perhaps it was then, too, that most of Mr. Eliot's other components of national culture—the boiled cabbage included—first began to cohere.

Asa Briggs

THE SPANISH PREDICAMENT

DR. AMERICO CASTRO is a scholar and humanist who has made many contributions to our understanding of the Spanish classics. Since the Civil War he has been living in the United States and studying the Middle Ages. The present work,* which is the result of these studies, is a translation, greatly enlarged, of *España en su Historia*, which first came out in 1948.

Dr. Castro is a historian of a rather unusual sort. He has a philosophy of history derived, it would seem, from Wilhelm Dilthey, according to which the role of the historian should be to reveal the "inwardness" of past societies by showing their life as an expression of the values they believed in. He must "listen to the people of the past as they felt themselves existing" and understand both the psychological predicament in which they found themselves and the kinds of actions that were open to them. It is especially important that he grasp the *mode* in which they held those values: for example, Frenchmen and Spaniards shared the same general notions on honour and religion, but

they felt them and therefore acted on them in entirely different manners. That is to say, history is the means by which one arrives at an understanding of the uniqueness of a particular people, "its basic position within its own unescapable life," and the person who writes it should set out in the spirit of a literary critic or biographer rather than in that of a contributor to the *Cambridge History*.

As we sink into this long, loosely constructed book, we discover gradually what Dr. Castro is after. He wishes to explain what the Spaniard is, how he has come to be what he is, and why he has not developed along the road followed by West Europeans. This is a very old theme among Spanish writers which has become particularly acute within recent years. The age-long ineptitude of Spain in political and economic matters offers so striking a contrast to the greatness and stability of its culture. Dr. Castro, whose general approach reminds one of Unamuno's, ransacks the Middle Ages to find an explanation.

Abbreviating greatly, the view he arrives at is that the "Spanish peculiarity" is founded on two things—a sense of insecurity which keeps the Spaniards in a constant tension, and a feeling of emptiness. The first is the result of a

* *The Structure of Spanish History*. By AMERICO CASTRO. Princeton University Press. \$9. (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege. 72s.)