

like Pollitt, cannot understand why there is not an overall economic plan; why nationalisation is so slow. No wonder the production position in the country goes from bad to worse. And when all the appeals are being made to the people to produce more (and this they must do), when are we going to see action against the rich and the profits of the capitalist class? Others, besides Pollitt, are asking these questions.

Nationalisation is vital. The nationalisation of the coal industry is one victory won under the Labour Government, but to its peril only can the Government abandon the nationalisation of steel.

If there's one thing upon which I agree with Pollitt, it is when he claims that coal is the key to any plan. I warmly endorse his demands based on the Miners' Charter. If the labour is to be got for the essential, but undermanned industries, the declared Government policy of attraction must be implemented, and I note that Pollitt quotes with approval the resolution tabled by the miners and carried by the Margate Conference of the Labour Party.

With the programme advanced for the solution of the crisis, who dares disagree? Pollitt advocates an overall economic plan for the main industries and the rapid extension of nationalisation, especially steel, the drastic cutting of the armed forces by 500,000, standing up to Wall Street and a foreign policy which brings us close to our Socialist allies, a trade agreement with the Soviet Union now and common action with the Dominions and the colonies, a capital tax, profit restrictions, and class action against the rich. Every day this programme is delayed makes the crisis deeper.

Pollitt argues for the need of Government changes. The issue is not whether there should be changes, but what kind of changes. There will be a major Government reshuffle, that is certain. Let us see it is one which strengthens the left and not the right.

As is to be expected, Pollitt concludes his booklet with a strong case for the Communist Party and working

class unity to face the crisis. One can agree or disagree with the need to be a Communist, but knowing the position in my own industry, I cannot but pay tribute to the work of my Communist colleagues. I have always supported Communist affiliation and working class unity, and always will. Today this unity is more vital than ever before; with that claim of Pollitt I completely agree.

It is about high time, too, we saw an end to the bans and restrictions within the movement. Why should the miners' secretary, Arthur Horner, freely elected by the men, not be allowed to represent his union at the Labour Party Conference? This is an anomaly which, as Pollitt correctly observes, is dangerous for the whole movement.

I cannot agree with everything in "Looking Ahead," but I have no hesitation in saying it is a book which deserves the widest circulation in the movement and a fighting, thoughtful contribution to the grave problems which face us today.

WILL LAWTHOR.

The History Of The Roman Empire

The Decline of the Roman Empire in the West by F. W. Walbank (1946, Cobbett Press, 97 pp., 7s 6d).

As our own civilization develops signs of instability—no greater than those which it showed between 1550 and 1650, but certainly greater than any which have been apparent since then—we naturally turn for guidance to the history of the Roman Empire. Professor Walbank has something new to say about it. He emphasises the point, which is familiar to readers of Prof. Farrington's books, that as a result of slavery technique, and therefore wealth, declined. But he goes on to a novel account of the economic and political measures taken by the later Roman Emperors, and particularly by Diocletian, to deal with the economic and political crisis of the third century.

The historians of that time gave no

name to these changes, and to a bourgeois historian of the nineteenth century the debasement of the currency, the fixing of maximum prices, the formation of industrial guilds in which membership was hereditary and the establishment of a secret police, seemed mere perverse mistakes. Professor Walbank shows it is possible to equate the late Roman Empire with the Fascist Corporative State. He makes out a very strong case for this identification, and he makes it the more cogently because he claims that those who made the change could not have avoided doing so if they wished to preserve a class system, as they inevitably did. Future scholars will doubtless question some of Walbank's analogies. For example, it could be argued that the *collegia*, or guilds, had already become important before the second century A.D., and that under Augustus capitalism was still developing rapidly. Nevertheless Professor Walbank's book will probably be a permanent contribution to historical thought.

It will also be an excellent starting point for Marxists who wish to begin a study of ancient Roman history, particularly on account of the bibliography, whose only flaws, to my mind, were the exclusion on the one hand of books dealing specifically with the religious movements of his period, and on the other of Petrie's "The Revolution of Civilisation." For the Christian Church organised itself in the period under consideration and absorbed much of its ideology, so that it is no accident that the Vatican is backing Fascism today as it backed Constantine sixteen centuries ago. And Petrie produced many of Spengler's seminal ideas before Spengler, using far less paper in the process, just as Bottomley anticipated much of the fascist ideology, and might have become dictator of Britain had he been fortunate enough to live in a revolutionary situation.

I must, however, end on a note of doubt. Shi Huang Ti gave China a political system which withstood both internal crisis and foreign invasion for two thousand years, and was only overthrown by the pressure of

Western industrialism. Could Antonius Pius have done the same for the Roman Empire? And if not, why not? Until this question has been seriously discussed by scholars with the necessary knowledge, I cannot admit that the evolution of European society followed an inevitable path.

J. B. S. HALDANE.

National Hero Of Bulgaria

There is a Spirit in Europe. A memoir of Frank Thompson. (Gollanz, 12s 6d, 191 pp.).

IN JUNE, 1944, Frank Thompson, who had been dropped by parachute in Bulgaria to aid the partisans, was shot by the Germans. It was not till March, 1945, when an eye witness of the shooting, a Bulgarian delegate to the World Trade Union Conference, came to London, that the full story was revealed in England.

"By what right do you, an Englishman, enter our country and wage war against us?" he was asked.

Major Thompson answered, "I came because this war is something very much deeper than a struggle of nation against nation. The greatest thing in the world now is the struggle of Anti-Fascism against Fascism"...

This memoir, which is prepared by his mother and brother from his letters and diaries, is not only the record of a charming, vivid and sensitive personality; it is a testament to the new Europe, to the new society in which Thompson was finding comradeship and fulfilment. In the course of his years overseas he was experimenting, studying, taking part in all Army activities, perfecting himself as an officer and following closely events in Europe; listening to European and Russian radio news, making contacts and friends among the soldiers and people of all nationalities he met. From 1942 onwards he became increasingly aware of the movements taking shape in Europe:

"I'm unspeakably angry about a great many things, but optimistic about the final result. Black and white are beginning to show up uncomfortably in a great many