

Report on Poverty

A New World in the Making, by Danilo Dolci, translated from the Italian by R. Munroe (Monthly Review Press. 327 pp. \$7.50), tells of the Italian reformer's visits to Russia, Yugoslavia, Senegal, and Ghana to study economic planning. Gabriel Gersh is a free-lance writer specializing in international affairs.

By GABRIEL GERSH

THIS is not another book about Danilo Dolci's efforts to rescue the peasants of western Sicily from the neglect, exploitation, and degradation to which they have been subjected for centuries. Unlike his other books, which have contributed so much to the awakening of the modern Italian social conscience, *A New World in the Making* tells of Dolci's journeys to Russia, Yugoslavia, Senegal, and Ghana to study how these nations set about developing and planning their economies.

Are their planners competent? How much scope or encouragement do they allow for initiative from below? Do the people contribute to the formation of the economic policies that affect their lives? Does the execution of these policies evoke a sense of responsibility or merely one of resignation and despair? Dolci analyzes these questions from the vantage point of his bitter, dramatic years in the slums of Sicily. Unfortunately, he does not sum up his experiences; thus the account of his Russian journey becomes a series of interviews with bureaucrats.

In the USSR, as in the other three countries, there is a vast difference between the plans projected by bureaucrats and their fulfillment. No one is more conscious of this than Mr. Dolci, who knows very well the discrepancy between the schemes for reform undertaken by the Italian government and the outlook for progress in Sicily.

In Yugoslavia, where squalor and backwardness coexist with modernity, Dolci admired the people, whose dignity remains uncorroded. He is pleased by the Yugoslavs' experimental attitude toward planning, but is dubious about the results.

Mr. Dolci's impressions of Senegal and Ghana are much more in focus than those of Eastern Europe. The result is a moving, amusing, and captivating description of these African states. In Senegal he is enchanted by the color of the costumes, disquieted by the power and wealth of the Moslem priests, concerned about polygamy and the lack of education. Given the size of the

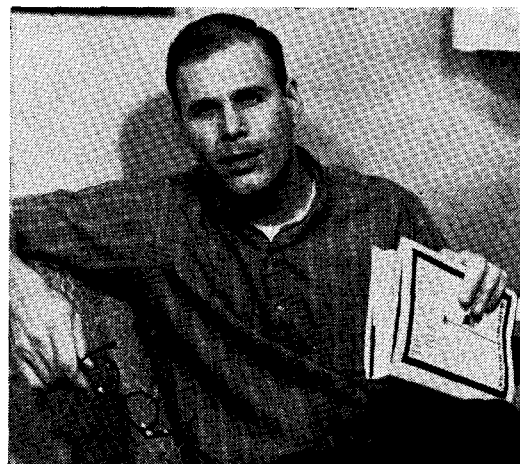
country's population (hardly more than three million), the widespread illiteracy (almost 90 per cent among the men and more than 98 per cent among the women) and the religious differences, it is not surprising that planning is imposed on the people without consulting them.

Senegal's social development, however rudimentary, shocked the author less than the attempts in Ghana to disguise maladministration. He is shown the Volta Dam and the new villages being built for displaced peasants. He notes that there is no provision for irri-

gating the new farmland, and that the villages are being set up at random without any relation to the projects for agricultural growth. The officials, steeped in professional optimism, cannot understand his questions about the social and human difficulties that must arise from their plans for national development.

While he was touched by the Ghanaians, he was disillusioned not only by the trend toward dictator-worship, but also by the distraction of public opinion from the questions that concern the people's well-being.

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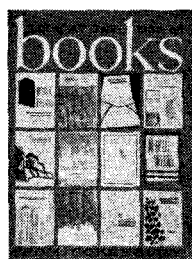
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Science and Social Myth

The Idea of Race, by Ashley Montagu (University of Nebraska Press. 126 pp. \$4), and *The Human Revolution*, by Ashley Montagu (World. 224 pp. \$4.95), discuss scientific evidence supporting current social and ethical considerations of racism and atomic warfare. Anthony F. C. Wallace is professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania.

By ANTHONY F. C. WALLACE

THE ETHICAL implications of scientific studies of race and evolution have long been argued by proponents of various social philosophies. No newcomer to this arena, the well-known physical anthropologist Ashley Montagu in his two new books, *The Idea of Race* and *The Human Revolution*, ably rehearses certain recent investigations of race and human evolution and draws conclusions about both scientific and social policy.

The more argumentative volume is *The Idea of Race*. Ashley Montagu asserts, as he has done before, that the term "race" should be expunged from the vocabulary both of laymen and scientists, at least in so far as it applies to man. He points out that the rise in popularity of the concept of race as a sub-species, characterized by a unique combination of genetically determined anatomical and behavioral traits, was associated with the development of racism as a serious social philosophy in the nineteenth century. Human "races," he argues, are really not sub-species at all, and "race" has no relevance to human evolution; on the contrary, the boundaries of the various "races" are fuzzy, shifting with the choice of criteria, and changing over time. Not merely is there insufficient evidence to show the superiority or inferiority of any race in relation to another, the very concept of race is of dubious value to science. The distribution of genetic traits is, indeed, he concedes, an interesting problem; the study of the fluctuating and fortuitous local combinations of these traits which are called "races" merely confuses the scientific issue. The perpetuation of the concept is undesirable, not merely because it gives aid and comfort to racism, but because it is scientifically sterile.

The Human Revolution is less contentious. It is essentially a popular

handbook, reviewing the salient fossil discoveries of recent years which testify to the nature of the "missing links" between other primates and man. Indeed, it can now be said with confidence that the "missing link" has been found, in Africa; the potassium-argon test indicates an age of about 2,000,000 years.

Ashley Montagu describes in some detail the particular anatomical and behavioral modifications which constituted the "revolution" that has produced man. Thus the volume will serve as a handbook for beginning students of this critical phase in human evolution. In conclusion, the scientist again dons the philosopher's robes and draws the moral of human evolution: man is naturally a loving rather than a hating creature; his welfare and even survival depend upon the maintenance of a culture that enhances his capacities for both companionship and intellect.

Although there will perhaps be few who wish to deny the virtues which the author praises, some may come away with the feeling that their value ought not to be made to depend upon scientific argument. Whether or not to the



physical anthropologist and biologist "race" is a real phenomenon, or even a concept, need not determine one's convictions about legal and social equality, nor need the pacifist interpretation of australopithecine social habits be required to support the position that atomic war is undesirable. Racist misuse of scientific data is indefensible, not because racism is socially unethical, but because it is dishonest science. The appeal to today's view of evolutionary truth in support of contemporary social policy invites a dialogue in which it is tacitly assumed, among other things, that civil rights really ought to depend upon proof of genetic endowment.