



sectarian one. It is not even necessarily a Christian approach, though few Christians would find any of Mr. Read's conclusions inconsistent with their faith and creed. This is his interpretation, for instance, of the Declaration of Independence:

"[Men] . . . 'are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable

rights: that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . .' This, quite obviously, is a political concept with tremendous spiritual overtones. Indeed, this concept is at once spiritual, political and economic. It is spiritual in proclaiming the Creator as the endower of men's rights and, thus, as sovereign. It is political in the sense that such an acknowledgment implicitly denies the State as endower of men's rights and thus the State is not sovereign. And this is an economic concept because it follows from a man's inherent right to life that he has a right to sustain his life, the sustenance of life being nothing more nor less than the fruits of one's own labour.

"Unless," he says, "we believe that man's rights are endowments of our Creator and, therefore, inalienable, we must conclude that the rights to life and liberty derive from some human collective and that they are alienable, being at the disposal of the collective will. There is no third alternative; we believe in the one or we submit to the other. If the latter, there is no freedom in the social sense; there is despotism. If we lack this spiritual faith, our rights to life and liberty are placed on the altar of collective caprice and they must suffer whatever fate the political apparatus dictates. The record clearly shows what this fate is. Russia is the most degraded example, but practically every other nation, including our own, drifts in Russia's direction. Among the Russians we note that freedom of choice has been forcibly lifted from the individual and shifted to the political collective. The dictator and his henchmen prescribe the manner in which the fruits of the citizen's labour shall be expanded and how his life shall be lived."

Mr. Read's thesis is that freedom has no meaning outside the community of free men. Man must know and experience freedom as a personal "release" and he can only do this in a society that recognises the unity of man's origins — in God, the Creator, the Divine Principle, Infinite Consciousness, or what you will — and, therefore, of his rights, which are his *inalienably* and not to be granted or removed by any man-made institution. How timely and urgent his argument is, he stresses in discussing the way in which individual liberty has been steadily eroded in recent times, not merely in the Iron Curtain countries but in all countries, not least our own. "We can measure," says Read, "the average citizen's loss of freedom of choice as it relates to the fruits of his own labour. During the past twelve decades, by reason of government expansion, his freedom of choice has de-

clined from 97.5 per cent. to about 65 per cent. and the trend grows apace. In other words, taxation which took only 2.5 per cent. of earned income now deprives us of about 35 per cent."

A large part of the book is devoted to "methodology," by which those who feel inspired to take up action in the libertarian cause may improve themselves and their technique in leadership and the like.

Comes the disappointment. You may read this book from cover to cover — and derive much good therefrom — without sighting, in any significant context, the word "land." It is a matter for astonishment, to this reviewer at least, that a man of Mr. Read's obvious knowledge, intelligence, wide reading and original thinking, in the field of political economy as much as in any other, can discuss the proposition that man's rights to life, liberty and the full enjoyment of the fruits of his labour are inalienable and universal, without realising that the sole source of his ability to satisfy these rights is nature, or, in economic terms, land; and that, so long as the right of private pre-emption of land remains, neither liberty nor justice are possible. There is no sign anywhere of the recognition of the vital economic and moral distinction between the gifts of nature and the products of man.

Mr. Read's economic authorities are, it seems, the Vienna School — of the marginal utility theory of production — the latest exponent of which is probably Hayek (see his *Road to Serfdom*). Mr. Read is infatuated with the idea of freedom in trade, enraptured by the vision of a free trading world. Well and good. In his pre-occupation with the vision, however, he loses touch with the reality that makes nonsense of all his theories of libertarianism, the reality of private land monopoly. Grateful as I am for much of Mr. Read's stimulating book, I regret that it is necessary to suggest that, at the very least, he should acquaint himself with Ricardo's "Law of Rent." It would of course be much more to the point if he were to read the works of Herbert Spencer, Patrick Edward Dove and Henry George, of whom, one must assume from his book, he has not even heard.

BOOK REVIEW



History in a Vacuum

By G. BUNYAN

The Economic History of World Population

by CARLO CIPOLLA (Pelican, 3s. 6d.).

THE author of this compact little book, itself a most useful reference work for students, is a 40-year-old Italian-born Professor of Economic history at Turin University and the University of California. He is the author also of several books on the theory of money and kindred

economic subjects, and general editor of *Archivio Economico Dell Unificazione Italiana*. Writing in three languages, he is a contributor of articles to the economic Press of several European countries.

This book shows the work of a thorough scholarship and a grasp of the statistical side of economics which gives it a value far greater than its "pocket" size would indicate. Described simply it is an attempt to show the rise of mankind, in economic terms, from the age of the hunter to that of industrialisation, and to demonstrate the various factors which have differentiated the former from the latter and forced the remarkable evolution man has undergone, all in the relatively slight span of time (considered against the background of total world history) of 10,000 years.

In clear, succinct statements, and with the aid of innumerable tables of statistics, Professor Cipolla brings us a very clear picture indeed and, in his final chapter, poses for us the true nature of the tremendous problem with which we have now come, through recent writings on the subject, to know as the "Population Explosion." This "explosion," Professor Cipolla reminds us, is no new phenomenon for it characterised both the agricultural and the industrial revolutions. What is special about its latest manifestation is its magnitude and the important fact that, whereas in the case of both the two previous great revolutionary changes in man's way of life, the population expansion was manageably related to and resulted from the development of man's new skills, today the expansion is taking place for other reasons and is out of harmony with economic development.

The "significant factor" is demonstrated by the use of statistics. Whereas in the past, a variety of causes kept the population in check until it reasonably equated man's ability to sustain it — famine, war, disease and ignorance — the rapid spread of medical knowledge, hygiene, higher nutritional standards and the rule of law have forced both a rise in birth-rates and a lowering of death-rates, together with a higher general expectancy of life, the total effect of which, says the Professor, is to produce a situation, particularly in those countries we refer to as "under-developed," which he describes as a "Malthusian trap." And, having reached conclusions regarding present world population figures, he produces his thesis — a kind of enlightened socialism. Quoting H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley, he tells us that "we must invest more of our resources in the qualitative (as opposed to the quantitative, of which we have apparently more than demonstrated our ability) improvement of man."

There is no indication of the truth that man's ability to sustain the population was frustrated by unnatural forces of which *war itself was one*.

Professor Cipolla is frightened by the possibility of a situation in which, quoting Ortega y Gasset (1932), "To modern man is happening what was said of the Regent during the minority of Louis XV: he had all the talents except the talent to make use of them." In other words, "There is nothing more dangerous than technical know-

ledge when unaccompanied by respect for human life and human values." Education, says Cipolla, is more than technical training. "The introduction of modern techniques in environments that are still dominated by intolerance and aggressiveness is a most alarming development." And his last word on the under-developed countries is "intensive and well organised educational schemes must be quickly developed. Educational assistance has to accompany or even precede technical and economic aid."

It may be gathered from the foregoing that Professor Cipolla, like so many present-day writers on this subject, for all the brilliance he brings to the elucidation of the population problem, is seeing that problem in a vacuum. It is clear that he is ignorant (he is too obviously sincere and concerned to be accused of deliberate evasion) of the basic cause of the inability of expanding populations

to sustain themselves without artificial assistance from outside agencies — their exclusion from right-full access to the means of production by the age-old evil of land monopoly.



Nowhere in this book is there the slightest indication that he is aware of this. The nearest he ever approaches the subject is a reference to "unequal distribution of incomes and resources" to the significance of which he is, apparently, blind. He even discusses the "Malthusian situation" which, he says, animal communities instinctively avoid by a system of territorial limitations. "In these cases," he says, "the burden of Malthusian pressure is made to fall upon a minority of displaced and destitute individuals and the population is maintained noticeably below the maximum possible density" — by forcing the surplus outside the "occupied" territory. But he draws no worth-while conclusion from this by reflecting on the obvious difference between the wise instincts of animals and the free intelligence and imagination of man.

He can even write this: "Unequal distribution of incomes undoubtedly played a key role in ancient societies." And he speaks of "privileged classes of priests and aristocrats" who "diverted human resources to higher modes of living and prevented the increase in available production from being fully absorbed by the growth of population." And still he sees as through a glass, darkly.

One is left to reflect, almost with despair, on the extraordinary situation in which a brilliant mind can be trained at great expense to arrive at the stature of a professorship of Economic History, and yet remain ignorant of the simple economic truth that, so long as man, whether in the most primitive agricultural or the most highly industrialised society, remains in bondage to the private monopoly of the rent of land, so long will the problem of population expanding ahead of its means of subsistence remain unsolved.