

CHURCH AND COLONIALISM, by Helder Camara. *Sheed and Ward*, London and Sydney, 1969. 181 pp. 15s.

No-one who was there will forget Dom Helder Camara's lecture at the Roundhouse last April (see *New Blackfriars*, June 1969). The impression was of an archbishop on fire with concern for the misery of his people and of the Third World as a whole. This impression is amply borne out by this selection of his addresses given between 1963 and 1968. The battle against under-development is for him not something secondary, an important after-thought. It is part and parcel of his Christian vocation.

The last section of the book could well be read first. It is a fifty-page inquiry, made by the Catholic Workers' Action (ACO) but inspired by Dom Helder, into the social and economic situation of North-East Brazil. 'Development' of a kind is taking place, but at enormous human cost. Seventy per cent of the population of the region are agricultural, but the small farmers cannot compete with the large land-owners and often seek work in the cities, where rapid modernization and automation already cause widespread unemployment. Many examples are adduced to show how workers are undernourished, deprived of their rights and simply swindled ('at Recife, several public transport companies pay their ticket collectors less than half the minimum wage, but require a receipt for the full amount' p. 152).

Dom Helder sees this appalling situation as the result of colonialism: mainly the internal colonialism whereby the N.E. is being exploited by the already developed South. But he is also conscious of the economic colonialism exerted by the developed countries upon the

whole Third World. What solutions does he suggest? He speaks of the need for 'structural revolution'. But he is rarely specific about which structures need changing. Perhaps his most concrete suggestion is that the UN should apply anti-trust laws at the international level. Finding the various forms of capitalism and communism equally inhuman, he places his hopes on a change of consciousness, towards which he is trying to mobilize his archdiocese. Here his key word is *conscientização*, an awakening of the social conscience, translated in this book as 'demystification'. One implementation of this policy has been the hierarchy's Movement for Basic Education, using transistor radios.

But is education enough? The Young Christian Business Executives are urged to challenge the great combines; but with words only? The same question must be asked when the ACO document recommends 'a vehement appeal to the employers' a few pages after a passing but seemingly favourable reference to the class struggle. Indeed in 1965-6 Dom Helder was suggesting non-violent action. He is opposed to violence, both because of the Gospel and because of the inevitable involvement of the super-powers, leading to another Vietnam. Yet he has respect for Camilo Torres and Che Guevara. In one of the most moving passages of the book he faces the objection that his policy of education will prove too weak against the forces of big business that imprison even the well intentioned. His reply is a plain statement of Christian hope.

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