

régime could have resisted that? One would also avoid falling into another trap, which once more the authors of these books fail to avoid, namely an indulgent resignation in regard to the French, 'who are like that'.

The truth is that the French have had greater difficulties than any the Big Four have had to face since the end of the war, and they have not done too badly in avoiding shipwreck on three dangerous rocks (Indochina, Morocco and Tunisia). Two of these territories were close by, with large populations of European origin—200,000 in the one case and 300,000 in the other—though admittedly a small minority, and in spite of everything the worst was avoided. These are aspects of the almost continuously dramatic situation which France has known since the last war and which should provide the authors of these books with some grounds for a judicious optimism. It would have been strengthened by a more exact knowledge of certain French political forces. One might mention in this context the role of the Catholics of the Left (in its widest sense: the M.R.P., C.F.T.C., J.O.C., J.A.C.—a political party, trade unions, movements for young workers, both industrialist and agricultural, etc.) who have made a stand against marxism and fascism alike, and their function is too little recognized or analysed in both these books.

In spite of these reservations, one must recognize these as serious books, which complement each other and give a good general idea of the present state of French politics.

JACQUES NANTET

ROMANESQUE EUROPE. Edited by Harald Busch and Bernd Lohse. With an Introduction by R. H. C. Davis and Commentaries on the Illustrations by Helmut Domke. (Batsford; 45s.)

BAROQUE IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL. By James Leas-Milne. (Batsford; 35s.)

At first sight it might seem that all these two books had in common was the fact that they were about architecture and that they shared the same publisher. There is certainly a visual gulf fixed between the cool gravity of Saint Trophime at Arles and the excitements of the Granada Cartuja Sacristy. But the fascination of architecture lies not only in the thing seen but in its genesis, in that extraordinary dynamism of art which, not at all like Melchisedech, has origins and a traceable family tree.

As it happens, these books share at least one building, the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, and its history—and indeed the very building you see—is the supreme statement of the continuity that transcends all style, the sense of the sacred that resolves the most spectacular differences in a single though many-sided achievement. The 'Romanesque' label (with 'Norman' as a confusingly English equivalent) is first of all applied to the buildings in northern Italy, southern France and Spain, which consciously imitated the achievement of the builders of imperial Rome and whose remains were a constant reminder, if not reproach. The more original achievement of the Romanesque of the north can be seen as a true development, and as a stupendous exercise in engineering. But from a common inheritance and inspiration there arose inevitably the diversities of regional architecture, so

that the rounded arch is only a general mark of identity for such wonderfully varied things as the cloisters of Silos, the nave of Norwich and the portal of St Gilles-du-Gard.

The special architectural interest of Santiago lies in one sense in the pilgrim churches that prepared the way—at St Sernin in Toulouse most of all—for the supreme achievement of the cathedral itself. Mr Lees-Milne is concerned with Santiago at a later stage of its history, of course, but he rightly remarks that in Spain ‘the most outrageous Rococo does not look out of context beside the soberest Gothic, as, for example, the highly carved Churriguera stone choir, built against the straight, stern piers of the New Cathedral at Salamanca’, and at Santiago the west façade (the El Obradoiro) in all its dramatic splendour by no means conflicts with the rounded calm of the interior. It reasserts a theme: and that is a sacred one which basically remains the same. Mr Lees-Milne has a splendid subject, for Spanish Baroque is so eloquent a statement of the Spanish genius, but he is never unaware of its origins. He writes with an exact and sympathetic understanding (as his earlier book on Italian Baroque so brilliantly showed), but, whether he is concerned with the Escorial (and how powerful a reminder that greatest of buildings is of the danger of Baroque generalizations!) or with some feverish Rococo sculpture, he never forgets the profoundly formative influence of a faith as modulated by a particular history in a particular land. His book is a patient and scholarly guide, and provides a superb postscript to part at least of the theme of *Romanesque Europe*. We may feel, if we are English and live in 1961, that Durham or Vézelay are easier to live with than the Obradoiro. But Mr Lees-Milne will teach us the wisdom of seeing architecture as so much more than an object of aesthetic choice, for a building is an articulation of a history and of a people’s love and hate; and nowhere is that so plain as in the Iberian Baroque.

Romanesque Europe has more than two hundred admirable photographs, with useful commentaries, which range from Winchester to Bamberg, from Monreale to Mont St Michel. It gives a wonderfully complete picture of the Roman ‘thing’, the legacy that was invested and which in time and place brought forth such an astonishing treasure.

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