

as 'love matches provide not only most of the divorces and unhappy homes, but the majority of homes without children'!

Those who are tempted to ignore the economic factor in social behaviour had better take a warning from the fate of poor M. Thibon who, in the chapter entitled 'Individualism and the birth-rate', attributes France's then falling birth rate to liberalism, materialism and democracy. Legal remedies such as concessions to large families are in his opinion 'very limited indeed' in their effects. Today France has one of the largest birth rates in Europe thanks to a system of generous family allowances introduced mainly as a result of the efforts of the Christian Democrats, those 'Christians of the left' who are mercilessly belaboured by M. Thibon in the chapter entitled 'Christianity and the Democratic Mystique' which, for reasons not easily understandable, is described by the English publishers as 'devastating'.

At a time when there is a crying need for translations of the many important Catholic books now being published in France, it is difficult to understand the reason for offering to the English Catholic public this obsolete work, and it hardly seems fair for the reputation of M. Thibon to revive for our benefit this old Vichy hangover.

JAMES LANGDALE

AMERICA AT MID-CENTURY. By André Siegfried. Translated from the French by Margaret Ledésert. (Jonathan Cape; 16s.)

In the fall of 1953 a cab-driver in Washington, D.C. (like all of his kind a repository of wisdom, political, social and sporting) who had a few months before lost a twenty-year-old Federal job through the advent of a Republican President assured me that it was the women's vote, stimulated by Mr Eisenhower's promise to stop the war in Korea, that had upset the Democrat's apple-cart. The trouble with M. Siegfried's book is that he obviously has never swapped stories with cab-drivers in Washington, D.C. or indeed anywhere else in the Union. The title of the French original, *Tableau des Etats-Unis*, of which this is a revised and dull translation (e.g. 'obsidional spirit' instead of 'siege mentality'), describes the contents far more accurately than the pretentious English title with its Beardian overtones. It is a picture of the United States, of its people and of its institutions, and as such is to be judged. The two questions to be asked are: (i) are all the essential elements of the picture there?; (ii) are they accurately depicted? In the opinion of the present writer the following elements should be included in any comprehensive and dynamic picture of America today: the expanding economy and its place in the world economy with the deep and permanent changes that automation are likely to bring about, and the forces for and against the implementation of the slogan 'Trade

not Aid'; the position of organized labour in the new post-New Deal capitalism as well as the effects in the economic and political fields of the impending merger of the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L., and of the growth of industry in the South; the present stresses in the relations of Federal and State governments, particularly in the fields of the tidelands (oil) and segregation (equal rights for negroes in education); progress towards the solution of the negro problem—if indeed any complete solution is possible; America as a matriarchy and the phenomenon of 'Momism'; the state of education at primary, high school and college level and the effect of the G.I. Bill; anti-liberal trends and their tendency to recur at more or less regular intervals; the place of religion and religions with particular reference to the growth of the Catholic Church and the Church-State controversy in relation to schools; the effect of conscription; the place and responsibility of America in world affairs; the pre-eminence of American engineers and technicians in the field of 'know-how'. These points are not set out in order of importance, but some understanding of each of them is called for in order to understand the evolution of the life and institutions of the people of the U.S.A.

How does M. Siegfried rate when judged by these standards? He is strong on foreign affairs and economics, weak on the position of labour and its future, unduly hypnotized by the place of Henry Ford in the history of production technique. He is lacking altogether on education, pessimistic on the future of the negro problem, amusing on the matriarchy, superficial on the deeper political problems. The section on the New Deal, though necessarily compressed, is inadequate. He finds a peculiar fascination, as a French Protestant, in the position of the Catholic Church but neglects completely the great German Catholic *bloc*. The accuracy of detail is not always good, but it is evident that at times he has been betrayed by his translator. In sum, a useful conspectus of America today, but with sufficient gaps to make it of dubious value as a first introduction for the general reader.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

OUTLAW. *The Autobiography of a Soviet Waif.* By Voinov. (Harvill Press; 16s.)

It is a corporal work of mercy to visit the prisoner, but the nature of the prisoner's burden is almost incommunicable. John Howard and Alexander Paterson have both indicated the dead weight of suffering behind walls, but the personal calamity and desolation is rarely revealed by the victim. Wilde attempted this in his idiosyncratic way and Dostoevsky (a political prisoner and untrammelled by a sense of guilt) almost succeeded. But both were poets who were not quite broken by