

Reviews

COERCION AND CONCILIATION IN IRELAND, 1880-1892, A Study in Conservative Unionism, by L. P. Curtis, Jr.; Oxford University Press; 35s.

Praise can hardly be too high for this definitive study of Conservative policy towards Ireland from 1880, but particularly from 1886 to 1892. All the main points are brought out more clearly than ever. It is obvious that the combined policy of coercion and conciliation was the work of one man, Arthur Balfour, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, supported by another, his uncle, Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister. Left to themselves, the other Conservatives and high officials usually finished by 'going green', like Hicks-Beach, however tough to begin with. Salisbury himself would have been even more extreme than Balfour, though credited by Mr Curtis with a warmer heart and a capacity, not possessed by Balfour, for showing some sympathy for Parnell in his tragic end. 'I agree', he said on one occasion, 'with Buller, the "Special Commissioner" in Ireland, that you cannot govern the Irish or anybody else by severity alone; but I think he is fundamentally wrong in believing that conciliation and severity must go together. The severity must come first. They must "take a licking".'

Balfour liked the Irish as little as Salisbury. He confessed to his uncle in 1892, 'I have never quite made up my mind whether I dislike the Orange Men, the extreme ritualists, the political disputers, or the R.C.'s the most. On the whole the last, but they are all odious.' But he was far too dispassionate not to recognise the necessity for a double policy and Curtis sums up in some respects in his favour. 'At times he seemed to personify coercion itself. But what has been ignored is the fact, inconvenient to those who wish to divide English administrators in Ireland into good and bad men, that Balfour also brought the substance of conciliation to Ireland'. It can hardly be denied now that he and his uncle Salisbury completely misunderstood the genuineness of the Irish demand for self-government. They both insisted on believing that the overwhelming majority of Irishmen were either indifferent or actively hostile to what they regarded as a trumped up demand for self-rule. But for good or for ill their supposition that the whole issue was really a bread and butter question encouraged their policy of land purchase, fair rents (*sic*), relief work and the Congested Districts Board. Their fundamental error, therefore, gross as it must appear to us now, brought some compensation to Ireland.

Once one accepts the arguments against granting Home Rule in the 80's and 90's (which is the opposite of this reviewer's standpoint) it is hard not to agree that logically a policy of coercion was the only alternative if anything like law and order was to be preserved. But the extraordinary aristocratic indifference of Salisbury and Balfour to the dilemma confronting them, while it may have

helped to strengthen or deaden their nerves, is surely a final proof that one country is not intended by providence to rule another.

LONGFORD

BRITAIN AND NYASALAND, by Griff Jones; Allen & Unwin; 36s.

Nyasaland was one of the last colonial possessions to be acquired by Britain. Largely because of Portuguese threats, in 1891, this small land-locked territory with its warring tribes and battling Scots missionaries became a British Protectorate. In the summer of 1964, Nyasaland will attain its independence, even though it has no common language and virtually no economic resources other than an abundant supply of labour. In recent years this country has played a surprisingly important part in African affairs. It was Nyasaland's unswerving determination to secede from the Rhodesian Federation which was chiefly responsible for the break-up of this ill-fated and half-hearted experiment in black-white partnership. Much of the credit for this little country's remarkable influence has been due to the ability of Dr Hastings Banda who, in spite of only being able to speak English, has been accepted as its undisputed leader.

The history and development of Nyasaland is a fascinating subject. It would be delightful to say that Mr Griff Jones has written a minor masterpiece on this little-known country, but this is not the case. His book is frankly a very difficult one to read continuously. In a bewildering fashion, he dodges about in time and place. He has stuffed his book with long, and often repetitive, quotations. His own style is far from limpid and he has an aggravating habit of inserting ludicrous sociological platitudes such as: 'Social concepts take life from social context'. This remark opens a chapter.

Yet despite these failings Mr Jones' book repays dipping into. He spent ten years as a young District Officer in Nyasaland and clearly knows and loves the country. He holds refreshingly strong views and has a vast, if ill-digested, store of knowledge about this remote nation. If only he can discipline himself and try to write a coherent book on Nyasaland he may yet produce a work which is both readable and important. *Britain and Nyasaland* is unfortunately little more than a hotch-potch of ten chapters.

Mr Jones is at his best when discussing the problems which beset the Victorian missionaries in Nyasaland, faced as they were with the brutalities attendant on slave-trading and the endemic cruelties of tribal warfare. He writes of their choice: 'Their actions had commonly been motivated by an active sympathy for the unfortunate among their fellow-men; they were also convinced of the horror of violence. The potential conflict between these elements in their thinking had been suffocated in the comfortable societies from which they had sprung, and the moralisings appropriate in those societies seemed woolly in the sharp realities of disorder. There was no hope of evasion, no authority to appeal to, no Caesar to whom they might render inconvenient responsibility. The alternatives presented themselves, persistent and embarrassingly naked. One after another these