

## The Case against Liberalism

*The Gospel of Fascism, by Kirton Varley. New York: The Generation Press.*

**M**R. VARLEY, an Australian who calls himself a "self-educated working man," claims to have propounded in 1916 in London, in writings, extracts from which are reproduced in this new book of his, the basic ideas of the Italian Corporate State. He is now advocating a "United Corporative States of America" or a "United Institutional States of America." The lack of a sufficiently disciplined mind is probably the explanation why so much of Mr. Varley's book is unintelligible. There runs through it, however, an intuitive sense of the collapse of liberal capitalism and the inevitability of the rise of the authoritarian state as an alternative to social disintegration.

In so far as he makes out a case against liberalism, rationalism and utilitarianism and a case for a humanely conducted authoritarian state, Mr. Varley is with the indications of the times. But people who are disposed to follow this line of thought want either a meaningful statement of the philosophy of the coming authoritarian state or a technical, scientific essay to provide a handbook for the operation of such a state. Mr. Varley does not satisfy either of these needs of the Fascist-minded.

An authoritarian state must be founded on paternalistic moral obligation to protect the weak and unsuccessful in the struggle for existence. And protection does not mean protecting merely their legal rights to property, of which they have none, or to make contracts and do things which, as a practical matter, they cannot make or do. A Fascist authoritarian state founded, as Mr. Varley would seemingly have it, on good Anglo-Saxon individualism of the frontier days, would mean an authoritarian state run as a ruthless exploitation of the weak masses by a strong oligarchy. Mr. Varley would conjure the evils of human greed and selfishness by terms like cooperation, etc. Obviously, if human nature were so constituted as to make possible a workable and humane authoritarian state which was not paternalistic, we should have no trouble under the present order. Mr. Varley sees in Fascism only an escape from the corruptness and inefficiency of liberalism and parliamentarism, but he has not thought through the implications of an authoritarian state.

The keynote of any workable or tolerable Fascism of the near future must be duty and solidarity. The individual will owe more to the state and the state to the individual. There will be less freedom for the individual to do anti-social things and less freedom for the state to neglect the individual. The trouble with the notion which so many people, including Mr. Varley, have of Fascism is that they see in Fascism a crusade against the people and things they dislike as well as a quest for the things they like. A totalitarian state, however, must be one in which everybody and all that goes to make up life may be said to have a satisfactory place or part. And the test of what is satisfactory may not be merely what the ruling crowd likes. One of the tests must be what makes a workable order.

LAWRENCE DENNIS.

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