

*[The Society of the Future, Sangre de Cristo Seminary Library. Unpublished]*

Review of "The Society of the Future" by H. Van Riessen

In analyzing our present society and in considering the possibilities for the near future, this volume presents material that all American should ponder. A combination of eschatology, economics, and labor theory is not to be ignored.

The main part of the books shows with some clarity how science and technology are generating a totalitarian society. Electric computers, by which all the operation of a large factory are controlled, can be perfected so that those with political power can control nearly ever detail of every citizen's life.

Professor Van Riessen believes that this planned economy and totalitarian state is not inevitable. For one ting he regards the present threat of war as a temporary factor of insufficient weight to cause totalitarianism. This seems remarkably optimistic. The remainder of his argument would at best prove only that we cannot know that totalitarianism is inevitable. No argument could prove that it is not inevitable. And all the details he so carefully points out are so many evidences that totalitarianism is well on the way.

The impression of inevitability is deepened by the apparent feebleness of his proposals to prevent it. He makes an excellent point that the independence of societies other than the state, such as the family, the church, and business organizations, hinders the rise of dictatorship. So they do, and they should be supported in their independence. But his constant opposition to individualism removes the inalienable rights by which these societies are formed and kept independent.

It is the reviewer's opinion that European authors are usually so inured to socialism that their fondest dreams of liberty are still well toward the left. The author approves of minimum wages laws, and guarantees against unemployment, he asserts that labor unions should have an equal voice with management in the management of a business; in fact he does not see why stock holders should have more rights in electing directors than the employees. And he gives no norm by which to judge where law or union decrees should stop.

In a sense these defects add to the value of the book. They show all the more clearly in what danger we live. Is he not mistaken when he asserts that machinery for the Anti-Christ "lies in a still

distant and vague future?" (p. 289). All he says, along with Spengler, Bellamy, H. G. Wells, Huxley, + Orwell, puts it near, ever at the doors.