

## THE HERESY OF THE NEW MAN

THE writing of History is commonly advertised as a two-fold labour: it is necessary not only to ascertain the facts but to interpret their meaning. The vocation of Karl Marx was scarcely less arduous; for, having established the principle of social evolution, there remained the labour of investing it with a positive content. This precisely was done by postulating an economic interpretation of History.

Sociologists and biologists to whom the whole of nature was the result of development from the simple to the complex (and all reality derived from the homogeneous distribution of matter) could scarcely pass the ball from one to another with more ease than that with which the cloak of Victorian morphology fell to the Sociologist.

Analysing those economic forces whose inter-play was according to him the cause of social behaviour, Karl Marx claimed to have found the key of history. Robert Owen and the Utopians, awaiting a swift transformation of Society without violence, fell by the way even as Utopians have fallen since. Owen's New Moral World would not dawn. How could it? Evolution, said Marx, was a strictly continuous process and since the operating forces were no longer occult there could be no surprise in store for society. This is all the best part of a century ago; but at no time, surely, has historico-political thought re-acted so obediently to the mood of evolutionists as to-day.

There are still those of us old enough to treasure recollection of history classes in which our media axiomata of all time (and for all time) was the triumph of Christianity over the paganism of the ancient world. Today in an ever increasing number of instances the cosmos-changing mission of Jesus Christ is presented to young students as merely an emphatic point in the cycle, classical, sub-classical and Christian.

We have now reached the sub-Christian era and are shortly to be confronted with the New Man. That is to say that man the 'free and rational being' has fulfilled his destiny and is now in process of retiring from the scene of human development.

Ideologically the New Man is already with us as the ideal Bolshevik or Nazi. In actual fact, much nearer home than Germany or Russia, his place in life is already assigned him. He is the man with a University education and the job of counting coupons for a famous advertising firm, or the automaton played so exquisitely by Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*. He is known to us (or soon will be) as the operative in a modern motor factory—jerking his elbow and snapping finger and thumb so many times to the hour; he is a single unit in the assembly process, the dismembered but still functioning limb of the Old Man, the craftsman. *He still lives*, we are assured, in his leisure time happily increased by the System. He is comfortably paid; he is (alas!) contented—contented to have surrendered his efficient rationality to his employer. His elbow-jerking may contribute to the assembling of a motor but it might as well be that of the newest type of bombing plane.

We may, however, for our present purpose consider only the perfect Nazi or Bolshevik.

In his book *National Socialism and The Catholic Church* Dr. Nathaniel Micklem reveals how in the Nazi campaign to take over complete control of confessional-schools the encroachment of the New-Man heresy is to operate at the very outset of the average German citizen's life. Dr. Micklem first expounds the fundamental ideology of the theory of Nazism. His texts are Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Alfred Rosenberg's *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*. His exposition emphasises the Nazi axiom that Racialism and Nationalism are the all-excluding religion. He deduces logically enough that the claims of Nazism, pseudo-spiritual as much as civil, are of their nature destined to conflict with any force that is capable of making spiritual

claims. Dr. Micklem supports his thesis with an illuminating example of the outlook and policy of Adolf Hitler, the Myth of Herr Rosenberg, the Nazi Party and the Nazi State, the Laws, regulating the Press, the concept of Positive Christianity, 'Political Catholicism,' the effects of the Condorat. He concludes with a valuable six year survey of the Church's conflict with National Socialism.

We have (without, I hope, undue cynicism) adverted to Dr. Micklem's book solely because at the moment the Heresy of the New Man is most likely to be recognised in the Nazi programme. The New Man is, as we have said, no less easily apprehended in Bolshevist ideology.

We have been reminded that now is the right time for seeing Communism and every other form of State Totalitarianism in true perspective. Of the two perhaps (Communism and Fascism) Fascism at least in its National Socialist form is the greater menace. There is little indeed to distinguish Communism from Nazism and other intensified forms of Fascism, as menaces to the well-being of the Christian Church. The advent of Fascism in any given state is a less immediate terror. The Christian's hope of martyrdom is more often merely a hope deferred. Why then do I believe that Fascism *in its final form* is probably the greater menace? Because its policy of force is a determinist policy, whereas Marxist Communism is bound to the '*denial of permanency*': to the insistence on recurrent change even in its ideology. For though the disciples of Lenin have reduced the whole of history to simple recurrent change they nevertheless invest that change with a mystical and eternal nature. The fashionable philosopher of the Soviet endorses the spontaneity of movement; he dismisses the determinist; universal and unending mobility is derived from the internal contradiction of things; liberty is inherent in matter.

The Bolshevist rationale is derived via Lenin—Marx—Hegel, from Heraclitus. The Weeping Philosopher who held that the world was evolved from fire made neither

by God or man, held also, it will be remembered, that nothing remains the same, 'that all things are in a constant state of flux and their permanence only illusory.' That is to say, that no thing is, but only becomes. The essence of Marxist materialism lies in the notion of activity and movement. So that light is the same as darkness, is invisible until it has passed into darkness whence it returns to itself and, taking on colour, becomes visible. Nothing can come into existence unless it has its opposite or contradictory. *Arguing thus, the Bolshevist cannot deny that in the future his present ideology may be converted into Christianity!* Though I have put the poser, more than once, to Communist philosophers, I have never yet had an answer satisfactory to the Communist sense.

The foregoing is, I think, a line of thought well worthy of development. In every reprehensible movement since the Fall of the Angels it is the negative, the short coming, that is evil. What is positive is good. What is positive equally in Soviet Russia is good. To reappropriate to ourselves the structure of Communist theory INsofar as it is POSITIVE, is merely to realise the social programme of Jesus Christ.

I can find no better appraisalment of Bolshevism than Père Lavaud's study in the *Revue Thomiste* (September, 1932). Its wide quotation was something of a solace in days when, as now, the Bolshevik Bogey had left far behind the bounds of ordinary credulity. I reproduce here, purposely without translating, an excerpt from the most impressive source:

'Il bolscevismo non va considerato soltanto come un modo di azione, o di reazione, rivoluzionaria; esso ha sentito, anche nel pensiero di Lénine, la necessita di costruirsi una dottrina e una teorica, non ristretta al solo campo politico e sociale, ma comprendente una concezione universale del mondo e una spiegazione della natura e dell'uomo. I presupposti di tale filosofia del bolscevismo si trovano nelle dottrine materialistiche, quanto al contenuto, e nelle dot-

trine hegeliane quanto al metodo. Più particolarmente, l'umanismo antropolatra dell'hegeliano L. Feuerbach ha giovato alle false e pericolose costruzioni teoriche del Marx e dell' Engels i fondatori del socialismo scientifico, dai quali prossimamente derivo il bolscevismo.'

There, in measured terms, is described the ideological background of the New Man in Russia. Nevertheless, it is our business in these times to urge that the Christian challenge is not simply to the totalitarian states, but to much that goes uncriticised in more democratic society. We have to assert the bearing of true Catholicism on the responsibilities and rights of personal life as much as its bearing on the wider problems of our time.

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