

EDITORIAL

AS we go to press the *Daily Mail* publishes an extract from an allocution delivered by His Holiness Pope Pius XI at a secret Consistory held on Thursday, December 18th, 1924. The Pope is reported to have said, *inter alia*, 'Certainly nobody has thought that we, by our relief of the Russian people, have wished in any way to favour a system of government which we are so far from approving. Indeed, we feel it is our duty, in the name of the Redeemer, to warn and exhort all men, especially the heads of governments, all who love peace and public welfare, all who believe in the sanctity of family and in human dignity, to make a unanimous effort to ward off from themselves and their fellow-citizens the most grave dangers and certain injuries coming from Socialism and Communism.' The press comment on this is that 'Pope Pius XI has definitely entered the lists against Socialism and Communism in general and against the Soviet Government in particular, uttering the severest condemnation of a foreign government or of a political movement ever made by any Pope in recent years.'

It is evident from the startling headlines which appear over the Holy Father's words, and the sentence, 'definitely entered the lists against Socialism and Communism,' that the *Daily Mail* was in some doubt until the present as to the attitude of the Church towards the vital questions of Socialism and Communism, and welcomes the statement of the Pope as an indication of the mind of the Church in these problems. But surely, since Leo XIII gave to the world his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, so long ago as 1891, there could be no doubt about the policy of the Church in these important questions. The Church has always

Blackfriars

been the champion of private property and individual enterprise, because these inalienable rights of the individual are inherent in the principles of Christianity and based on natural law itself. No other attitude could the Church maintain or approve. Leo XIII merely stated for the enlightenment of a groping world what the Church had always taught and strenuously enforced. The *Rerum Novarum* is the immortal Magna Charta of the working classes, insisting on the rights of private ownership, and demanding a just living wage for all workers. Every man has a natural right to what is justly his own. Socialism and Communism that in any way threaten the just rights of the individual are contrary to the natural principle of justice, individual and personal, and must therefore be condemned whether they take the form of a political movement or an established government.

The present Holy Father, therefore, in his recent allocution (the full text of which will soon be available), did no more than reiterate what has been the constant teaching of the Church with regard to those who infringe the rights of men in matters of justice, and apply its principles to the particular case of the Soviet Government which these principles are 'so far from approving.' His present utterance, while being a strong and timely reminder to the heads of governments to safeguard their people from the 'most grave dangers and certain injuries coming from Socialism and Communism,' is not intended to be a new statement of policy towards these pressing evils, or a manifesto of the Vatican's attitude to them. His words are new, but the principles he enunciates are as old as man himself. Pope Pius XI is reminding 'The Reds' and others less revolutionary but equally wrong that what they are trying to inflict on the world is against the laws of God and man.

THE EDITOR.