

COMMENTARY

THE ANATOMY OF COMMUNISM. It is a convenient fiction to suppose that the answer to Communism is a matter of dialectic. It is convenient, because the critic of Communism, appalled by the range of the total Marxist debate, can withdraw to a narrower field and, without much difficulty, expose the fallacies of the materialist view of history or of the Soviet economy. This issue of BLACKFRIARS can claim no higher achievement than a partial examination of some of the most urgent issues presented by the Communist faith in the modern world. Originally given as lectures at the International Centre of the Newman Association, the papers that follow have, it is hoped, the merit of modesty. They are not intended to provide an armoury of easy arguments to confound the unbeliever. But they are the contributions of men who are professionally aware of the true extent of the Marxist philosophy and its implications in action, and as such they may assist the work of understanding, which even—indeed, most of all—in the case of Communism must precede that of judgment.

For Communists, too, are persons, and the 'Marxist' can be as mythical as the Martian. It is not irrelevant to the philosophical and sociological debate in which this issue engages to recall the effect of Communism on the men and women who profess it. Such an account as that of Mr Bob Darke, in his *Communist Technique in Britain*, is, in its forthright idiom, a much more terrifying indictment than any academic analysis of dialectical materialism. For it presents, in the context of trade union meetings and borough councils, the resolute application of principles which owe nothing to truth or tolerance. 'The Communist is taught that his enemy (that is anybody but a Communist) is ruthless, merciless and unprincipled. To defeat him the Communist is justified in being more ruthless, more merciless and more unprincipled.' To live on hatred, a hatred be it remembered that can have its origin in an enraged protest against the manifest injustices of a capitalist society, is to cross the frontier of pity. And much that is happening in Eastern Europe becomes easier to understand.

Conversion to Communism, as Arthur Koestler has shown in his autobiography, *Arrow in the Blue*, is not a persuasion of political probabilities. 'To the convert, his conversion appears as a single and indivisible act, a spiritual rebirth in which emotion and reason, the perennial duellists, are for once in complete harmony.' So it is that true conversion from Communism must be commensurate with the claims it makes—the claims of rebellion and of faith. It is a sad distortion of the truth, indeed, for Mr Koestler to find an analogy to the 'closed system' of Communism in that of the Church. Yet he is unconsciously bearing witness to the fact that, in the last analysis, the absolute claims of Communism can only be matched by those of the Church whose title is universal—a system enclosed within the infinite providence of God.

It may seem pessimistic to conclude that the partial answers to particular Communist beliefs can only be an inadequate—though an essential—preliminary to the total work of conversion. The presentation of the Christian revelation for what it is, and not for what time and place and persons have sometimes made it seem to be, is the most pressing of missionary tasks. It demands the help of philosophers, scientists, economists, but in the end so immense a rejection of man's nature and his destiny must be confronted with an adequate alternative, at a far deeper level than that of social democracy or even of intellectual consistency. The debate must continue, but its limits must be acknowledged. And beyond it lies the work, in which every Christian must share, of building up the society of justice, of the peace promised to men of good will, which finds its distorted reflection in the mirror of the Communist faith. It must appear an antique platitude to say as much, or as little, but the heresies and hatreds of every age are ranged against the constant truth of Christ and his Church. And it is part of the work of reconciliation to acknowledge the responsibility of those, and ourselves among them, who have betrayed that truth and have in their measure helped to create the Communism that is only the latest of the apes of God.

The Communist Technique in Britain, by Bob Darke, is published by Collins at 12s. 6d. It is also available as a Penguin Special at 2s. *Arrow in the Blue*, by Arthur Koestler is published by Collins at 18s.