

BLACKFRIARS

the papal call to Catholic action, the deep needs of Catholic people, their requirement for apostolic priestly leaders, the hostile atmosphere of industrialism to the full Catholic life expressed in a poignant sentence in *Quadragesimo Anno*, and the true Commune, as we Catholics see it, set out and achieved by the meek victory of Christ over worldly power.

In these articles we have unrolled for us the future conflict, not perhaps in the temporal but in the spiritual order. It would then be foolish querulously to complain that no one tells us what we can do to help. What we can do is manifest. We can and must aim at nothing less than holiness for ourselves: 'Only one modern revolution could shake modern society to its foundations, a general outbreak of asceticism amongst the masses of the people.' That is the object the Pope has in mind. Begin now with yourself.

Is this a sermon? It is the sermon that the Pope wishes to have preached everywhere.

EDITOR.

REMARKS

IMAGE OF GOD. The dignity of personality holds the centre of the Catholic position in face of Communism, and the theology of the Blessed Trinity lies in close support. A man is more than a unit in a scheme, even though the scheme be a human commonwealth. There is something in him not subordinate to the collective good, not related to its purpose only through a place in the scheme of things. Created to the image of God, destined to share in the inmost life of the Blessed Trinity, man's noblest and most characteristic interests set him above any arrangement of creatures among themselves, economic, political or social. He is a person, *sui juris*, an absolute in his way, relative only to God. He is a man before he is a citizen; he has rights before he has uses; he is free to determine himself before he can be treated as a producer.

REMARKS

SLAVERY. Communism is not the only system to degrade human personality. Communities exert a constant pressure to reduce their members to the condition of utilities. In the name of the human race, women have been regarded merely as child-bearers; in the name of the Aryan Race, a little Jew baby may one day be refused baptism. There seems to be a tendency in groups as such to become a Frankenstein's monster and batten on the personalities from which they derive. The group takes various forms, the Business, the State, the Social Collectivity, the religious institution. The latest philosophy of Communism seems to have shaken off the determinism of pure economics, but the dynamic Absolute it has substituted is still impersonal, is still a tyranny.

THE ISSUE. Before the philosophy of Marx had penetrated to his critics, when the cardinal elements of society were still reckoned according to the *Almanach de Gotha*, and Communists were regarded in the part of wicked fellows liable to interrupt a gala performance at the opera with the explosion of a home-made bomb, it was the Pope who defined the issue. A Pope, at that, considered by the penultimate school of historians as a kindly old muddler, who left a pale liberalism for the support of Austrian bayonets, and who fulminated somewhat ineffectually against rationalismus, liberalism, and other progressive spirits of his age. Time has shown that he was not such an obscurantist after all. The deadly error of Communism and Socialism, says his Encyclical *Quanta Cura* in effect, is to assert that human rights derive from civil law. His teaching was developed by Leo XIII, and culminates in the *Quadragesimo Anno* of the present Pope. Yet in some quarters the Catholic argument against Communism still largely consists in evoking pictures of mongoloid Muscovites with blood-imbrued hands. We are not fighting a bogey, but an idea, and an idea that is so strong because part of it is so true.

QUALIFICATIONS. Private property is a corollary of the personal integrity of man even apart from society. His right

BLACKFRIARS

to it is **more** than a concession which **makes the best of** his selfish streak, but a response to something deeper, namely his instinct for responsibility, for protecting and improving. Nevertheless, his right is not unrestricted. His private administration may justly be modified by the action of the State, and his profits belong to those that need them. *Quadragesimo Anno* condemns Individualism along with Collectivism. The trespassers-will-be-prosecuted notion of private property is not the Catholic one, which holds a balance between the principles of private initiative and common enjoyment.

COMMUNISM OF PROFITS. On the question of private property, Catholic philosophy distinguishes between administration and enjoyment of property. **As** regards the latter, the riches of this world do not **so** belong to private persons that the needs of others are not satisfied. Production may be private, but consumption is common. Historically speaking, most Communists have been in reaction to an unjust exclusiveness of enjoyment. Whatever the philosophy of Communism, the fact remains that its popular force springs from the spectacle of luxury side by side with want. It is difficult to adjust collective consumption to private production, probably impossible until the theological virtue of charity dominates society, but the two principles are distinct, and it is worth remembering that Communism when it insists that nobody should be denied the riches of the world is only repeating the classical teaching of the Church.

JACOBIN.