

## BLACKFRIARS

### ENLISTING REVOLUTION

#### III

IN short, what we want is *Catholic Revolution*—a revolution transcending the revolt of petty anarchists but not ashamed of harnessing their energy and harmonizing their discordant outcry. Anyone acquainted with conditions in the U.S.S.R. will agree with me that with one fundamental obstruction removed no state could be easier and worthier of adoption. That is why we have spoken with some eagerness on the 'unsponsored Bolshevism' detached from administrative protection, and scandalized by the Capitalist-Communist symbiosis favoured by Stalin and Litvinoff. That one obstruction, I need hardly add, is the purely *political* value placed on the human economy. Nevertheless the transition from the political to the Metapolitic required for *entente* with Catholicism is not impossible. Long before the publication of M. Berdyaev's works in England, contact with Bolshevism had convinced us of the *subjectively* religious nature of Russian Revolution—of the mock-metapolitic set before the Russian people, and the possibility of its substitution by Catholicism.

Are we warned by Austria? Less than a year ago we heard an Austrian Catholic declare that the prosperity of his country depended on an *entente* between moderate Radicalism and Catholicism in the temporal order, and co-operation in the national economy. For the Linz programme of the Socialists has much in common with the encyclicals of Pope Pius; both advocate a discreet State interference with unprincipled capitalism, both condemn huge profits. And Pfliegler, a left-wing Catholic, in condemning the incontinent greed and anarchical competition of modern Capitalism, in deploring the class war that these have made inevitable, does no more than endorse the Pastoral Letter of the Austrian Hierarchy. In Austria, as

## ENLISTING REVOLUTION

elsewhere, Catholic Radicals have demanded by what mysterious nexus (other than an emotion on the part of the pocket-conscious) a rational reorganization of production need be associated with Atheism. When I see seven bakers delivering bread in the same street, wasting their time, in the attempt to sell goods that nobody wants (all because seven firms are competing in a market which could be supplied by one), when I see miners' children frozen and starving because Europe has too much coal, or cotton-workers going unclad because they have produced too much cotton, must I descry Satan in an attempt at saner organization of production, or juster distribution? And when my socialist friends are a little bitter to see that the first people to starve amidst overproduction are the very people that produced the surplus, does Leviathan rear its head? . . . .

With a view, too, to *rapprochement* (with Radicalism of a sympathetic type in Austria) St. Augustine is quoted to remind us that the Church is not exclusively bound up with conservatism.

'The Heavenly City, in its wanderings on earth, summons its citizens from among all . . . . being itself indifferent to whatever differences there may be in the customs, laws, and institutions by which earthly peace is sought after or preserved, not rescinding or destroying any of them, but rather keeping and following after them as different means adopted by different races for obtaining the one common end of earthly peace, provided only they are no obstacle to the religion by which men are taught the worship of the one supreme and true God.'<sup>1</sup>

Of one thing we are very sure, if Catholic Action were to bear the character of Reaction, it were doomed from the beginning, and that we know it is not. It is the Catholic Church alone to-day which stands for a constructive system of order without futile retrospection and without wild dreams of the impracticable. Even as she is the only bond of unity between East and West, between past and present, so she only can re-unite and identify the

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<sup>1</sup> *Civ. Dei*, xix, 17.

## BLACKFRIARS

opposing energy of Revolution and Reaction. For as all energy is the dynamism of reality, so she, the supreme reality on earth, has the transcendent power of attracting all other energy, carrying it with her, directing revolution into creative and constructive channels.

And what is the moral of all this? Simply that if we would (as we must) be forever broadcasting constructive Catholic philosophy as the cure for the moral crisis of today, be forever pleading the Catholic social system as the cure for our economic sickness, we can accomplish nothing without the word, more the idea, *Revolution*.

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'Some remedy must be found, and found quickly,' pleaded the urgency of Leo XIII, 'for the misery and wretchedness pressing so heavily and unjustly on the Working-classes.' Do we not notice a similar urgency, the same *radical tone* throughout the trenchant analyses which Pope Pius has made of our troubled times. We quote (without fear of great reiteration).

### *On the despotic dominion of Capital*

(a) 'This state of things was quite satisfactory to the wealthy who looked upon it as the consequence of inevitable and natural economic laws, and who therefore were content to abandon to charity alone the full care of relieving the unfortunate: as though it were the task of charity to make amends for the open violation of Justice.'

(b) 'Capital was long able to appropriate to itself excessive advantages; it claimed the products and all the profits, and left to the labourer the barest minimum necessary to repair his strength and to insure the continuation of his class. For by an inexorable economic law, it was held, all accumulation of riches must fall to the share of the wealthy, while the working man must remain perpetually in indigence or reduced to the minimum needed for existence.'

### *On the economic anarchy favoured by Capitalism.*

#### (a) The survival of the 'fittest.'

'This accumulation of power, the characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of limitless free competition which permits the survival of those only who are

## ENLISTING REVOLUTION

strongest, which often means those who fight most relentlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience.'

(b) Its moral consequences:

'With the leaders of business abandoning the true path, it is not surprising that in every country multitudes of working men too sank in the same morass; all the more so because very many employers treated their workmen as mere tools, without any concern for the welfare of their souls, indeed, without the slightest thought of higher interests. The mind shudders if we consider the frightful perils to which the morals of workers (of boys and young men particularly), and the virtue of girls and women are exposed in modern factories; if we recall how the present economic regime and above all the disgraceful housing conditions prove obstacles to the family tie and family life.'

Here is the true urgency and the insight that the others lack—Catholicism, no less than that. A correspondence to no single exigency, age, nation, class, but to humanity itself; established on the appeal to perennial needs, whose care is no abstraction, whose type—the family. In this alone (had Lamennais perceived it) and in this corporate manifestation, can man attain all that it is his nature to attain.

J. F. T. PRINCE.