

## CORRESPONDENCE

### AN ASPECT OF RUSSIAN COMMUNISM

SIR,

A correct understanding of Communism, both in theory and in practice, is perhaps at this moment *the* most important of all questions facing the civilised world. Therefore at the risk of tiring your readers I revert to it again. In a letter published two months ago your contributor, Fr. J. F. T. Prince, expressed the opinion that only personal knowledge of the situation could discredit the views expressed by him in a series of articles. As personal knowledge may always be questioned, whatever the qualifications of the writer, I prefer to give the translation of an official document, reference to which has already appeared in the daily Press. It is the report of Comrade Steinhart, head of the *Politsector* MTC (political section?), North Caucasus, to the Central Committee of the (Communist) Party, published in the official daily *Pravda*, Moscow, August 8th. A copy of this paper has been secured at the Soviet Bookshop, Bush House, and can be produced, if necessary. I believe it is now unobtainable. The translator has aimed at preserving the style and language of the original, though a few paragraphs have been curtailed.

#### REPORT

of Comrade Steinhart to the C.C. of the R.C.P. upon the safeguarding of the collective crops.

'According to the initiative of the Political Section of North Caucasus a number of measures have been taken for the enlisting of the children of the collective farms (*Kolkhosy*) for the safeguarding of the harvest. On July 2nd the *Kraikom* (Regional Committee) of the Russian Communist Party agreed with the suggestion of the Political Section upon this question. Units of "light cavalry" formed from children of the collective farms and "pioneers" (soviet scouts) have already been organized. We are fully aware that this measure of safeguarding the harvest can by no means be a fundamental one and replace a number of decisive measures taken by the regional bodies in conformity with Party directives. But, as the experience of last year shows, immense losses in the harvest were also sustained owing to the organized direct plunder of the corn by *kulaks*; we therefore found it imperative to apply all possible means for the protection of crops, including the organization of children of the *Kolkhosy*. The results of the work of organized units, given below, emphasize the great political significance of this measure which is manifested by the facts, that the children of the *Kolk-*

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*hosy* are enlisted in the consolidation of the latter and in this respect have a positive influence upon their parents by helping to strengthen the labour discipline; that the life of the "pioneers'" organizations has assumed a concrete meaning, that the children are being armed with the idea of struggling against the attempts of the *class-enemy*, that a healthy educational work amongst the children themselves is opposed to the *kulak* tactics of moving children towards the plundering of the crops. The Political Branches are entrusted with the organization and direction of the work of the units. By our initiative the Regional Committee of the *Komsomol* (Soviet youth organization) mobilized 4,000 *komsomols* from urban and rural centres to lead these "light-cavalry" units.

'In many places the Political Branches have unfurled the activity of these units. Their participants, to whom we have given a special badge and armband, have already shown in a number of places examples of positive work. There are separate facts of indeed very high consciousness and even heroism, manifested by children organized in units. Thus, in the Olgino village the pioneer Mitya Gordienko, aged 12, helped in the most self-sacrificing way to arrest three plunderers of the crops.

'This action of Mitya Gordienko, who was one of the first to show an example of conscious protection of the harvest, has been widely broadcast among the children of the *Kolkhosy*, and used for the stimulation of their activity towards the safeguarding of the crops. A special mass-meeting of the "pioneers" took place in Rostov. Gordienko spoke there. His action was described in a special leaflet of the "light-cavalry," and forwarded to all the "pioneer" units and outposts. The regional Press was widely utilized. Local Political Sections have also mobilized their organizations for the popularization of the measure, drawing the attention of the local social organizations to the importance of enlisting children for the protection of the harvest. It is obvious that the participation of children in the consolidation of the *Kolkhosy* will give a new mighty impetus to the further development of the rural pioneer movement and socialistic education of the *kolkhos* children. Therefore, measures must be taken for the strengthening of this movement around the protection of crops and for the ideological and political consolidation of the pioneer-detachments.

'The Political Section in conjunction with the Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party are taking further steps in this direction.'

Following the *Report* the paper gives a number of news items received from various villages in the Caucasus to illustrate how the juvenile detachments work. Thus, at the village Little Kir-

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sanovskaya the *pioneers* Zhelchik, Kanonenko, Mitrofanov and others retained on July 15th the individual-holder Dubrova with ears of barley. She had stolen *five kilograms* (some ten pounds) of barley. Dubrova was handed over to the authorities. At the village of Ust-Bystrianskaya Vitalius Kryukov, aged 10, suspected the woman Anne Bannikov, who was hiding something under her apron. Challenged by the boy, she abused him. Being unable to arrest her alone, he called up his comrades, and they forced her to show what she was carrying: she had stolen ears of corn from the collective field. On the next day another woman, Anne Uvarov, was detained with ears of corn which she had hidden in a bucket under some cherries. The report praises the children, who 'behaved like real heroes.' Many other cases are given, and the information concludes by the quotation of an answer of a young *pioneer* Egorov, who declared to a representative of the Political Section that he shall catch all corn-thieves without exception: 'If I see my father or mother stealing,' said the boy, 'I shall immediately report them to the Political Section.'

These are the facts given from a source which is beyond any doubt. Let us draw our conclusions.

1. In order to be termed a *kulak*, or *class-enemy* it is no more necessary to be either a small rural profiteer, as of old, or a man who has risen above the average villager, as it was two years ago. A *kulak* is one who, being driven by hunger to despair and recklessness, cuts off a few ears of corn—a bucketful, or maybe less, at the risk of his life. True, there are no death sentences in the *Pravda* of this year, but last year's papers published several such sentences for similar offences. The 'self-sacrificing' *kulak* is, indeed, in such an infinitesimal minority, that with the best of wishes it is impossible to detect him, whereas such facts as have been quoted above and the necessity of ruling the masses of Russian people by a legislation based on terrorism prove sufficiently that the sympathies of the people *at present* are not with the Communists.

2. That the *rising generation* is being turned into 'hundred per cent' Communists (to use the Soviet jargon) was never doubted by me, and I quite agree with Fr. Prince that the Bolsheviks are seeing to it that Potency becomes Act. The difference between us, so it seems, lies in the fact that he views this transformation sympathetically, whereas I see it with horror and deep anxiety. The moral depravation of children taught to denounce their parents is appalling, yet from the Communist viewpoint this is the 'education of their class-consciousness,' and the facts which horrify us are commended as heroic acts and rewarded as such.

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I have never doubted that there are many sincere men among the Communists, but our sympathy for a few individuals must not lead us to sympathize with the teaching they adhere to as a whole, for this teaching is based on an untruth and aims to achieve its ends by immoral means. When advocating the possibility of a better understanding between Catholics and Communists we must be fully aware of that devilish perversion of mind which urges Communists to extol as heroic acts the denunciation of parents by their children. Certainly missionary work among Communists is necessary, and Catholics must prepare for it, but the time is not ripe for that task. In the meanwhile we must study Communism, understand its nature, and do everything we can to safeguard our co-religionists from being poisoned by a teaching which can indeed be presented under very alluring and attractive forms.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

G. JENSEN.

P.S.—Since this letter was written Fr. Prince has published another article in *BLACKFRIARS* (September). I agree with him while he denounces modern Capitalism, though I am surprised how he fails to grasp the fact that the so-called 'Communism' of Soviet Russia is nothing but Capitalism in its most ruthless and absolute form.

Perhaps the information given in my letter based upon *official* Bolshevik data as well as the appeals of the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna and the united hierarchy of Galicia and Poland on behalf of the starving Russian peasants will make Fr. Prince ashamed of his inverted commas in the 'Russia's starving millions'! It is the official policy of the Soviet Government to deny the famine whilst it is exporting grain, but it is painful to see a Catholic dismiss this fact airily as the 'news-papers' latest caption.'

## ROME TO CANTERBURY

DEAR SIR,

With reference to your review of my book, *From Rome to Canterbury*, I hope you will do me the courtesy to insert the following corrections.

According to your Reviewer, 'Miss Almedingen asserts that she was compulsorily baptized into the Greek Orthodox Church—this statement is puzzling, for on page 1 she tells us also that none of her family ever married Russian brides. Baptism into the Orthodox Church was compulsory by law only when one of