

ENLISTING REVOLUTION

PART I

IN the uncertain associations it evokes, Revolution is hardly a word with one meaning. We may deplore the revolutionary economics of Karl Marx and applaud the revolutionary pedagogics of Don Bosco. The *Revolte des Anges*, Lucifer's assertion of self-subsistence and equality with God, the insolence of our first parents, were (it may be urged), no less revolution than the subversive mission of Jesus Christ who came to overthrow the powers of Evil, the false privilege and the unreal values they had inspired.

Or do we prefer to call Christianity counter-revolution —perceiving in it the re-establishment of human-divine intercourse, ultimate incorporation with God, through submission and service? Perceiving in Catholicism the subordination of self in contradistinction to the Satanic assertion of the Ego; service among men as opposed to the primeval assimilation of the meta-human, the snatching at the high-hanging fruit in the garden? Must we accept counter-revolution as the more accurate Christian nomenclature? For Joseph de Maistre, you will remember, insists that 'Contre-révolution ne doit pas être une révolution contraire mais le contraire d'une révolution.'¹

Indeed, thus considered, the mission of Our Lord, consisting, as it did, in the reinstatement of humility, as opposed to revolt against the Divine Mind, was essentially counter-revolution. Revolution, de Maistre goes on to tell us, is essentially Satanic in that it is destructive and not creative ('car détruire n'est pas faire'). Yet, while de Maistre and his fellows to-day insist that the nature of counter-revolution is non-revolutionary and purely reinstative, it is yet insisted in the same breath that its constructiveness does not derive 'from hope of restoring the past.' They agree with Berdyaev who is right enough in his insistence that 'La contre-révolution réelle ne peut être opérée que par des forces post-révolutionnaires et non-pré-

¹ *Considérations sur la France.*

révolutionnaires—par des forces qui se seront développées au sein même de la révolution.²

For the very notion of restoration is absent from an absolute ideology: metaphysically, it is fatuity to talk of restoring the past. In short, the truth is that unless we prefer to lose the issue in a pleasant quibble we must admit that Revolution does not rest necessarily on negative and destructive principles. Because Lucifer's revolution was the first is no reason why we should bestow on him all subsequent right to a useful catchword, or waste on him any more than the fruits of his own ill-doing.

The question is of considerable practical import. We may argue that it is only a question of words. But what a question, and what words! Words may divide a party (and institute a sect) and a false nomenclature has before now led to catastrophe. Here is a question in which we must avoid confusion and misunderstanding even as we would deplore the secession of the few who the Word would keep. For in days when our modernists despise the value of the Word, it is the hard-headed, the practical, the men of business who most rely upon it—the slogan, the Word in advertising!

The ephemeral shocks known to us as revolutions are contemptible by comparison with the Christian revolt—the subversive mission of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The revolution set going by the Son of God, the 'insolent heresy' of the Nazarene, was verily more of a menace (as subsequent history proved) to materialist empire than Communism can possibly be to our materialist civilization to-day. For, after all, if the worst comes to the worst, our political 'Christians' will have not far to travel in climbing down to the materialist level of modern Communism. We at least shall perceive no appreciable loss of dignity in their admission of the negations of Bolshevism, an expedient denied to the World, by its very nature, when (confronted with the Revolution of Christ) it would insure its existence with Christianity in the air! We are most of us too phlegmatic

²*Un Nouveau Moyen-Age.*

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to recognize the jest of the modern situation in its full implications. For it is the truth that communism and capitalism, so much vilified the one by the other, are similar beasts, provided with similar offensive apparatus, seeking to devour the same prey. Lacordaire, so often ahead of his time, illustrates the very point with a pleasant fable: 'A lamb was feeding in an oasis of Arabia. The roar of a lion was heard, the monarch of the desert appeared, and was about to spring, at a bound on the defenceless animal. But remark! Another lion moved by the same hunger rushes on from the opposite side of the wilderness: they regard each other: they struggle together: they tear each other to bits, while the lamb feeds tranquilly.'

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To be sure, the pessimists among us modify Lacordaire's fable by suggesting an alliance between the lions. But maybe they accredit the World with an unwonted perspicacity in the matter of ultimate Values, change the very nature of the beasts, project into them a wisdom that is not there, in fact, disqualify the analogy. For who can deny the aptness of Lacordaire's analogue? Is not the World essentially brutish in its limitations?

Nevertheless, it is our thesis that we must be warned. Among the many political diversions of last year (1933) we can hardly ignore the significance of Monsieur Maxim Litvinov's diplomacy. A triumphant tour (whose culminating success may be regarded as the U.S.A.'s *de Jure* recognition of the U.S.S.R.) suggests an era of Communist-Capitalist symbiosis, a fundamental modification of Russia's foreign policy. Stalin has long been too interested in his machines, in the industrialisation of his country, to care very much about the extension of the Internationalc. A general imbibing of the Capitalist viewpoint in respect of disarmament, or rather armament, the breach with Germany (and subsequent flirtation with France), ending in a happy alliance all point in the same direction. The prospect of fruitful contacts with the big Powers have induced the pocketing of Bolshevik pride. The Soviet now waives the altruistic principles enunciated by Chicherin in the days when

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Bolshevism was proud in its preference of rapprochement with the weak and oppressed (Germany, Lithuania, Turkey). As for Communism abroad, Capitalist Powers are conciliated by a final and unequivocal declaration from the Soviet that foreign Revolution must look elsewhere than Moscow for support, must in fact, it is somewhat sententiously added, seek a mandate from its own people.

Au Verso, Capitalists representing British interests are expressing increasingly trenchant views on the subject of trading relations between Great Britain and the Soviet. The long absence of the Russian Trade Treaty, the recent drop in trade with Russia to 50 per cent. of what it had been a year before, the comparison with a Swedish-Russian deal, or a sale of £90,000 worth of German steel-tubing to the Soviet, are facts whose implications induce a hypnotic forgetfulness in respect of Default of War Debts—are enough even to soothe away the irritation of a country producing for profit and only profit, with a country which boasts to produce primarily for use. The much emphasized irreconcilability of the two, thought ten years ago to be irrevocable, is smoothed away to-day by the increasing trend of Russian Industry towards Capitalism. So at least the Capitalists explain the situation. The 'vast improvement in Russian goods sent to England in the past year or so' is reported by the Capitalist tradesmen. The necessity of a 'rational rather than emotional attitude to the Soviet' is urged.

How, then, it will be urged, are we to recognize the misalliance indicated above and at the same time avoid the supposition of a Capitalist-Communist Symbiosis—an *entente cordiale* between the lions of Lacordaire's fable? I think the answer is suggested by the word misalliance. It would be trite to insist further on the impossibility of a true *rapprochement* between the two, but it is equally trite to point out that Capitalism is unashamed of the friendship of a Communism distinguished by inverted commas. For having assured itself of its opponent's detachment from the dynamic spirit of the veritable commune, Capitalism in a tight corner will, as we have already said, put

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up with the slight embarrassment of removing its ethical outer covering and revealing a naked materialism. And, that those of less dexterous eye may not be scandalized, there is other, if scanty, apparel—ever handy pleas of expediency, an attire to which we are well habituated.

As for our Bolshevist friends, those that is to say who are succeeding the zealots of the Revolution, they have always been more honest than we. They have only to inform their stripling country that it need apprehend neither ethic nor ideal at heart in its new friend—a waggish fellow and fond of cant, but with as little belief as any Bolshevist in the rights of the human soul as fit values in a sound economy of life. It is the old story: good business turned angel of Peace, uniting the strivers in a common strife. It remains for the more sanguine of us to hope that the U.S.S.R. (retaining, surely, much of its proletarian honesty and zeal) will in such a symbiosis, elevate Capitalism, and that Capitalist Culture may be a channel, however muddy for the influx of Christianity into Russia.

As for the metamorphosis of Russia Communism we must lay no claim to prophecy. We can pretend to no more than *rapport* with the present. Published opinion and criticism in the U.S.S.R. leave little room for doubt: criticism, hardly suppressed, from the remnant Faithful, as one would like to call them, the real Left Wing.

An essential point in the present situation is the existence of a Communist country *whose increasing influence is largely co-extensive with its detachment from the true spirit of the Commune*. A little later and we may have an orphaned world-wide Bolshevism to deal with. For of one thing we may be fairly sure, that in Russia alone the revolutionary conscience awakened in the days of Bakounin, directed later by the Absolute values of Lenin will not suffer a lasting amnesty. Not even the hypnotic eye of Stalin will suffice. A foundling revolution, disowned, unsponsored, detached from administrative influence, but part of a pandemic impulse: entity, rather than theory: not essentially dependent upon any particular rationale. The exist-

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ence of such a force, and the possibility of its adoption, should lead us to an honest enquiry into its essential nature. An unprejudiced examination, from the teleological point of view, of Communism, Socialism, Radicalism, is as rare as it is difficult to accomplish. Even in literate circles the reaction to such words is inevitably reaction to specific polities associated with the words. And we are less and less agreed in our definitions of the fruits of revolution.

Is it revolution's fault that revolutionaries have done without God? Does Atheism in some mysterious fashion occur in the etymology of Revolution? These are the questions we must ask ourselves. May we cease talking of the heresy of revolution and speak simply of the sin of revolutionaries? For sin lies in the attempt to get the Infinite out of the Finite: and the heresy of Lamennais lay in the notion that our good is to be sought in the natural order.

Again, what essentially is the ideal Bolshevik State but an attempted anticipation of the Kingdom of Heaven, *or an end in itself*. Make it Metapolitical and a means to an end—with the revelation of Christ as its Metapolitic—and those who are familiar with Bolshevism will agree that it were trite to insist that the Christian need not quarrel with its main workings in actual fact. For, in conclusion, we must rid ourselves of the delusion that in opposing Bolshevism, the Church falls into line with those who oppose it because it seeks to subvert the present wretched economic order. For though many prudent Christians to-day are to be distinguished by the spirit of Judas, rather than the generosity of Him whom he betrayed, Catholics have heaven to thank that the encyclicals of Pope Pius XI do not fail to set an absolute limit to the mercantile prudence of this World. The Church's demand for economic justice, in Manning's day, was a far-flung influence. And who can blame the Church because all the faithful do not respond to a counsel of perfection—more than the exigencies of justice—the adventure of heroic *apostolic* charity that can alone over-balance materialism, *the implication in every individual soul* of the Christian Revolution.

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