

BLACKFRIARS

crusade for the Recovery of Europe. The canonization of Thomas More is a solemn appeal addressed to the peoples of Europe to make Europe again what she had been meant and made to be. St. Thomas More is the Intercessor in the cause of the Restoration of Christendom, which is vital to the life of humanity.

OSKAR BAUHOFFER.

NOWHERE ISLAND

IT is only of late years that Communism has come to excite an emotion rather than an opinion. . . . Until a decade or two ago, it distinguished itself from Socialism in that it dealt with distribution or consumption whereas Socialism concerned the mode of production: and whereas Socialism was a theory of economics the appeal of Communism was to sentiment, one might even say to religion. Their common ground lay solely in a recognition of the equality of Man. But it was Communism that associated itself with the now century-old hope of the perfectibility of Man.

Historically Communism was of course forbore by such as the Essenes, whose economy of life was however inspired by the urge to escape (rather than repair) social ills. They are described by Philo: "None had his own house but shared his dwelling with all. Living in colonies they threw open their doors to all their sect that came their way. They had a common storehouse, common expenditure, common garments, common food (syssitia). They gave what they earned to a common fund for the support of the unfit."

The Communist colonies of last century were ineffectual enough and are notable largely in that their origin was philanthropic and motivated, if not by pessimism, at least by the urge to escape.

Communism, as we know it, was anticipated in literature only by a Saint—in the *Utopia* of Thomas More. Here was a state in many respects indistinguishable from the economy of the Soviet, comprising four million souls, superintended

NOWHERE ISLAND

by elected officers, shifted periodically from office to office, none escaping the toil of production, the population levelled by the adoption of surplus offspring by the barren or less fertile. Soon we shall have a Saint of the Roman Calendar who is also the idol of modern Communists. "It is his socialism that has made him immortal" (Karl Kautsky in his *Thomas More und Sein Utopie*), or again, "Rarely does Socialism to-day produce so uncompromising a critic of society." At least two noted Communists have recorded that their conversion from Bourgeois philosophy was due to reading the *Utopia*; and I myself have seen a small Bolshevik (to whom even Tolstoi is forbidden by the Soviet *Index Expurgatorius*) spending his evening unreluctantly with More's *Nowhere Island*. The Chancellor of England who tilted against the "rapacious and unprofitable rich" (preferring the poor as "of greater profit to the common weal") has been hailed as the morning star of Revolution; a Bolshevik educationalist has spoken of a Saint of the Catholic Church as "providing the proletariat with its Evangel." Unhoped for as its influence may have been it is not too much to say with Montgomery Carmichael (cf. *The Dublin Review*, October, 1932) that the *Utopia* is "responsible for the existence of modern Socialism and Communism."

Naturally enough it is customary to pass off the *Utopia* as a peg, a pleasant phantasy, on which its author hung a catalogue of certain admitted abuses. It is conveniently forgotten that there is a preface composed of hard facts—facts concerning the wretched state of the sixteenth century proletariat, the avarice and cruelty of the élite, the un-Christian commerce of the wool-market, the callousness of the landlords who supplied it at the expense of disemploying and starving the farm-labourers—a state of affairs which we recognize as the obvious analogue of modern industrialism. There is no pleasant fancy in More's bitter denunciation of the pandemic hanging of thieves whose theft because they were starving was no theft. Note how he abandons his model of an ideal pagan state and urges "Christ's True doctrine of behaviour." It is perhaps unfortunate, though natural, that the saintly humanist (steeped

BLACKFRIARS

in Plato and the classics) took as his theme the maxims of Natural Law; because he has left a loop-hole for his *laissez-faire* devotees. But a theologian will not let these complacent people escape far—aware (as More himself) that Nature is worked upon, not antagonized by Grace. The argument is implicit in the *Utopia* (without even adverting to Monastic Communism or the Apostolic Socialism of the Acts).

In September, 1933 (cf. BLACKFRIARS Editorial for that month), the late Father Bede Jarrett predicted that it would not be long before Moscow would learn from Rome and Bolsheviks seek reinstatement in the one, transcendent comity of nations. Who dare say that it may not be through him—and through his prayers—at whose feet they sit, the author of the *Utopia*, who died rather than deny a principle which would unite us all in the One True Commune upon Earth?

J. F. T. PRINCE.

ST. THOMAS MORE: A LAST WORD

“FIRST to respect and regard God and afterwards the King, thy master.”

This “notable and woorthye lesson and charge” was the first instruction given by Henry VIII to Thomas More on the first entry of the latter into the King’s service. The occasion of this entry has a certain historical interest and significance. It happened after the decision of a legal dispute between the Pope and the King concerning a ship belonging to the Pope which the King claimed as forfeit.

“There chaunced a great shippe of his that then was Pope to arriue at Southampton, the which the King claymed as a forfeiture. Wherevpon the popes ambassadour, then resident in the Realme, vpon sute obteyned of the King that he might retaine for his master some Consailers learned in the lawes of the Realme, and that in his owne presence (him selfe being a singuler Ciuilian) the matter might in some