

## EXCERPTA

**TOWARDS THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF KARL MARX.** The wealth of Marx-ish literature, so far from simplifying, is actually increasing the difficulty of forming an objective estimate of Communist theory and practice such as our contributors seek to undertake in this number of **BLACK-FRIARS**. Where are we to find the uncontaminated stream of authentic Marxism? Which its authorized interpreters, and which the heretics? 'A certain difficulty,' writes Fr. Lewis Watt in the January **CLERGY REVIEW**, 'in making use of even those books which are sympathetic to Communism is caused by the fact that the official Communist Party is reluctant to admit that anyone who is not a member of that Party can avoid mis-statements and misrepresentation when writing about Marxism. It does not approve of Professor Laski's exposition; it repudiates Mr. Middleton Murry; and it sneers at Professor Hook's recent *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*. Moreover, as Berdyaev has explained, the "general line" of the Soviet philosophy is now the official monopoly of the Institute of Red Professors at Moscow, which is by no means content to accept all the interpretations of Marx-Leninist philosophy which professed Bolsheviks put forth . . .' Undeterred, Fr. Watt continues with a very useful comparison of the widely-misunderstood Soviet idea of property. (' There is no theoretic hostility to the private ownership of articles intended for the use and enjoyment of the owner . . . property in the form of means of production is consistently fought against ') with that of Leo XIII and Pius XI, and he has some important things to say on the 'liquidation of class-distinction' in **U.S.S.R.** in fact and theory.

**SOVIET 'FASCISM.'** In its January number, **ESPRIT** takes up its position against Fascism. Allowing for the fact that French political opinion is hostile to Italy and Germany, the articles are informative and considered. This lively monthly is opposed to the jungle of individualist Capitalism and to the mechanist oppression of Materialist Collectivism. It is opposed to Fascism as well. **For**, according to *Esprit*, it raises **up** instead the tyranny **of** the lower **spiri-**

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tual forces. These are arraigned under the headings of race-exaltation, nationalist passion, irresponsible discipline, the 'boom of youth,' personality defined as aggressiveness, submission to the State and to the Superman when there is no question of safeguarding common economic interests. We shall return to a more detailed consideration of the anti-Fascism of *Esprit* next month. Meanwhile, the observations of one of the contributors on the 'Fascising' tendencies of contemporary Soviet policy merit a long quotation, for the infidelity of Moscow to its own cause of a world-proletariat is becoming increasingly patent and disturbing to thoughtful Communists themselves. 'The whole Bolshevik ideology still implies, indeed, absolute internationalism. Even if it is a fiction, even if it is no more than political etiquette and pious delusion, like the "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" on our public monuments, that **is something . . .** Internationalism is still the letter of the Bolshevik law; we are not yet compelled to despair and say that there is nothing to differentiate Bolshevism from Fascism. But we must beware: the more Bolshevism confines its outlook to that of the Russian State the more, by that very fact, it tends to abandon the cause of the workers and to become indistinguishable from Fascism.' [*Esprit* has its own ideas about Fascism—not dissimilar to those of Mr. John Strachey.] 'Here we see the menace of a most fearful and monstrous degeneration of the proletarian movement; for it is being attacked **from within**; within a movement which by its social and ideological constitution is authentically working-class. It is undeniable that plenty of explanations and excuses can be found for the appearance of this menace. If the spread of the Communist revolution to the whole world had not been checked, the Bolshevik rulers would not have had to concern themselves with the national defence of the Russian State and become involved in a troublesome and disquieting system of pacts with imperialistic governments, the most determined and implacable enemies of social revolution.' A declaration of the S.A.P. (German Socialist Workers' Party, comprising left-wing remnants of the Social-Democrats and disgruntled Communists) is quoted: 'In their highly questionable efforts to stabilize the Soviet Union the Stalinists have been compelled to admit the stabilization of Fascist **Poland,**

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Italy and Germany. Socialist theory in a single country seeks to impose elsewhere a regime of docile idiots for its own preservation. It demands that Socialist parties in other countries should do nothing but what is conducive to the supposed interests of the Soviet Union.' The writer continues: 'Incalculable and incalculably disastrous will be the consequences of this blind and thoughtless docility, this abdication of working-class thought and action throughout the world for the benefit of the supposed interests of that which is no longer clearly a militant proletariat, but already a national group.' It is becoming increasingly clear that non-Russian workers have nothing to hope from a movement so de-internationalized as the Bolshevism of Stalin and Litvinov. Communism cannot much longer pretend to show a united front.

**THE ISSUES OF CATHOLIC SOCIOLOGY.** The outspoken article under this heading by Fr. J. Arthur O'Connor in the current DUBLIN REVIEW should be read and pondered upon: the origins and aims of distinctively Catholic Social thought and action have not often been stated so clearly and succinctly in English. Without pretending to summarize what the writer has to say, we may pick one or two of his remarks for quotation. 'We are not mere analysts. Our work is positive and practical. We shall never reform the existing social order by deciding that this or that feature is not immoral. We have to determine whether or not each legitimate feature conduces to an intended whole, and to reject it if it does not. This is a point which many Catholic students have not seen. To apply the principles of Christian morals to the details of our complicated economic life without reference to the sort of society which the Christian religion envisages would be merely to accumulate a mass of pointless casuistic knowledge . . . The whole economic order, and every part of it must be judged by the objective society at which social justice aims. Sociology can be Catholic only if it is teleological . . . The sociological method in this matter is comparison; comparison between an actual human structure and a divine plan. The plan exists and can be consulted. It is in the keeping of the Catholic Church.' Fr. O'Connor makes clear the distinction between lawful and unlawful Capitalism, and continues :

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'The distinction here made between the two things is unmistakable. Many students of Catholic sociology are loggerheads because they have confused them. That Capitalism has resulted in the deprivation of the mass of the people of property in land and industrial capital is a moral and social calamity, and may be fatal to the system; but it is not inherent in it.' That calamity he finds due largely to historical accidents (as the discovery of steam- before petrol- and electric-power) and not necessarily concomitant with legitimate Capitalism as the Encyclicals understand it. He speaks of the 'lethargy or timidity amongst Catholics in England, due perhaps to their being a small and unpopular minority' and concludes. 'The task before us is staggering, and it will need not only courage but hard thinking and close application as well. It can only be done by the joint efforts of a very large number of workers . . . Ours is a smaller but similar task to that of the early Church. But the early Church started with one advantage over us: it had not to reform itself.' All Catholics concerned for these things—and therefore all Catholic—should study this article

PENGUIN.

### EDITORIAL NOTE

IN treating Communism with the fulness which it deserves we gave deliberately to the writers whom we asked to contribute to this number larger space than usual, with the result—for which we apologise—that three articles must be held over till March. We sincerely apologise for this, as the three articles would have completed our survey of Communism: Fr. Aelfric Manson's *The Church: Mother of the Proletariat*, Mr. P. D. Foster's *Joshua or Judges*, and Mr. H. Somerville's *Karl Marx and Capitalism*.