

## NAME AND NUMBER

THE EDITOR

**A** DOCTRINE about man and his destiny must mark even the crudest of political theories. Man's capacity to choose, his will to be free, must be the concern of any system that orders his life in society. And it is the paradox and peril of totalitarianism that the freedom it offers is a freedom to be enslaved. The Christian insistence on man's essential subordination to God and his Law finds a hideous parallel in the claims of the omnipotent state or party; and the classic liberal suspicion of tyranny has too often failed to distinguish the sacred and the secular, the radically different limitations on human liberty imposed by Christ and by Caesar.

For limitations there must be, if liberty be more than anarchic choice, without responsibility or moral sanction. Man's destiny as redeemed is to be made ready for eternal life, and his freedom is most freely exercised when all is seen and chosen in the light of that destiny. It is a commonplace to recognise in the missionary zeal of the Communist a distorted reflection of the Christian apostolate. And no analysis of Communism can ignore the unquestioning faith it evokes; a subordination of all in the interest of an end that commands a total allegiance.

The record of one former Communist's disillusionment has recently appeared, and the importance of Mr Douglas Hyde's *I Believed* lies deeper than in its account of the party's methods of work or in its estimate of English Communist leaders. For Mr Hyde is more than a Marxist who has seen the fallacy of a system. For him, as for many others, the god of dialectical materialism has indeed failed, but the vacuum of a faith that has been lost has been filled by a faith even more compelling than that which he has abandoned. And nothing is more remarkable in his book than his insistence on an understanding of the degree and quality of the Communist's faith, and the corollary that a Christian alternative must—as indeed it should—demand a faith and fervour yet more imperative. 'I know that the majority [of Communists] would make magnificent Christians if once they were given a better cause in which to believe. And I am certain that millions more

could be prevented from ever joining the Communists' ranks if they were made more aware of something superior, something able to make even greater demands upon them, claiming the whole man and using him for noble instead of ignoble ends.'

It is not through minimising the radical demands of Christian faith that its enemies will be converted. The Christian's concern for social justice must be more, not less, absolute than that of the Communist: his zeal in implementing the doctrine that he holds must extend to all the occasions of life, so that they become, and the whole meaning of the Incarnation is to make it possible for them to become, the occasions of grace. And a negative and querulous attack on Communism which fails to see that it is the fruit of unbelief, the inevitable consequence of what Mr Hyde rightly calls 'the spiritual vacuum which exists all over what once was Christendom', can do nothing to remove its power to inspire those who have found a faith in the rejection of Christian faith.

Those Communists who have withdrawn in despair from a cause to which they have given their whole lives do so, most often, without finding what Mr Hyde has found. The recent defections in the Italian Communist Party, while they may reveal weaknesses in the solidarity of a movement which has secured immense support in a nominally Catholic country, need not be a matter of congratulation for Christians. The most prominent of the Italian 'heretics' had in earlier years been a leader of Catholic Action, but his disgust at the dominance of Moscow has not brought him back to the faith he had once known. The Christian answer to Communism is first and last to embody the total demands of Christianity in a life that is lived, Christ's life, extending as it must to the whole function of man in society, with rights to be satisfied, with a dignity to be respected. Nothing less than that can be enough.

In Italy one is told that young men will frequently not commit themselves to 'Catholic Action'; they believe, but might agree with the mythical taxi-driver in Naples, who, when asked by an English visitor if he were a Catholic said, 'Of course', and when further asked if he went to Mass, replied: 'Well, no. I'm a Catholic but not a fanatic'. There is a sense in which the 'fanaticism' of Catholics can be the only alternative to the undoubted fanaticism of the unbelievers. The fear to be involved, the instinct that

passively and good-naturedly accepts a traditional piety, the failure to see that a faith that has nothing to say of the evils of mass unemployment, malnutrition, bad housing: these are not the alternatives to the faith of materialist unbelief.

And the political action through which Christian social justice has to be implemented must itself be gravely weakened if at the familiar level of home and factory the individual Christian is afraid of being 'involved'. The secret of Communist faith—and it has been remarked so often that the moral should be clear by now—is precisely in the detailed range of the allegiance it evokes. No job is too unimportant, no opportunity is too slight, for the 'baptism' of the Marxist's action. Once more one sees the providential meaning and importance of the lay apostolate: the answer, as it is, to the calamities of our time.

In two neighbouring towns in Italy the Fascists had built party headquarters in that bombastic and empty style which symbolised the movement itself. Each building has a tower, on which mammoth bronze *fasces* had been placed. Today, in one town (which has a Communist Council) the hammer-and-sickle adorns the tower instead. In the other (which is not Communist) the tower has an immense scarlet advertisement for Coca-cola. It would be absurd to pursue the analogy too far, but until the alternative to the hammer-and-sickle is seen to be the cross, and until allegiance of the cross is seen to be the heroic and sacrificial life it is, Communism, the ape of Christianity, will never lack apostles, generous men as they often are, deluded, in the dark. It is the privilege of the 'children of light' to pray that the light of grace may fall on their brethren everywhere. And it is the fulness of faith, flowing out into the works that are Christ's, that will, under God, achieve a world's redemption.