

function of the sick personality, whose powers have waned, whose usefulness has been outlived, and who must die if a more robust successor is to take his place and healthy life is to revive. For always the priestly law holds good, in the individual as in society: It is expedient that one should die for the whole, lest the whole perish. The dying god is not just an obsolete museum-piece for the study of archaeologists. Analytical psychology has limitations which we must yet consider; but at least it has shown that the dying god is not dead: he is still very active and alive.

Note: Fr Victor White's second talk will appear in the March issue of **BLACKFRIARS**.



THE REAL ANSWER TO COMMUNISM

DOUGLAS HYDE

SEVERAL times since I left the Communist Party nearly four years ago to become a Catholic, young priests have told me that they proposed engaging in argument or debate with members of the Communist Party. In every case they have been convinced that they had not only been given all the answers to the Marxists when they were in the seminary but, in addition, that those arguments were so devastating, so unanswerable, that any audience, any Communist even (if he were honest), would at once be obliged to accept them and to admit the intellectual defeat of Marxism. But it is not as easy as that, as a brief discussion of the lines they proposed to follow and an indication on my part of the answers which the Communists were likely to produce has usually soon demonstrated.

It is absolutely right that the young priest should be sent out with a knowledge of Marxism—for it is now, apart from anything else, the basis of all education from the elementary school to the university in nearly a quarter of the world today—and it is obviously necessary that he should be given entirely convincing answers at the time, or the consequence might well be that our seminaries would begin to produce members of the Communist Party instead of Catholic priests. But, when visiting seminaries,

or talking to their younger products, I have sometimes felt that this outlining of the Marxist case followed by instruction in the pat answers to it is all a little too easy. First you put up a simplified, truncated version of Marxism and then provide the unanswerable answer. The result is a foregone conclusion. It is rather in the same category as those very popular but, I always feel, rather phoney 'two pulpit' performances where one priest puts up Marxism as an Aunt Sally and the other proceeds to knock it down. Having what is perhaps a somewhat perverse sense of humour, I sometimes wonder what would happen if the wrong priest won—if the 'Marxist' put up such a strong case that his 'good Catholic' opponent—to the scandal of the faithful present in the church—was unable to answer it.

But that, presumably, is under the circumstances unlikely. The question is, would the same stock 'answer' used in a debate with a real Marxist in the other pulpit and with a largely Communist congregation be equally convincing and decisive? This is important, if the knowledge imparted in the seminary is to be a weapon in the battle of ideas and not simply a means of bolstering up the morale of the individual concerned and of providing an occasional entertainment for the faithful.

These views were strengthened as I read *Must It Be Communism? A Philosophical Inquiry Into The Major Issues of Today*, by Dom Augustine J. Osgniach, O.S.B.¹ It will presumably be useful as a textbook—and will certainly be used as such in American seminaries and by lay social study groups. It may satisfy the seminaries, but I'm not at all sure about whether it will satisfy, for example, active Catholic trade unionists who are in daily contact with live Communists in their factories and trade union branches, and who find themselves involved almost daily in lunch-time arguments with them. To the answers given with such confidence by the author, the Communists will quickly counter-attack with others, to which the victim, whose knowledge of the case for Communism is based on such books as this, has no answer.

I am not suggesting that it is a deliberate attempt to oversimplify, still less to deceive. Its weakness springs, I think, in part from a general failure on the part of those non-Communists who write theoretical works on Marxism to recognise that there is such a thing as the development of Marxist doctrine. That Marxism is

¹ Published by Herder; 30s.

not something which was laid down for all time from the first word to the last by Dr Marx a hundred years ago in a series of books which are rapidly becoming out of date. Marx was the first Marxist thinker (although, in fact, Engels is equally entitled to the honour for, as Professor J. B. S. Haldane observed to me in 1940, Engels made a greater contribution to Marxist thought than did Marx, and the system ought in justice, therefore, to be called Engelsism rather than Marxism), but he was not the last.

To use our own terminology, the deposit of truth was there in the first books, and is to be found expressed in current policies and doctrines too; but a lot has happened to it since the Communist Manifesto was first written in 1848. Marxism is a living thing, which is daily being applied under most diverse conditions by a great variety of men. Marxist thought is not static. And, since we must in real life argue with the men of today who are influencing the thought of our own generation and not with those of a century ago, it is necessary to know it as it is now, after having been developed by, for example, Plekhanov, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung, to name only the giants.

What makes a full understanding of modern Marxism still more difficult is the fact that some of the most important developments in its thought are made in study classes attended only by the initiated and are not necessarily committed to the text books at all. Still more changes in emphasis are made in this way. For example, Fr Osgniach gives more or less equal weight and prominence to the Materialist Conception of History, the Surplus Value Theory, the Abolition of Private Property and the Class Struggle. But no Marxist tutor engaged in the instruction of Communist Party members would do this. The whole emphasis would be upon the class struggle and historical materialism, which would be taught in that chronological order but would be regarded as equally important in the fight for the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship, which are the Communists' aims. The abolition of private property would come a bad third, not because it has been rejected but because total abolition is seen as something belonging to a future sufficiently remote for it to constitute a diversion from the main struggle of today. Any recruit who wanted to discuss the matter in detail with his tutor would probably be told: 'Our job is to get the revolution over first, Comrade, and then establish the dictatorship of the

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proletariat; it will take long enough to destroy the last remnants of bourgeois thought for the stage after that not to matter much to you or me'.

The surplus value theory would be next to nowhere. Few Communists today would feel that their Marxism had been shattered because an opponent had undermined it as a theory. For them it is enough that, according to their experience, 'the profit is that which is retained and never paid back; there is no common interest between working men and profit makers'—which incidentally was written by an English Chartist before Marx came on the scene to put it on a scientific basis.

This knowledge of changing emphasis in the relative importance of Marxist theories is not to be got from the text books. There seems less excuse for Fr Osgniach's handling of the Marxist theory of the rôle of the individual in history. But here he is, nonetheless, most certainly not alone. To say that Marxism is a form of economic determinism and then to go on to show that the individual's rôle in history destroys the Marxist case, is stock treatment and an attractively easy one. It serves again to emphasise the difference between the Marxism of the seminaries and the Marxism of the Marxists. To disprove the Communists' economic determinism, the author quotes Joad, who is, in turn, quoting Bertrand Russell. What, they ask, would have happened to the Russian Revolution if Lenin had not been permitted by the Germans to return to Russia at the vital moment? More often the same sort of question is applied to Napoleon Bonaparte. But Marx and Engels always protested that Marxism was not economic determinism, and Plekhanov wrote a book on the whole question which dealt specifically with that very argument. Whether Marx's protest and Plekhanov's answers are justified is another matter, but the man who is being told, 'This is Marxism' needs also to be told the views of the foremost exponents of Marxism on the subject as well as those of its opponents.

After outlining and setting about refuting the liberal and Marxist philosophies, the author goes straight on to explain Catholic social doctrines, which he does very fully, following the conventional lines. This section will undoubtedly be useful to study groups, but its inclusion in the book is presumably intended as the answer to the question posed by the title. It may be that 'Must It Be Communism?' is just an American publisher's

catch-penny title, but one has to assume that it is the subject of the book, in which case a quite flat outline of Catholic social teaching is not in itself enough. A satisfactory answer would have to take account of Communism's great emotional, as distinct from its purely intellectual, appeal to our generation. The Marxist ideas and theories need to be defeated fully and convincingly, but a fuller understanding and a clearer recognition of the blending of intellectual conviction and emotional dynamic which constitutes the faith of the Communist is required if this is to be done effectively, as anyone who has argued with Communists knows from experience.

I remember how at a public meeting in a Lancashire textile town some time ago, I answered a great battery of questions from the leader of the local Communist Party branch to the complete satisfaction of the Catholics present who applauded what they obviously felt to be the total destruction of his case. Then came his last question. It was this: 'You have been a Marxist, too. Why don't you admit that it is as certain that Capitalism will collapse, that we shall make our revolution and establish our workers' dictatorship, as that the sun will not rise in the West nor rivers start flowing uphill?' Said an impatient Catholic social worker sitting at my side on the platform: 'What on earth can you do with a man like that?' The answer is that we have to find ways of doing something about men like that, men with a great faith which has made them the most formidable force of our time—and in this case he was a lapsed Catholic anyway.

The emotional appeal of Marxism in our day has been terrific. It has made Marxism a faith to be held as a religion, which most certainly does not spring from a passionate belief in Marx's theory of surplus value as such. The overwhelming majority of its followers have joined, not because they have first studied every aspect of Marxist theory and have been convinced by it, but because they have agreed with its denunciation of the rottenness of bourgeois society, because they have recognised that there is no strength left in the bourgeois values of the last century, because they are anxious for change, feeling that at any rate nothing could be worse than a social and economic system of which ever-recurring economic depressions and ever more horrible wars are a normal feature.

That may not be an appeal to the intellect, but it has had an

appeal for intelligent men. Only the spoonfed and dumb, they have felt, could be prepared to accept such an iniquitous system as inevitable and be prepared to tolerate it. The revolt against the rotten has driven good men into Communism—and for good, even if not necessarily intellectual, reasons. It was the intelligent ones who in the early 1930s foresaw the approach of a new world war and sounded the alarm, who saw that mass unemployment and poverty in the midst of plenty made nonsense of all the current claims to progress, and who believed that it proved that Christianity was cant. A terrifically powerful dynamic impelled them and drove them on. Their Marxism had a tremendous emotional content. Hatred of evil and the doers of evil filled their lives, prompting them to sacrifice their time and energy. It urged on young poets, artists and philosophers to die, for example, on the battlefields of Spain, believing that no one else knew or cared about the issues which were at stake. They felt that they were living and dying for decency, saving the honour of a generation whose acceptance of commercialised greed and blatant social injustice had become obscene, since the price paid for it was the malnutrition of millions of children and the probable slaughter in war of a generation of young manhood.

Many of the middle-class intellectuals who have joined the Communists have, I believe, been driven in by what one might call a collective bad conscience, the uneasy conscience of a class which has come subconsciously to feel that the possession of any sort of privilege, arising from money, birth or education, implies a certain guilt when so many are in need. The causes of Communism are manifestly spiritual, and the only effective answers will be spiritual too.

The 1950s are not the 1930s. A process has begun which, if Catholics do their part effectively, answering Communism in the intellectual, social and spiritual spheres, may mean an end to the appeal of Communism in the West. Of the men who influenced the thought of what was called 'the pink decade'—from the mid-twenties to the mid-thirties—few remain in Communism today. The contents lists of the Left-wing cultural reviews of that period were catalogues of some of the best-known poets, writers and artists of the day. That is no longer true. The ideas of Marx have been put into practice. They have been put to the empirical test—and have failed. And members of a materialistically minded

generation which, quite logically, tests its theories first and foremost by results, have been disillusioned as a consequence.

Most of those who departed are today in a wilderness of cynicism and disillusionment. They no longer influence the Left, and most of them influence no one at all. Yet I know enough about them to be certain that they are still seeking a philosophy and a faith. From their ranks, the ranks of the men who have proved in their lives the falsity of the wrong ideas of the past century, may well come the Church's next harvest.



CATHOLICS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

A Personal View

R. P. WALSH

FOR good or for ill there is every chance that the Labour Party will control the destiny of this country for perhaps fifty out of the next hundred years, and as it is a party that attracts strong support from a large proportion of the Catholics in this country it is important to think of the position of these Catholics within it. In the major industrial centres the majority of Catholics in the working class support Labour; indeed, it was once estimated in the columns of this review by Lord Pakenham that eighty per cent of the Catholic body voted Labour, and even if we agree that this figure is high, the percentage must still be very significant.

Unfortunately most of those Catholics with the ability to write and to project their ideas into the world of thought and of literature tend to be supporters of the Conservative Party, and they in no way represent the general opinion of the Catholic body. When one moves at what might be called the national level of Catholic action one finds that most of the leaders are also Conservative. No one can doubt the right of these writers or leaders to follow the politics they hold, nor can one doubt their ability to write and their ability to give time to the leadership of the Catholic body. They accomplish a magnificent job for the Catholic community, yet it is unfortunate that so one-sided an