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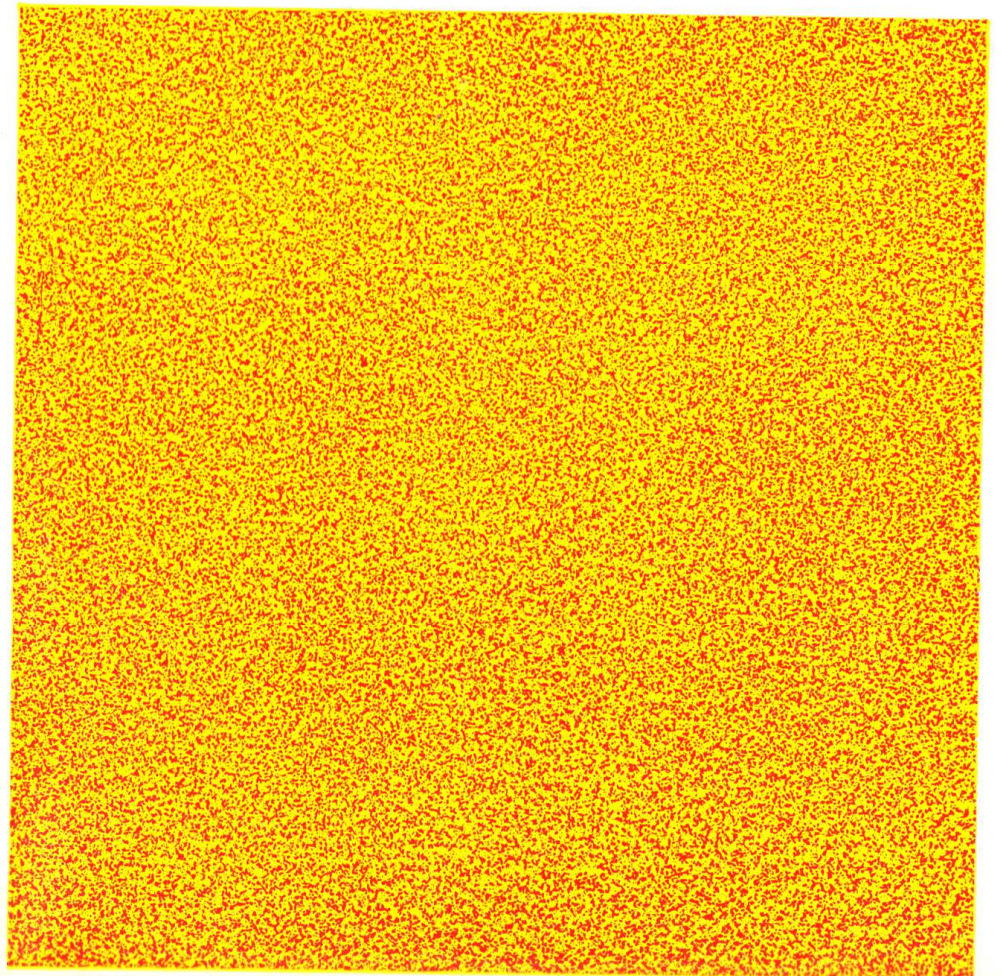
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# Communism and Religion

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By Lewis Watt SJ  
Revised by Eamonn Dwyer





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## Communism and Religion

By LEWIS WATT S.J.

Revised by Eamonn Dwyer

Those who are chiefly interested in the economic and social programme of communism may be inclined to maintain that, in strict theory if not in practice, religion and communism have nothing to do with each other. It is not uncommon to come across the statement that socialism considers religion to be a purely private affair, extraneous to socialist demands for changes in the social and economic order. And (so that argument may continue) what is communism but a form of socialism?

Others whose attention has been focussed on the violent attacks which many communist régimes have directed against religion, may look upon communism as a mere negation of religion. In doing so, they would have the support of many official and semi-official communist statements. Lenin writes that the statement 'Socialism is my religion,' is a retreat from Marxism, though it may be excused on the lips of a propagandist who wishes to 'present his views in terminology to which the backward masses are more accustomed'.<sup>1</sup>

Nicolas Berdyaev (1874-1948), a Marxist at the turn of the century, was, on the other hand, repelled by the materialistic nature of Bolshevik Marxism, interpreting instead a spiritual essence which few of his contemporaries were able to recognise. ' . . . . The creation of a new man and a brotherhood between men is a spiritual problem, a religious problem, which presupposes an interior transformation. This is what communism, itself a religion, will not admit . . . .'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Lenin on Religion.* Martin Lawrence, Ltd.

<sup>2</sup>*Communism and Christians.* The Paladin Press, 1938. A collection of essays introduced by François Mauriac.

Whether we are to call communism a religion or not evidently depends on what we mean by 'communism' and by 'religion'. Without losing time in a discussion of possible meanings of the former term, it will be here taken to mean the theories of Marx and Engels, and of Lenin, the founders of communism whose authority is accepted by communists of all camps. As to the word 'religion', there is greater difficulty.

Religion could be said to be the sum-total of beliefs, rules of conduct, and rites governing the relations of man with a Power or Powers looked upon as transcendent.

Alongside this may be placed a description of religion provided by the former leader in Russia of the now defunct Union of Militant Atheists:

Religion is a belief that, in addition to the visible world which man can observe, test and experience, there exists another world—a supernatural world.<sup>1</sup>

In neither of these senses can communism be called a religion. That it may rightly be termed an attempted substitute for religion will be shown later in these pages.

#### FROM HEGEL TO MARX

The shadows of two men, both German philosophers, lie across the pages of the founder of modern communism, Karl Marx (1818-83). When at the age of eighteen he went to the University of Berlin, he found the philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831) exercising a very strong influence, an influence which he did not escape. Hegel is generally admitted to be one of the most difficult of all philosophers to understand. Mr Wickham Steed (b. 1871; Ed., *The Times* 1919-1922) tells a delightful story of a conversation he once had with Friedrich Engels (1820-95), who may fairly be called the co-founder, with Marx, of modern communism. In reply to a question which Mr Steed put to him, Engels replied, 'Knowledge of Hegel can only be acquired through lifelong

<sup>1</sup>E. Yaroslavsky, *Religion in the U.S.S.R.*, pp 26-7. Modern Books, Ltd.

study. I have been studying him for fifty years, and now, I believe, I have nearly mastered his vocabulary'.<sup>1</sup> Very summarily, it may be said that for Hegel the universe is a manifestation of a spiritual force, the Idea, the Absolute, evolving itself to self-consciousness through various grades of being, through social institutions, through art, religion, and philosophy. This evolution, he held, takes place by 'Dialectic'. Just as in the process of thinking one arrives at the true ideas by beginning with partially false ideas, then discovering the element of self-contradictoriness which lurks in every false idea, and finally arriving at the complete truth, so the outer world of things and institutions (and the spiritual force which it manifests) evolves from one stage to another in a series which Hegel calls thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, the process taking place under the pressure of 'internal contradictions' which each stage contains. Against this system it was urged that it was merely theism disguised as metaphysics.

This, of course, is not the place to discuss the subsequent history of the Hegelian philosophy and the divisions which split those who professed it into Right, Left and Centre, according as they interpreted it in a Christian, Pantheist, or 'liberal' sense. One name, however, must be mentioned, for it is that of the second of the two philosophers who, unconsciously, supplied the foundations of Marxist communism. Ludwig Feuerbach published, in 1841, his anti-Christian *Essence of Christianity*, an attack on the Hegelian philosophy, and it received an enthusiastic welcome from Marx and Engels. Feuerbach had been a disciple of Hegel, but subsequently he revolted from the teaching of his master, holding that it was merely theism transposed into terms of a mystifying philosophy. Hegel's 'Absolute', instead of being a transcendent force, is in reality nothing but the spirit of man; all theology is really anthropology. God is simply a creation of man, for man, having many wishes which he desires to have fulfilled, persuades himself that a God exists who can fulfil them. As for religion he maintains that it merely represents an unconscious attempt on the part of man to deify and

<sup>1</sup>*A Way to Social Peace*, by H. Wickham Steed. 1934. Allen and Unwin.



make 'objective' his own essential nature. Without pursuing further the history of Feuerbach's philosophy in his subsequent writings, it will suffice to draw attention to the fact that he substitutes materialism for Hegel's idealism, that he puts the spirit of the human race in the place of Hegel's 'Absolute' (*homo homini Deus*), and that he gives a purely rationalist explanation of religion, though he claims that his own philosophy is still in a true sense religion.

It is unquestionable that Marx and Engels were greatly impressed by Feuerbach's criticism of Hegel. 'For the time being', wrote Engels, 'we were all Feuerbachians'; and Marx, 'who has put man in place of the old lumber, and in place of the infinite consciousness as well? Feuerbach, and no one else. Feuerbach was the first to complete the criticism of religion'. A couple of years after the publication of *The Essence of Christianity*, Marx writes as follows, in a critique of Hegel:

Man makes religion; religion does not make man . . . Man is the world of men, the State, society. This State, this society, produce religion, produce a perverted world consciousness, because they are a perverted world. Religion is the generalized theory of this world . . . The fight against religion is, therefore, a direct campaign against the world whose spiritual aroma is religion . . . Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature . . . It is the opium of the people . . . The people cannot be really happy until it has been deprived of illusory happiness by the abolition of religion . . . The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man.

The influence of Feuerbach is evident in such passages; but what is also evident is that they contain the seeds of a divergence from his doctrine. Feuerbach had deified man in the abstract, the spirit of the human race. Marx insists on the concrete view of man, as a product of history and environment.

This divergence developed into a definite breach. Amongst Marx's notes have been found his *Theses on Feuerbach*, in which the philosopher is criticised for resolving the essence of religion into the human essence without perceiving that the human essence is not an abstraction, but the totality of social relations, with the result that he has ignored the process of history; for not perceiving that the 'religious sentiment' is a social product; for not understanding the importance of

revolutionary activity, etc. By about 1845, Marx and Engels had ceased to be Feuerbachians pure and simple, and were developing a philosophy of their own, Dialectical Materialism, which was indebted to Feuerbach for its anti-Hegelian materialism and its deification of man, but which was equally indebted to Hegel for its theory of the Dialectic. We shall see later that it is this philosophy of life, interpreted by the authorized exponents of the so-called 'Party line' of Soviet philosophy at Moscow, which is offered to mankind as a substitute for religion.

#### MARX AND ENGELS ON RELIGION

It is a matter of common knowledge that both Marx and Engels were atheists. That, however, did not exempt them, in the course of their self-imposed task of discovering a new interpretation of the universe, and particularly of human institutions, from endeavouring to explain the universal phenomenon of religion. They attribute its origin to the nature of man's mind, which tends to take a 'mystical' view of what he cannot understand. In primitive society man is confronted with the forces of nature. He wishes to breed flocks and herds, to grow crops, and he discovers that his efforts to do so are successful or unsuccessful because of natural powers (the seasons, the weather, fertility, etc.) which are beyond his control, and which impress him as overwhelmingly mysterious. These powers he seeks to propitiate by worship; and so, according to Engels (in his book, *Anti-Dühring*), primitive religion is 'nothing but a fantastic reflection in men's minds of the external forces which dominate their everyday existence . . . In the beginning of history it is the forces of nature which first produce this reflection'. As the tribes separated, religions developed along different lines according to the circumstances of each tribe. Gradually, by a natural process of abstraction or 'distillation', the many gods of a tribe or nation were consolidated into one, and so monotheism arose. Similarly Marx says that when the social relations within the sphere of material life, between man and man, and between man and Nature, are 'narrow', this narrowness is reflected in the

ancient worship of Nature, and in the other elements of the popular religions (*Capital*, i. ch. 1).

When capitalist production comes into existence, the products of labour become 'commodities' exchanging on the market. Faced by this phenomenon, Marx tells us (*loc. ult. cit.*), men are bemused by its 'mystical character'; for the commodity is 'a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties'. Not because of its useful qualities; these are obvious enough. Nor is there any mystery about the kind and amount of labour which produced it. The real reason why men find the commodity 'enigmatical' is that it reflects to men's minds the social character of labour, the basis (in Marxist theory) of the value which commodities possess. Since commodities are valued according to the amount of social labour embodied in them, what has really happened is that men have projected into commodities their own social relations. To find an analogy with this, we are told, 'we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches to the products of labour so soon as they are produced as commodities'.

Without entering into detail about the Marxist theory of value, let us just observe that this 'social' labour is also called by Marx, 'abstract' labour; i.e., human labour after one has thought away all particular form from it. Since, in Marx's words, 'the religious world is but the reflex of the real world', the religion most fitting for a capitalist society is Christianity 'with its cultus of abstract man', especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc. The suggestion evidently is that the 'abstract labour' of the real world is mirrored by the Christian 'cultus of abstract man'. By the latter term Marx perhaps intends to designate Christianity's reverence for the dignity of the human person, no matter to what race or nation a man or woman belongs, for it is difficult to attach any sense to his words if this is not what he

means. Yet it is equally difficult to understand how this attitude of reverence can be said to reflect social conditions under capitalism, which (in Marxist theory) is based upon the exploitation of a whole class of men, the absolute negation of reverence for human personality. Moreover, the development of capitalism in Japan since Marx wrote proves the inaccuracy of his theory of Christianity as the reflection of capitalism. As to 'abstract human labour', it is of course a purely abstract idea, and Marx has fallen into the error with which he reproaches Feuerbach, of over-abstractation. There is no such thing as 'abstract labour' or abstract anything else in the real world.

Christianity has been in existence for nineteen centuries. For fifteen of those, Marx's theory affords no explanation, since they preceded the capitalist era (which, he says, dates from the sixteenth century). He is content to inform us (in a footnote) that mediæval Catholicism is to be explained by the way in which men made a living, and makes no attempt to expand this dictum. Engels has attempted an explanation of the origins of Christianity. After describing the sufferings of the oppressed in the Roman Empire, he says that Christianity offered the hope of eternal happiness to the struggling masses as a consolation for their unhappiness in this world. It was a product of the social conditions of the time. He has, of course, to face the fact that Christianity's appeal extended before long far beyond the oppressed, and that the State became officially Christian. To explain this he invokes the usual shibboleth: the fact that it was adopted by the State shows that it was a religion answering to the circumstances of the times. No one—at least no Christian—would deny that Christianity offers consolation to the oppressed, or that it is admirably suited to the conditions of all times. But to claim that such statements afford an explanation of the origin of Christianity is ludicrous; just as ludicrous as to explain the origin of birds by saying that they are admirably adapted to flying.

In the introduction to the English edition of his *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*,<sup>1</sup> Engels maintains that the Protestant

<sup>1</sup>Allen and Unwin.

Reformation was the first of three decisive battles in which the long struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism culminated. The bourgeoisie attacked the Catholic Church because it was inextricably bound up with feudalism, and because it held in leading-strings the science which the bourgeois needed for the development of industrial production; and he tells us that the cry against the Church found 'a strong echo in the peasants, who everywhere had to struggle for their very existence with their feudal lords'.<sup>1</sup> The bourgeoisie triumphed in Calvin, whose doctrine of predestination reflected the new economic conditions; for it 'was the religious expression of the fact that in the commercial world of competition success or failure does not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrollable by him. It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of the mercy of unknown superior economic powers'. Thereafter the bourgeoisie made use of religion to keep the proletariat quiet and obedient.

Now this is an extraordinarily feeble attempt to explain religious history along the lines of dialectical materialism. There are few who would deny that religion has been sometimes abused in the interests of those who hold economic power. Pius XI uttered a strong protest against such abuse in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. One does not need to believe in dialectical materialism to admit and deplore the fact of religious hypocrisy in many forms. But what Engels ought to have proved is that changes in the modes of production and exchange brought about changes in religious ideas, and that by an inevitable process. He makes only one serious attempt to do this (if indeed he really was serious); his comparison between Calvin's theory of predestination and the conditions of competitive industry. Others have traced a connection between capitalism and Calvin's lax attitude to usury, or his insistence on the importance of secular activity, and can make out a plausible case. But it is too much to ask

<sup>1</sup>In *Capital*, i. ch.25 and 27, Marx gives a very different picture of the peasantry in England before the Reformation, quoting Thorold Roger's description of the fifteenth century as 'the golden age of the English labourer in town and country'.

us to believe that the bourgeois victory in the fight to establish competitive capitalism was accurately 'reflected' in a religious dogma which expressed the fact that individual effort (the basis of competitive capitalism) is fruitless, in face of 'unknown superior economic powers'. On Engel's own theory of the origins of religion, such a dogma is appropriate to the earliest stages in man's social evolution, not to the opening of the capitalist era.

The fact is that history affords no evidence whatever that forms of religion are merely 'reflections' of modes of economic production.<sup>1</sup>

Turning from the past to the future, religion will vanish (so Marx believes)<sup>2</sup> when the practical everyday relations between man and man, and between man and Nature, have all become perfectly reasonable and intelligible; and that will only be when material production is carried on by freely associated men, and is regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. In other words, there will be no religion in the perfect communist society. It never seems to occur to either Marx or Engels that religion may be based upon reason and intelligence. They were too infected by the errors of their philosophical masters to realize that religion may be more than a response to the instinct of wonder or the creation of men in need of consolation. They accepted the now discredited attacks on historical Christianity which were common in the Germany of their day, and so gave never a thought to the evidence for a divinely-revealed religion.

#### LENIN

At the beginning of this study, mention was made of the objection that socialists regard religion as a private matter, and that therefore there was no place for a study of the relations between religion and communism, a form of socialism. The reply to this objection is provided by Lenin,<sup>3</sup> who speaks with no less authority for communism than does Marx himself.

<sup>1</sup>See *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History*, by M. M. Bober. Harvard University Press. 1948.

<sup>2</sup>*Capital*, i. ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Lenin's writings on religion have been collected into a small volume under the title *Lenin on Religion* (Martin Lawrence, Ltd.)

He says:

'Religion must be regarded as a private matter'; in these words the attitude of Socialists to religion is usually expressed. But we must define the meaning of these words precisely so as to avoid misunderstanding. We demand that religion be regarded as a private matter as far as the State is concerned, but under no circumstances can we regard it as a private matter in our own party. The State must not concern itself with religion . . . everyone must be absolutely free to profess whatever religion he likes, or to profess no religion, i.e. to be an atheist, as every Socialist usually is . . . The party of the proletariat demands that the *government* shall declare religion a private matter, but it does not for a moment regard the fight against the opium of the people - the fight against religious superstition, etc. - as a private matter.

The gist of this is that communists demand that governments shall sever all connection with religion, and make no attempt to enforce religion on their subjects; but at the same time communists reserve to themselves the right to conduct anti-religious propaganda.

Perhaps it may be well to point out that Lenin, by his words 'religious superstition' means *all* religion, which for him is mere superstition. That should be evident enough from his use of Marx's description of religion ('the opium of the people') but it will be even more clear from what follows.

In an article on Tolstoy, Lenin calls religion 'one of the most corrupt things existing in the world', and says that the attempt to replace the official state priests (in Russia) by priests of moral conviction is the cultivation of the most subtle, and therefore the most especially loathsome, kind of clericalism. Other statements made by him are:

We must combat religion - this is the A.B.C. of Marxism . . . The Marxist must be an enemy of religion . . . The philosophic basis of Marxism is dialectic materialism. This dialectic materialism fully accepts the historical traditions of the Materialism of the eighteenth century in France, and of Feuerbach in Germany - which is absolutely atheistic, and definitely hostile to all religion . . . Our programme necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism.

It is really unnecessary to multiply examples to show the hostility of Lenin to all religion, for it is frankly admitted by those who look to him as the prophet of Marx and Engels.

With regard to the propaganda of atheism, it is to be observed that Lenin does not wish it to be too blatant; first be-

cause that would be to revive interest in religion and secondly, because it would substitute religious divisions for political ones. Lenin's utter inability to understand the power of religion is shown in the following passage:

We must not allow the forces waging a genuinely revolutionary economic and political struggle to be broken up for the sake of opinions and dreams that are of third-rate importance, which are rapidly losing all political significance, and which are being steadily relegated to the rubbish heap by the normal course of economic development.

He tells us that the progress of the class-struggle will convert Christian workers to atheism a hundred times more effectively than atheist sermons. Therefore 'the propagation of atheism must be *subordinated* (his own italics - implying that it must not be omitted) to the development of the class-struggle'.

Lenin faithfully follows Engels in regarding religion as the ally of the exploiting class; 'it teaches us to bear uncomplainingly the woes of hell on earth in the hope of an alleged paradise in the skies'. It is used by the bourgeoisie to defend exploitation by stupefying the workers. None of this is in the least original, as we have seen. Even if the Engels-Lenin generalization about religion as the instrument of exploitation were correct, it would none the less be guilty of confusing religion and the use made of religion by some unscrupulous people - a use, as we have also seen, which was denounced by Pope Pius XI.

The origin of religion in modern times Lenin traces to the apparent helplessness of the workers before the blind forces of capitalism, threatening the worker and the small businessman with sudden destruction and ruin. Fear of these forces he calls 'the tap-root of modern religion'. He makes no attempt to explain how this is to be reconciled with the widespread indifference to religion on the part of the workers in the modern world, who are still exposed to economic disaster, but so many of whom are neither religious nor atheist.

#### ORGANIZED COMMUNISM AND RELIGION

An attempt to explain why the peasantry persist in their belief in religion is made in the anti-religious 'theses' adopted

by the Russian Communist Party in 1926. The explanation resembles that given by Marx and Engels to account for Nature Worship. The peasant is delivered into the power of the uncontrolled forces of nature owing to his ignorance of natural laws and his inability to select those forces of nature which would be useful to him, as well as his lack of means for controlling those forces. Hence arises a belief in chance, fate, Providence, and thus there develops faith in God, designer and ruler of the world.

With regard to the urban proletariat, the Russian Communist Party appears to follow Lenin's explanation of religion as arising from fear of the forces of capitalism, so that in general their theory of the origin of religion may be said to be that fear of blind forces created the gods, and still maintains belief in them - at least so far as the uninstructed masses are concerned. The religious practices of other classes they would doubtless attribute, as Engels does,<sup>1</sup> to hypocrisy and a desire to keep the masses religious and therefore amenable to exploitation.

Without opening up the question of the influence of awe in face of the powers of nature as a factor in primitive religions, or of the effect of a consciousness of the individual's weakness in face of the world as a stimulus to filial trust in God, one may just remark that neither one nor the other proves that there is no God, and that neither one nor the other is used by Christianity to prove its claims. Once again we see the omission of any serious consideration of those claims and, instead, an unproved *a priori* assertion. Marx and the German rationalists whom he followed are justified of their children.

The 'objective rôle' of religion is, of course, explained in the 'theses' along the conventional Marxist lines: religion serves for 'the subjugation and oppression of the toilers'. Consequently it is essential for communists to combat every existing religion. This is, as has been shown, sound Marxism-Leninism, but it is worth emphasizing here because it is occasionally asserted by apologists for communism that the only religion which communists attack is the backward superstitious religion of the ignorant masses of the peasantry

<sup>1</sup>*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*: Introduction.

in Russia. Such apologists would do well to notice the thesis which asserts:

It is necessary to condemn categorically every effort or approachment of Christianity to communism. Religion must be rejected for good, without reservation and camouflage. At the given moment this is particularly necessary since sectarianism, in its effort to hide from the toiling masses its bourgeois essence, is adopting a communist phraseology. Every obscuration by anti-religionists in this respect will be used by sectarians against us.<sup>1</sup>

The theses lay stress on the importance, for anti-religious propaganda, of understanding the religious philosophy of life<sup>2</sup> and of substituting 'the scientific materialist conception of the world, of man and human society'.

The methods of anti-religious propaganda must be cautious and adapted to local conditions. The peasant must be enlightened scientifically about natural forces, and shown that kulaks (wealthy peasants) use religion as an instrument of oppression. This must be done by a 'quiet, cautious talk'. Similar caution must be shown in dealing with the urban proletariat. An amusing paragraph concludes this section of the theses:

Particular caution must be maintained towards debates, which frequently yield results contrary to those for which they were organized.

The Union of Militant Atheists was organized in 1925 in response to the above theses. Although its initial growth was rapid the use of crude, blasphemous propaganda merely alienated the populace. It eventually decayed and has not been revived. But, even before the Union was formed the Churches were the victims of persecution. During 1922 and 1923 twenty-five clergy (Catholic and Orthodox) were condemned to death.<sup>3</sup> Among them were the Catholic Archbishop, Jan Cieplak (1857-1926) and his vicar, Mgr Budkiewicz, at whose trial the prosecutor remarked that the laws

<sup>1</sup>I quote from the translation provided by Dr Julius Hecker, in his *Religion and Communism*, Appendix I (Chapman and Hall).

<sup>2</sup>Explained as being 'a peculiar system of fantastic conceptions of the universe, not corresponding to fact and contradictory to the data of contemporary science'.

<sup>3</sup>See N. S. Timasheff, *Religion in Soviet Russia*, p. 30. Sheed and Ward, 1943.



of God did not apply to the Soviet Union. The Archbishop's sentence was commuted, and, after a year in the Butrika prison, he was expelled to Poland. Mgr Budkiewicz, however, was executed on Good Friday, 1923. Other brutal assaults followed in Stalin's era; in 1929-30, and the most violent in 1937-38 resulting in the widespread arrests and liquidation of clergy.

In 1929 the Constitution was amended to forbid propaganda in favour of religion. In 1936 this became Article 124 of the Constitution.

Thus the foundations of the Soviet Union were laid.

Tension within the Soviet Union has eased since the beginning of World War II and the Orthodox Church openly functions, but as a Party adherent and in strict accordance with Article 124. Nevertheless those who worship openly still encounter considerable obstacles. In the field of education, for example, recommendation by the Party, Komsomol (Party Youth) and trade unions is a prerequisite to entry into university or similar institutions. 'The transition to communism implies training that will make people communistic . . .'<sup>1</sup> In this way the party eliminates the prospects of those who might possibly oppose it from a position of influence gained through educational attainment.

#### WHY IS COMMUNISM HOSTILE TO RELIGION?

This question opens up a still wider one; why is it that the socialist movement has so often shown hostility to religion? That it has done so on the Continent of Europe is well-known; Lenin, as we have seen, takes it for granted that the normal socialist will be an atheist. In Great Britain socialism is rather a creed of social reform, a rebellion against the abuses of the existing economic régime, than an acceptance of Marxist theories of complete revolution. We have not lacked for atheistic socialists even in our own country. Robert Owen, to mention only one of the great names in the British socialist movement, was an open atheist, and before the foundation of the British Communist Party we had at least one small

<sup>1</sup>1961 Programme of the C.P.S.U. (Soviet Communist Party), Section, *In the field of Public Education*.

socialist party which openly attacked religion. The Marxist Social Democratic Parties of the Continent, in spite of their maxim that 'religion is a private matter', were always anti-religious in tone. Even the so-called Utopian socialists of the pre-Marxist era (such as Saint-Simon) were anti-religious.

No doubt one of the elements which went to give an anti-religious bias to socialism in the nineteenth century was the influence of the French freethinkers of the century before on the political revolutionary movements which changed the political aspect of Europe, beginning with the French Revolution. Organized religion had been closely associated with the *ancien régime* both west and east of the Rhine, and in Italy and Spain. All the constituent parts of that régime were attacked by the revolutionaries, organized religion amongst them. The real victor in those revolutions, however, was not the proletariat or the peasantry, but the bourgeoisie; and it was amongst the bourgeoisie that free-thought obtained its recruits. For the time, Mammon seemed to conquer God.

Marx and Engels, of course, belonged to the class of the bourgeoisie, though they threw in their lot with the proletariat. Their views on religion were those of many of their class at that time, and of the Universities which the bourgeoisie supported and attended. They were freethinkers, 'very advanced freethinkers', as Engels tells us.<sup>1</sup> As has been pointed out above, it does not seem to have occurred to them to investigate the rational and historical proofs of Christianity. Their minds 'reflected' the confident (but now exploded) theories of religion put forward by the German critics of the Hegelian Left and, absorbed in their campaign against the oppression of the workers by nineteenth century capitalism, they gave no serious thought to the possibility that the doctrines of Christianity, however much abused in practice by those who wished to claim it as an ally in money-making, might none the less be true. They gave no credit to the Catholic social reformers who in France had been attacking the *laissez-faire* economics for thirty years at least before the *Communist Manifesto* was published, and who, in Germany, by the middle of last century, were fighting for better social conditions

<sup>1</sup>*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. Introduction.

under the leadership of Bishop von Ketteler. They were determined to see and to represent religion as a mere tool for capitalist exploitation.

That early prejudices against religion counted for a great deal in this attitude seems beyond all doubt. But are they enough to explain completely that violent hostility to religion which the writings of Marx and Engels evince? It does not seem probable that they are. We must also take into consideration the fact that Christianity, particularly Catholicism, is always an awkward obstacle in the way of those who wish to obtain exclusive control over a State. The Catholic Church also represents a challenge to communism not inherent in any other organized body opposed to communism. It covets the universal (or international, as Marxists would say) nature of Catholicism and in this respect it sees in Catholicism a reflection of its own ideals, while it also recognizes and is apprehensive about the influence of such a body. History is full of the clashes between the Catholic Church and political absolutism. Marx and Engels were neither of them of a temperament to allow for any sovereignty over men other than that of themselves and their party. It was impossible for them to consider the Catholic Church as a potential ally in the warfare against economic exploitation, because of their materialist philosophy of life. And they would not brook her as a rival.

If then we combine the religious and philosophical prejudices of the founders of 'scientific socialism', the social and political conditions of their time, and their desire to establish a completely Marxist society in every country, we have some explanation of what has proved so puzzling to many of our British socialists, viz., the anti-religious attitude of the Marxist socialist parties, for whom Marx is the great social prophet of all times. This is, of course, not to say that Marx and Engels or their followers could not help being anti-religious. They had free will, whether they believed it or not. All that has been shown is that there were influences drawing them in the direction of a voluntary rejection of religion.

It is interesting to notice that Lenin was so much under the influence of his 'doctors' in this matter, as in others, that he

actually reproaches communists with not having carried into effect Engel's advice to translate the atheist literature of the end of the eighteenth century for mass distribution among the people. He writes of 'the lively, talented writings of the old atheists of the eighteenth century'. He is clearly under the impression that the dreary atheism of two hundred years ago remains unrefuted.

Given the anti-religious attitude of the leaders of the communist movement, it was to be expected that the Russian revolution of 1917 would be hostile to religion. There was also the fact that the Orthodox Church in Russia was even more closely associated with the Tsarist régime than was the Church in France with the *ancien régime* there. The active side of Western Christianity was foreign to the creed of the orthodox Russian. The Bolsheviks wanted action; indeed, if their power were to endure they had to rouse the whole nation to action. So we find them striking at all religion and denouncing it as opium or 'dope', instead of attacking the Slav misinterpretation of Christianity.

But even more important than these influences in the direction of an anti-religious campaign was that jealousy of any rival power to which we have already referred. Though anyone can recognize what a travesty of Christianity is the description of its philosophy of life quoted above from the theses of the Russian Communist Party, there can be no denying that Christianity has a philosophy of life which clashes at certain points with communist theory; and these points are cardinal. In the field of morality, Christianity holds certain definite views on human rights which are irreconcilable with the communist view of marriage and the family, of the right of private ownership, and of the power of the State over the persons of its citizens. Ultimately, this difference of doctrine arises from the fundamental difference which separates those who are materialists from those who are Christians. Yet even if communists had been willing not to insist upon the propaganda of materialism, there would still have been conflict between them and (at any rate) the Catholic Church on these subsidiary points. They were determined that there should be no such conflict, but that they would be

absolute masters of the Russian people; and they were therefore quite logical in doing their best to make it impossible for Christianity to exist in Russia.

#### THE COMMUNIST SUBSTITUTE FOR RELIGION

We have seen already how Marx and Engels combined the materialism of Feuerbach with the Hegelian 'dialectic' into dialectical materialism, which claims to provide an interpretation of the whole of reality, both as it is and as it develops. It is this philosophy which communism officially offers to mankind as a substitute for religion. It cannot be pretended that either Marx and Engels gives any complete exposition of dialectical materialism, and when Lenin was asked where Marx had explained it, he took refuge in the oracular reply, 'where has Marx *not* expounded dialectical materialism?', no doubt implying that this philosophy pervaded the whole of his writings. This may be true, but it is not very satisfactory to an inquirer who wishes to understand and examine critically the premises, proofs, and conclusions of an intellectual construction which makes the enormous claim of affording a key to the correct interpretation of life as a whole. It really amounts to saying that Marx looked at life from a certain point of view, and wrote with certain presuppositions in mind. But why should that point of view or those presuppositions be accepted by others without full examination?

Bolshevist theorists have endeavoured, and are still endeavouring, to develop the elements of dialectical materialism to be found in the works of Marx and Engels, but they are finding it no easy matter. For long, Bukharin was considered to have succeeded in his *Historical Materialism*, but his book is now rejected by the official exponents of communism in Russia as being a 'deviation of the Right' and 'mechanist'. Mechanism, it is held, lays undue stress upon the influence of the forces of production in the evolution of the world, and not enough on the relations of production and the class-struggle. It favours too passive an attitude, whereas a revolutionary party needs an active one. It refuses to see that matter has movement inherent in it and, above all, it is useless as an

alternative to religion, for it makes no appeal to thoughtful minds which found an answer to the problems of life in a religious philosophy. It was discredited when Stalin had Bukharin executed in 1938 for alleged treason. Stalin himself then wrote *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* to replace Bukharin's theses. The Soviet State, founded as it is on Marxist-Leninist doctrines, finds it necessary to justify policy changes by demonstrating their compatibility with these doctrines. This results in attempts to 'develop' the original theses to suit the prevailing conditions. New theses are produced when required and rejected when unsuitable. The Zhdanov theses in 1947, for example, effected the condemnation of the Soviet economist, Eugene Varga, who was the author of a book in the previous year which forecast that capitalism would have no major crisis within a period of ten years. Zhdanov however, under Stalin's instructions, regarded war between the capitalist nations to be imminent.

In spite, however, of the non-systematic character of dialectical materialism, some attempt must be made here to outline the philosophy which communists propose as a substitute for the religious philosophy of life.

In agreement with realists, as opposed to idealists, communist philosophy admits the existence of an objective reality, which would exist even were there no consciousness of it. This reality includes nature, organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate; it includes man and society, sensation and thought. It is in constant and eternal process of change, or 'movement'. This movement is more than *mere* change; it is an 'unending ascent from lower to higher'. (Engels). 'According to dialectics, evolution is not simply a quantitative elaboration of existing forms which produces nothing new but a progressive movement from lower to higher levels'. This progress to something better or 'higher' holds good only of the infinite universe, of the totality of reality; for in every particular case, for every particular unit of reality, there is a law of decay. 'It looks upon nature as undergoing unceasing change and renovation, wherein everything grows, evolves and then dies'. This process of development does not proceed in an unbroken upward course; 'The gradual and imperceptible evolutionary

changes, quantitative in character (representing increases or decreases in respect to the original qualities present), prepare the way for radical, qualitative changes. These changes take place precipitately, by means of a 'leap' . . . . The cause of the evolutionary process, according to the dialectical law, is 'the fact that the phenomena of nature are characterized by internal contradictions', and 'in all the phenomena of the universe, movement, change, evolution, take place on the basis of internal contradictions inherent in the phenomena'. In this way, life arises from dead matter. With regard to sensation and thought, the former is held to be 'one of the properties of matter in motion', an opinion adopted by Engels from the eighteenth-century freethinker Diderot; thought is but a product of matter. Vitalism, which insists that a force exists outside matter, is of course rejected. So too are mechanism and behaviourism.

This is the account which dialectical materialism gives of the world. The account which it gives of itself is that it is 'the scientific philosophy, concerned basically with the general laws of development (evolution) of nature, society, and thought; the world view of international Marxism . . . . This world view "is called dialectical materialism because its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them is *dialectical*, while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory is *materialistic*". (Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*)'.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that all the main arguments which can be and have been directed against pre-Marxist materialism by Catholic philosophers are equally valid against dialectical materialism. It is not proposed to cover the ground once again here, but it must be remarked that dialectical materialism fails to prove that there cannot be a God directing the whole process of development. Matter *can* certainly be acted upon and affected by the human mind, as experience shows; then why not by a

<sup>1</sup>All the quotations in the preceding two paragraphs are taken from *Handbook of Philosophy*, edited and adapted by Howard Selsam from the *Short Philosophic Dictionary* by M. Rosenthal and P. Yudin. International Publishers, New York 1949.

divine mind? Moreover, it is necessary to look beyond matter for the laws which govern its movements and changes. Even were one to concede that by an 'objective dialectic' dead matter develops life, which then develops into sentient and thinking beings, we cannot rest satisfied with the mere statement that this dialectic and its inexorable laws (on which communists lay such emphasis) exist. Dialectical materialism professes to reveal the chain of cause and effect in the universe. We are entitled to demand *the cause of the dialectic itself*. If we are told that it is its own cause, this opens up still greater difficulties. How can what is only a process of change be the cause of itself? Further, what right has anyone to assume that a mere process of change, undirected by an intelligent being, will necessarily lead to progress in the universe, to an unending ascent from the lower to the higher? It is useless to invoke the Hegelian 'contradictions' to explain all this. The question merely recurs in another form: why do these contradictions develop? and why must they result in an ascent, in progress? These are not the only difficulties which can be urged, but they are crucial.

Applied to social evolution, dialectical materialism becomes the materialist conception of history, according to which the prevailing methods of material production determine the social and intellectual institutions of mankind; the ideological superstructure, as Marxists call it. Inevitable natural laws lead to new methods of production, which come into conflict with the old ideology. One social class discovers that it is being exploited by another class, and thus a class-struggle arises which results in the break-up of the old superstructure and the establishment of a new stage in social evolution. In the capitalist era, the struggle is between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

It must be observed that the materialist conception of history professes to disclose 'the tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results'.<sup>1</sup> The capitalist method of production, for instance, is so inevitable during a certain historical period that Marx says he would be the last to hold the individual responsible for conditions whose

<sup>1</sup>Marx: Preface to first German edition of *Capital*.

creature he is.<sup>1</sup> At a certain point in its development, when conditions have become propitious, the proletariat will seize power and nationalize the means of production. This revolution will establish socialism, the transitional stage to perfect communism. When communism at last develops there will be no classes, no State, and man will at last be free. All the references in Marxist writings to 'inexorable laws of dialectic' suggest the belief that sooner or later communism will eventually come into existence, but for the first time the possibility was expressed in practical terms when the 1961 C.P.S.U. Programme declared: 'The Party solemnly proclaims; the Present Generation of Soviet People shall live in Communism'. This audacious pledge is nevertheless accompanied by many vague qualifications. A clause in Part Two, III (2), for example, says: 'To insure that the State withers away completely, it is necessary to provide both internal conditions - the building of a developed communistic society - the external conditions - the victory and consolidation of socialism in the world arena'. Brezhnev and Kosygin however, having deposed Khrushchev, conveniently ignored this seemingly irrevocable promise and so reinstated the establishment of communism in the realms of speculation. But would the withering away of the State benefit the masses? No classes, no State, but does it also imply no Party? Even Stalin considered the withering away of the Party to be an essential characteristic of communism, yet there is no well-defined indication of this eventuality in the Programme. The Party, perhaps intoxicated by its own ambitious programme, nourishes a narcissism, convincing itself of its own indispensability. Today the C.P.S.U. can manipulate with impunity the Supreme Soviet. The future generations of Soviet 'non-citizens' will hardly appreciate the withering away of an organization, which, however weak, ostensibly enumerates their rights as individuals and in some ways preserves the sense of freedom.

#### DIVISIONS IN COMMUNISM

The intransigent broadsides delivered across the Iron

<sup>1</sup>*Loc. ult. cit.*

Curtain have, to some extent, been replaced by those being delivered across the Sino-Soviet frontier. Chinese 'dogmatism' and Russian 'revisionism' are the terms of abuse. Perhaps the utterances between Moscow and Peking are not as bellicose as those hurled at U.S. 'imperialism' but they are not merely the rumblings of petty grievances. Mao Tse-tung, always publicly obedient to Stalin, refused to be the abject disciple of Khrushchev. The C.C.P. (Chinese Communist Party) Chairman considers himself to be the authentic heir of Stalin as leader of the communist world. He developed Marxism-Leninism and adapted it to suit Asian conditions. Instead of revolution by the proletariat he came to power as leader of a peasant revolution. Then, claiming China to be unadulterated by capitalist influence, he decided that it was ready for pure communism without going through the transitional stage of socialism deemed necessary by the Soviet leaders. So in the middle of 1958 the 'uninterrupted leap forward' was initiated, and although the C.C.P. was unable to carry out its policies, it no doubt aggravated the uneasy alliance between Russia and China.

The criticism of Stalin by Khrushchev at the 20th C.P.S.U. Congress was considered heretical by the Chinese leaders. It had other repercussions as well. By denouncing the man who had been accepted as a father figure of the Marxist world, Khrushchev was undermining the influence of the Russian Communist Party. He was, in essence, admitting that for years they had been labouring under the directives of an autocrat who had been misusing party and state machinery for ends, however misguided, not advancing the Marxist cause. Almost at once there was successful resistance to some aspects of the régime in Poland, to be followed by the catastrophic uprising in Hungary which was suppressed only by the intervention of the Red Army. The unity of the communist world was now seen to be a myth, and the course of events led unavoidably to a loosening of Moscow's reins of control. China and Russia now compete for disciples and in doing so must appear to respect contradictions rather than hasten the negation which would result in their decay, according to dialectical theory.



## CO-EXISTENCE

Considering these changes, do they intimate a less prejudiced attitude towards religion? The policy of co-existence now being pursued by the Soviet Bloc is not an acknowledgement of errors, it is the inevitable sequel to the recognition of the futility of nuclear war and the inexhaustable appetite of a war-gearred economy. The Marxists, being materialists, can only measure progress in units of materialism, and the standard unit, *per caput* production. To raise the production level the method used must be in accordance with Marxist-Leninist principles. Khrushchev, after criticizing Stalin, had to demonstrate his own integrity, and his regret that Party members such as himself had permitted the existence of this state of affairs. This could only be accomplished by not imitating Stalin and by introducing more liberal attitudes into Soviet life. The objectives of the C.P.S.U. then required restatement as the policy of coexistence required dialectical justification. So in 1961 the C.P.S.U. introduced its third Party Programme, the first since 1919.

To immediately dispel any suggestions of retreat from its Marxist-Leninist basis the Programme states: '*Socialism, which Marx and Engels scientifically predicted as inevitable and the plan for the construction of which was mapped out by Lenin, has become a reality in the Soviet Union*'.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union is therefore progressing towards communism guided by the 'ingenious' strategies of Lenin. But what of the changing attitudes towards the 'West'? '*The Soviet Union has consistently pursued, and will continue to pursue, the policy of the peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems*'.<sup>1</sup>

The economic pretensions of the programme are the decisive guide to the policy to which the Party is now committed. A target has been set and the Soviet Union has claimed that it will surpass the *per caput* production of the U.S.A. by 1970, and by 1980 'the material and technical basis of communism will be built'. Brezhnev and Kosygin show little enthusiasm to be so explicit about the transition to communism, but

<sup>1</sup>Emphasis in original.

they, like Khrushchev, believe that Marxist-Leninist ideological superiority will be conclusively demonstrated if the Soviet Union by-passes U.S. *per caput* production.

But does this indicate any reduction of anti-religious prejudice? The official attitude towards religion is promulgated in Section V-lf (Part Two) of the Programme.

'The Party uses ideological media to educate people in the spirit of scientific materialist world conception, to overcome religious prejudices without insulting the sentiments of believers. It is necessary to conduct regularly broad atheistic propaganda on a scientific basis, to explain patiently the untenability of religious beliefs, which were engendered in the past when people were overawed by the elemental forces and social oppression and did not know the real causes of natural and social phenomena. This can be done by making use of the achievements of modern science, which is steadily solving the mysteries of the universe and extending man's power over nature, leaving no room for religious inventions about supernatural forces'.

This would seem to be a more tempered approach than in the past if there really is concern about insulting the sentiments of the believer. But is this liberal policy being genuinely carried out? Reading the Party Programme and the Soviet Constitution would give little cause to suspect anything other than a petty intolerance towards religion. Yet brutal purges were vindicated by various interpretations of the relevant clauses. Luca Pietromarchi spent some years as Italian ambassador to Moscow during the Khrushchev era and he recalls: 'Above all, the spiteful anti-religious propaganda never lets up for a moment, prompted by the constant fear of a resurgence of religious fervour and a new ascendancy of the Church over the masses'.<sup>1</sup> He describes the personal abuse directed at clergy in attempts to discredit them and their work. It generated only disgust and probably made those repelled by it more religion-conscious.

Luca Pietromarchi mentions a review which was published in 1959 to reverse this tendency. Called *Science and Religion*,

<sup>1</sup>*The Soviet World*, Luca Pietromarchi. Allen and Unwin, 1965.

its importance was determined when an article by Khrushchev was included in the first number. The method of propaganda is more subtle, more scientific. In the secondary schools also propaganda is served in large, pedagogic slices, counter-acting any religious ideas perpetrated by 'reactionary' parents. The momentum of this propaganda gathers when the young 'communist-man' enters higher education. Here his future depends as much on his ability to absorb this propaganda as on his academic achievements. In order to successfully advance to communism the elite at least must be materialistically orientated. The promise in the 1961 party programme that 'the Present Generation of Soviet People shall live in Communism' depends therefore, among many other things, on an influential executive and administrative class un-restricted by Christian morality which recognises man's basic freedom.

Communist persecution in Eastern Europe has been equally brutal yet the individualism of these satellites has been vigorously asserted in recent years. Marxism-Leninism leaves no theoretical loopholes for compromise, but the peoples of Eastern Europe, by their refusal to be overwhelmed, force concessions which are straining the principles of communism. In the 'West' the communist parties have also been affected by the changing international situation. Much discussion and dialogue has taken place with opponents. These people, lucidly aware of the errors of some of Marx's predictions, (for example, prophesying the eventual pauperization of the worker in capitalist society), are more prepared to shrug off some of communism's more intransigent precepts. In the August, 1965 edition of the *World Marxist Review*, in an article entitled *Dialogue between Marxists and Catholics*, Roger Garaudy, the French communist, is reported to have said that religion in the past had not been merely the 'opium of the people', and he went on; 'To say that religion everywhere and at all times diverts men from action, from struggle, was to deny the facts of history. Christian ideals could help stimulate believers to action'. Garaudy's remarks indicate that Marxists living in a Church-influenced environment are searching for an area of agreement in which to meet Christians.

To admit that religion could be a force which stimulates positive action must have been the result of some weeding in the Marxist garden. In the same article, Walter Hollitscher, the author, noted the surprise shown by some Catholics in the symposium because they 'were clearly unprepared for the freedom, the tact and the tolerance displayed by their Marxist opponents'. This surprise may be the result of past experience. The impression created by Marxists has not normally projected these qualities. When the approach has been one of open arms there was every reason to respond with suspicion. The Marxists in the 'West' may deny their subservience to Moscow but they cannot avoid being bathed in the shadow of Soviet policies. Although the Comintern no longer exists to formulate international Marxist policies, communists of the 'West' must accept Russia as the dominant influence of European communism if only for its military and economic strength. Therefore its official policies, unless repudiated by them, must reflect their own ideals. Section VII (Part One) of the C.P.S.U. programme says of clericalism - It 'is acquiring even greater importance in the political and ideological arsenal of imperialism. The clericals do not confine themselves to using the Church and its ramified machinery. They now have their own big political parties which in many capitalist countries are in power . . . The monopolies lavishly subsidise clerical parties and organizations which exploit the religious sentiments of the working people and their superstitions and prejudices'. This is an expression of international policy, one which would be of consequence if a communist government were to be installed in a Western nation, and so the Marxist, Russian or otherwise, must discuss the practice of Soviet Marxism-Leninism within the schema of his Marxist philosophy.

#### CHINA

Mao Tse-tung, the ruler of 'six hundred million paupers' (his own words), competes with Moscow for disciples. But there are no overtures of peaceful coexistence emanating from Peking. Mao Tse-tung considers the 'revisionism' of the Soviet leaders to be in complete contradiction to Marxism-

Leninism. Is there any essential difference between the Chinese attitudes towards religion and those of the Soviet Union? As chairman of the C.C.P., Mao Tse-tung is the exponent of Marxism-Leninism in China and, as with the C.P.S.U., his religious attitudes cannot be considered in isolation from his economic views. Nevertheless the C.C.P. has not been opposed by an indigenous church which supported the old régime. On attaining power the C.C.P. simply expelled, imprisoned or executed all foreign missionaries who would not accept the authority of the Party. Chinese clergy were given the same choice, although imprisonment, execution or 'rehabilitation' by brainwashing techniques was usually their fate. The following statistics from the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*<sup>1</sup> is evidence of this policy:

'more than 2,000 foreign priests, sisters and brothers were forced out of China between January 1951 and June, 1952. At least 250 Chinese priests were imprisoned - 18 died in prison; 5 were beaten to death; 15 were executed'.

What is Mao Tse-tung's policy now that the Chinese mainland has been effectively sealed off? Convinced that his image of benefactor and liberator had been accepted he initiated, in February, 1957, the 'hundred flowers' policy, inviting communists and non-communists to criticize the régime. The response must have been overwhelming because in June 1957 he reiterated the policy, 'let a hundred flowers bloom' and 'let a hundred schools contend', poetically inviting criticism, but this time six criteria not mentioned in February were inserted. One of these demanded that suggestions must 'tend to strengthen, not cast off or weaken the leadership of the communist party'. This brought criticism to an abrupt halt, from then on it was merely eulogizing. In 1966 Mao's intolerance of opposition was further demonstrated by his initiation of the *cultural revolution* and by the excesses committed in its name by the Red Guard. As in other communist countries freedom is a myth and tolerance is shown only to those who accept the restrictive discipline of Marxist-Leninist doctrines.

<sup>1</sup>Supplement II, Fourth Section, The Gilmory Society. New York, 1953.

The materialist conception of history has been frequently criticized,<sup>1</sup> but for our present purpose we need do no more than remark that, as an application of dialectical materialism, it suffers from the defects of that theory. It can give no sufficient explanation of the existence of the historical laws it professes to have discovered. It hesitates between being a sort of Calvinism with God left out, and a revolutionary programme unable to guarantee that its ideal society can ever be achieved.

#### THE APPEAL OF COMMUNISM

It is strange that such a programme should appeal to some as a philosophy of life. The explanation is partly that the details of the communist philosophy are, for many who proclaim themselves enthusiastic communists, swamped in a fervent conviction that a better world will emerge if the social conditions of today, and the bourgeois mammonism of today, with its neglect of social justice, its avarice and lust of power, are completely destroyed. What is overlooked is that the social evils of today come precisely from that spirit of materialism which communism elevates into a philosophy of life. Engel's sarcasms against the materialist bourgeoisie were misdirected; it was not the bourgeoisie but their materialism which he ought to have attacked. The fruits of materialism will always and necessarily be evil, whether it be bourgeois or communist materialism.

To others the appeal of communism lies in the fact that it professes to have a complete and rational philosophy of the whole of life, and to apply this philosophy to a rational planning of the social and economic régime. This appeal is particularly strong to a generation that has lost all faith in *laissez-faire*. It has been shown that dialectical materialism is by no means so rational as communists would have us believe, and that it leaves some of the most important elements in human life unexplained. Nor is it necessary to be a communist in order to repudiate *laissez-faire*. The Catholic social school has repudiated it consistently since the early years of the nineteenth century.

<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Bober, *op. cit.*

The emergence of the Soviet Union as a great industrial and technological power is used as the evidence of the 'truth' of the Marxist view of history, and appeals, certainly, to many intellectuals in under-developed countries. This apparent evidence is strengthened by the attempt of the Soviet Union to overtake and by-pass U.S. *per caput* production by the seventies. This is of the utmost importance to Marxist-Leninists as it is their only criterion for judgment. The economic defeat of capitalism now depends on their ability to by-pass capitalist production, thus achieving a mighty propaganda success which would undermine confidence in the capitalist system. It is extremely difficult to separate the intellectual satisfaction of abstract theory of Marxism from its indigenous materialism. The methods of achieving the ends of Marxism ignore the dignity of man and his right to freedom, but as Marx looked at history as a whole rather than a series of specific incidents, the importance of the individual was of little consequence to him. Hence there is a demand for self-sacrifice in this doctrine requiring a rigorous self-discipline which could be intellectually appealing. For if the non-believer is working for the eventual attainment of 'heaven on earth' he is to some degree satisfying the urge to know absolute Truth, Beauty and Goodness. This morality, although lacking a real focal point, could attract many of the people who exist on the fringes of Christianity (as many millions in the 'West' do), or those who reject God either through ignorance or prejudice. The concern for man, because God has the utmost concern for him, is a facet of Christian morality totally disregarded by these adherents of Marxism. They translate the Church's lack of political power as inertia in the field of social justice. Yet their method of attaining social justice for mankind is to ignore this very quality. In the desperate hope of delivering the masses into the promised land, the exodus is being ravished by the excesses they so emphatically denounce.

Nor must one overlook the ethical importance of religion. No society can endure, much less prosper, which attempts to dispense with moral ideals and moral rules. Without them, government becomes mere exploitation, and the relations between citizens degenerate into a war of all against all.

Few would deny that the morality taught by Christianity is the highest that mankind has ever known, and Christianity alone provides motives and sanctions adequate to evoke, in the generality of men, the self-denial which morality involves. The social stresses and strains which have arisen in capitalist society (largely owing to the disregard of Christian teaching) would arise in equal or even greater degree in an atheist communist society. This is confirmed by the recurrent trials of communist 'wreckers' and the denunciation of 'anti-party' groups in the Soviet Union.

Dialectical materialism can neither satisfy the human mind in its search for a meaning in life nor offer to the human will motives weighty enough to counterbalance its egotism. It is infected with that false humanism which ignores the sinfulness of man. As a system of philosophy, it is a failure; as a substitute for the Christian religion, it is an illusion.

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