

this example—in which a provision intended to safeguard the public interest becomes simply a sight for the morbid, another hideous instalment in the dramatization of the criminal. It is only through a patient realization that crime is not simply a sensational horror on the fringe of society, but is in fact a mark of society's own failure—calling for a much deeper understanding of the failures, of individuals and communities alike—that progress can come.

Socialism and the Encyclicals

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From Pius IX to John XXIII, Popes have stated that a person, to be consistent, cannot, at the same time, be a sincere Catholic and a true Socialist. To many, this attitude seems to evince sheer clerical cussedness towards positive measures intended to right economic injustices, and to dismiss the great improvements in social conditions won through the efforts of Socialists: an examination of what is meant by 'Socialism' in the encyclicals may accordingly dispel some misunderstandings. It should be remembered that the Church's teaching is not an attack on all the demands of Socialists or their criticisms of Capitalism, that the meaning of the term 'Socialist' varies in the encyclicals depending on the circumstances of the time and that the personal attitudes of the Popes towards Socialism are reflected in the encyclicals and the timing of their publication.

1. *The meaning of Socialism in the earlier encyclicals.* In the encyclical *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (1878) Leo XIII, who groups Socialists, Communists and Nihilists together, was referring to revolutionary Socialists such as the Anarchists who had sprung a minor revolt in Romagna in 1878. The proximity of this doubtless affected Leo XIII. What was unfortunate was that he did not appear to discern the effect of an attack against Socialism on the German Socialists who, unlike their Latin brethren, were not burning for revolution and the rank and file of whom

really desired practical reforms not incompatible with the Church's teachings. In the event, Leo's vigorous condemnation of Socialism tended to close the ranks of Socialists, both those who were Marxists and those who were not, and make them more actively hostile to religion: on the other hand there was no question that Marxist Socialism was anti-religious and that in the 1870's, Marxism was rapidly becoming accepted by German Socialists.

In 1878, Leo could make an 'across the board' denunciation of the active revolutionary type of Socialism without any clear distinction between the different types of Socialism but, in 1891, the German Social Democratic party, formed after the merger in 1875 of the two wings of the German Socialist party, the Marxists and the followers of Lassalle, adopted a wholly Marxist programme to which it remained committed until 1914 and it was to this Marxist Socialism that Leo XIII was referring in 1891 in *Rerum Novarum*: indeed in his encyclical *Graves de Communi* (1901), Leo XIII refers explicitly to 'Social Democracy'.

2. *Objections to Socialism.* There are certain reasons for rejecting 'true Socialism' which are fundamental whatever the exact meaning of 'Socialism' in the encyclicals separately may be, because liberalism, in the philosophical sense of the term, and Socialism, in the meanings used in the encyclicals, both made possession of liberty and happiness the supreme goal. But liberals and Socialists differed in their conception of freedom, for the Socialists rejected the liberal conception of political freedom because it ignored the lack of effective liberty in a *laissez faire* economic system. In the two philosophies there was a similarity in their underlying individualism: Socialism demanded that the state secure the means of production for the benefit of individuals but this was not 'socializing' men for they remained atomized either when confronted by the state or, in Marxist doctrine, when the State had withered away. 'Paradoxical as it sounds, individualism and Socialism are not necessarily opposites. One may argue that the Socialist form of organization will guarantee "truly" individualistic realization of personality. This would in fact be quite in the Marxian line'.¹ Socialists, unlike liberals, argued that since happiness cannot be obtained until men are economically 'liberated', that is, when they have their material wants satisfied, the State, or the proletariat in Marxist doctrine, is justified in taking any measure to secure the indispensable pre-requisite to freedom. Thus paradoxically enough, men lose all liberty in the economic sphere so as to enjoy freedom by becoming liberated from economic servitude, for

¹Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1943, p. 171.

production serves no purpose other than the satisfaction of material wants. Both liberalism and Socialism shared the same belief that antagonisms in the economic system cannot be remedied by the conscious effort of men working together. Socialism is not an argument for 'bread and circuses' but that culture and freedom are dependent upon the satisfaction of material needs, viz: 'the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.'²

One may note that the word 'Socialist', particularly before Marxism was widely diffused, was used to describe those who proposed co-operative as opposed to individualistic economic doctrines: the use of the word 'Socialist' originally to describe Marxists can, in a sense, be said to have been a misnomer: indeed Catholic Social Reformers were frequently called 'Catholic Socialists' in the nineteenth century since the Church teaches that society should be reconstructed on the basis of co-operation amongst men rather than that it be dominated by a system of unrestrained competitive individualism. Nevertheless, any form of socialism (not only Marxist or revolutionary Socialism) is incompatible with Catholicism in so far as it either (a) accepts a deterministic interpretation of history or (b) believes that the satisfaction of material wants is the sole purpose of society or (c) demands the abolition of private property or (d) seeks the common ownership of all the means of production.

In *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII rejected the Socialists' proposal to abolish property for they concentrate on the satisfaction of man's material needs of consumption to the exclusion of all others: this solution would make men dependent on the state and strike at the dignity of man which is what Socialists themselves aim at promoting.

3. *Quadragesimo Anno*. When one reads *Quadragesimo Anno*, one must remember that the Socialists' attempt to seize power in Italy after the first war and the revolutions elsewhere made a deep impression upon Pius XI and that he feared that Europe would be engulfed by the tide of Communism. Pius XI is careful to distinguish between the demands of Socialists, with certain of which he is sympathetic, and the basis of their thinking. The Church does not argue that there should be no disputes between classes but it does reject an assumption that classes are naturally antagonistic: he sees that the attack on private ownership has so abated that 'it may well come about that gradually these tenets of mitigated Socialism will no longer be different from the programme of

²Marx: *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*.

those who seek to reform human society according to Christian principles' (para 114). He continued (para 117) 'whether considered as a doctrine or as an historical fact or as a movement, Socialism, if it really remains socialism, cannot be brought into harmony with the dogmas of the Catholic faith', because 'it conceives human society in a way utterly alien to Christian truth'. In the next paragraph, he explains that real socialism 'affirms that human society was instituted merely for the sake of material well-being'. Socialists demand 'that man's higher goods, not even excepting liberty, must be subordinated and even sacrificed to the exigencies of the most efficient production'. (119.) Pius' language is strong but with the apparent collapse of the capitalist economic system in 1931, he had justification for fearing that men might turn to Socialism *à l'outrance* as salvation for economic distress. It is clear, too, that Pius XI when referring to 'Socialism' means Socialism which concentrates on material conditions to the exclusion of other values and at this time there was no criticism by many Socialists of the methods Communists were using in Russia. Not every form of Socialism is, therefore, condemned, but those that are cannot be embraced by Catholics even if their policies are on all fours with those who accept the Church's social teaching.

Socialism sees economic individualism and the 'open ladder' system in capitalism as giving rise to antagonisms, and private property as causing abuse, but the Church teaches that society should be reformed so that such antagonisms disappear without abolishing freedom: the Church's teaching rejects both the mechanism of self-advantages and the absorption of all production into one system. The Christian conception of society is organic and is based on the idea of the human person being master of his own life and developing himself in association with others (though he may not be able to escape altogether from the pressure of environment). The Church does not reject the idea of a planned economy but it does oppose the foundations which 'true Socialists' use in their argument for a planned economy. Pius XI was not unnecessarily harsh in his analysis of the theories of continental Socialists: thus G. D. H. Cole states: 'The Social Democratic and Communist movements of 1939, though sharply opposed to each other, professed to derive their inspiration from a common original. Save in a few countries, of which the most important was Great Britain, where Marxian doctrines had but little hold, both Communists and Social Democrats were by profession followers of Marx, whose essential doctrines they interpreted in essentially different ways.'³ The timing of

³A *History of Socialist Thought*, Vol. V, p. 294.

the encyclical, however, was unhappy because it hardened relations between Socialists and parties committed to Christian Social teaching so as to preclude an effective front between the Centre party and the Social Democrats in Germany against Nazism; and in Austria the encyclical deepened the cleavage between Dollfuss and the Socialists which led to the tragic civil war of 1934.

4. *John XXIII*. Since the Second World War, class war and the abolition of private property have been replaced by policies seeking on the one hand to establish organization in the economy without preventing individual decision and on the other to federate the countries of Western Europe. The Socialist International in 1951 and 1953 'formally agreed that Socialism must not be regarded as in itself an ethic or philosophy of life. It was the practical expression in current conditions of an ethic whose roots might run back to various sources. The source for a particular individual might be Marxist or Kantian "humanism," or it might be Christianity. Either for Socialists was equally respectable; for the unifying factor in Socialism was its programme, not an identity of ethical or theological beliefs.'⁴ The new Socialism thus shows hopeful signs of turning to ideas of co-operation as opposed to individualism, the extension of 'socialized' institutions and the abandonment of a materialist and determinist philosophy.

In Holland, the Dutch Labour Party since the second war has abandoned its Marxist foundation; and in Germany, the Social Democratic party has been weaned away from its traditional pure milk of Marxism, and at its congress in 1959 abandoned its class war and revolutionary theses: it had previously abandoned any overtly anti-clerical attitude. It is not surprising, therefore, that John XXIII, in dealing with Socialism in *Mater et Magistra* goes no further than to summarize aptly Pius XI's arguments (para 34). In essence the Church's concern with the forms of socialism described is that they are remedies for injustices in the capitalist system which will only lead to graver abuses and this encyclical reflects the present position where now the danger of people turning to drastic solutions has receded since the dark, depressed days of 1931 and where European Socialist parties have modified their programmes.

The now celebrated paragraphs of *Pacem in Terris* regarding 'relations between Catholics and non-Catholics in social and economic affairs' appears to be relevant to the attitude to be taken by Catholics in countries where Marxist-Socialist regimes have been established, in co-operating with their governments. This section is not contradictory to

⁴M. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe*, p. 383.

para. 117 of *Quadragesimo Anno* since that answers the question whether a Catholic can be a 'true Socialist', whereas *Pacem in Terris* speaks of 'a drawing nearer together or a meeting for the attainment of some practical end'.⁵

The Church has always distinguished the Labour party in this country from the form of Socialism proscribed and Cardinal Bourne in 1931, after the publication of *Quadragesimo Anno*, promptly reaffirmed this distinction, for, though there have been Marxists in the Labour party's ranks, the party had until after the second war, a strong religious stream, in men like Tawney, Lansbury and Cripps. The party has not specifically attacked the institution of private property even if it attacked justifiably its abuse and mal-distribution; it has not proclaimed that the cause of all ills was the lack of satisfaction of material wants, and the intensification of the class struggle was inimical to it. On the other hand, this does not mean that a member of the Labour party can, any more than the member of any other party, subscribe willy-nilly to all that the party holds and let the party executive do his thinking for him.

Some of the misunderstandings that have arisen about the Church's teaching on Socialism stem from two errors: 'Socialism' is thought to describe an 'homogenized' international movement dedicated to improve working-class conditions whereas the term has been used to describe a large number of movements and doctrines which have differed in essentials. The second error is to believe that, because the Church has attacked certain forms of Socialism, it therefore supports capitalism: this both assumes that the only alternative to capitalism is Socialism and ignores the strong strictures on capitalism which the Popes have voiced in the past.⁶

⁵C.T.S. edition, p. 58.

⁶I am indebted to Fr C. Dooley, S.J., for advice in preparing this article.