

CRIMES AGAINST THE PEOPLE

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CRIMES AGAINST THE PEOPLE." This is the charge, this catch-phrase, deftly turned and placed upon the lips of the puppets of Central Europe, levelled at the leaders of Catholicism. Its constant repetition by these servile rulers points obviously to its one source, the party line. But this particular "party line" is a serious matter. For these "crimes against the people" Archbishop Aloysius Stepinac and Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty were arrested; countless priests are daily being exiled, imprisoned, slain; the Church is undergoing a real reign of terror.

What are these "crimes against the people"? Considering that this is a Communistic formula, we could define "crimes" as anything the Kremlin doesn't like—whether it be the heinous offense of teaching a child that there is a God; or the dreadful sin of wanting to own your own home. "People"—well, those are the great classless masses, especially the ones who happen to be running the show, enjoying life, power, and wealth like the hated capitalists, but all in the name of their happier, starving, oppressed comrades. But to define "crimes against the people" that way might be just shouting against the flagrant injustice this phrase is being made to serve. What the Moscow puppets mean by "crimes against the people" (insofar as you can ever attach any meaning to the words of Communism) is that the Church, in the person of her Bishops, priests and lay-leaders, has been protesting against the kind of government which Moscow's mouthpieces so warmly and no doubt sincerely, call democracy.

Protesting against the government? So many men will say, "Well, if the Church stayed in the spiritual field, perhaps they'd have left her alone." That precisely is what each premier of each of the "people's democracies" has said over and over, no doubt each coming to this profound conclusion by his own personal thought on the matter.

On the other hand, Catholics everywhere decry this present scourge against the Church as outright terrorism, the trials and imprisonment of her prelates as a mockery of justice. To see the truth

of the matter, we ought to attempt to examine the respective rôles of the Church and State in the life of men, instead of only raising a ceaseless clamor.

TWO PERFECT SOCIETIES

Both Church and State are perfect societies. In other words, each has what is required to achieve its own purpose. And the purpose, the end of both Church and State is necessary to man. To see this the nature of man must be considered, for society is the answer to the needs of man's nature. An organization of many men to achieve one goal, which alone they cannot reach, that is what a society is. Man has two chief goals—his temporal well being, and, by the gift of God, supernatural happiness; these two principal societies, the State and the Church, answer these needs. Without them, no man can attain these goals. With them he can; for each is perfect in itself—sufficient to bring man on the one hand temporal welfare, and on the other, eternal life with God.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Examining the rôle of the State more closely, we can see how necessary it is, as well as how sufficient it is for its task. In a very real sense there is such a thing as "cradle to grave" care by the State. For man from infancy needs food, clothing, education, protection. None of these things can be provided for totally by one man or by his family. The mutual coöperation of all men in a country is required. This mutual coöperation is made possible by the State. By effective legislation it directs the family and the individual towards the common good, the welfare of the community. Regulating capital and labor, the State guarantees sufficient work for its citizens, thereby providing sufficient food, clothing, and shelter for all. As to education, State encouragement fosters the arts and sciences, insuring the intellectual advancement of its citizens.

In addition, by safeguarding peace and tranquillity among its citizens, the State affords them leisure for intellectual pursuits and legitimate recreation. In the same way, the State attends to the moral integrity of its citizens by its prevention and punishment of crimes violating their rights. In short, the State, protecting and channelling the individual talents and contributions of its citizens, through its power to make and enforce laws, safeguards a normal, healthy human life for all. This is its field, a field in which it is quite adequate. Without this organization of mutual coöperation, the individual could not provide for his temporal well being.

THE CHURCH ALSO A SOCIETY

Unlike the State, the Church is not a product of man's making. But like the State it does correspond to man's tendency to unite to achieve a common goal. The Church was founded by Christ Himself in order to bring all men to that supernatural happiness to which man, by the free gift of God, is destined. Respecting man's inclination towards action in common with others, Christ founded His Church as a society. Through his life in that society which is the Church, man lives a supernatural life on earth, and thus gains a supernatural reward in heaven. Founding His Church for this purpose, Christ made it sufficient to attain this goal. The Church, too, is a perfect society. In it the mutual coöperation and individual perfection of its members are made possible. The supernatural life of the faithful is sustained by the Sacraments entrusted to the Church by Christ as the principal means of supernatural living: The rules of the road heavenward are constantly brought before the faithful by the Church, teaching and preaching. Finally, Christ assured the orderly life of His society by the power He gave it—His very own power. "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you."¹ This power He entrusted to His apostles, who were to govern, to legislate, to teach, to foster the life of the Church, personally in their lifetime, and thereafter in their successors.

Thus the Church had been equipped by Christ as a full, complete society—the one, all-sufficient organization to lead men to their supernatural beatitude of heaven.

There are these two societies, the Church and the State. For man to achieve his perfection he needs society. The State is necessary for man to gain temporal well being; the Church is necessary for man to gain the perfect happiness of heaven. The State protects men from enemies to his life; the Church protects man from the enemies of his soul. The State provides laws so that man can live at peace with his neighbor; the Church provides laws whereby man lives at peace with his God. The State enables man to enjoy the benefits of culture and leisure; the Church brings to man the fruits of Christ's Redemption.

THE INTERRELATION

So far, there is little difficulty, at least to anyone recognizing the true nature of man, with his natural and supernatural needs. Acknowledging the respective rôle of both Church and State, it is clear that

¹ Jo. 20, 21.

as man's temporal welfare is subordinated to his eternal, supernatural destiny, so too, the rôle of the State is subordinated to the rôle of the Church. This does not mean that the Church supplants the State in the life of man. It is simply a recognition of the fact that the Church is of a higher order than is the State.

There is no intrinsic conflict between the rights of each. By insuring the material well being and security of its subjects, the State assists the Church's efforts in the supernatural order. Since in a well ordered state care and anxiety over every day needs cease to plague men's minds, they are able to think of the things of God, and have leisure to develop the life of grace which is the realm of the Church. Since God is the Author of the authority both of State and of Church, there can be no conflict rising out of the very nature of both. God cannot be at cross purposes with Himself.

CONFLICT

Yet there has been, there is now, conflict between civil authority and Church. Yet through the centuries the Church has insisted on obedience to civil authority; on the rights of the State to make just laws. Nor has the Church sought, nor does she seek, to substitute herself for the State. This is not to say that the Church has never interfered in civil matters, if "interfered" be taken in its literal sense of "being concerned about" civil affairs. Whenever any government has infringed upon the Church's own divine rights, she has protested. Whenever injustices have been heaped upon men, she has raised her voice. Whenever men have been governed, not as free persons, divinely endowed with rights, destined for eternal life, the Church has cried out in accusation.

Why? Because when such things occur, no longer is the State a true State, but the tool of the selfish ambition of a few men. As soon as the State forgets that its reason of being is the temporal welfare of its citizens, it has left its own sphere of activity. Or when this temporal welfare of man is made by the State to be the supreme, the ultimate purpose of life, the State is in error. It needs to be corrected. For the sphere of the State depends upon the nature of man, and the perfection of man surpasses mere material well-being.

Yes, the Church interferes, but she is not a usurper. Economics and politics are not the field of the Church, as economics, as politics. But as moral, in their relation to man as a creature of God, they certainly are the concern of the Church. The Church was founded by Christ to lead men to salvation. Unjust laws, depriving man of his

rights, impede his progress towards salvation. Overemphasis of the material side of man's nature tampers with God's plan. To condemn such evil is not usurpation by the Church; it is not even a privilege of the Church; it is her sacred duty. She is the mouthpiece of God to men, the organ of His Truth.

CONCLUSION

In Central Europe today, the Church has fulfilled her duty. There the communist puppets have passed unjust laws. She has protested against such laws; she has insisted upon the truth, the truth about God, the truth about man. To a diabolical philosophy of life, this is of course a "crime." In these countries the State has gone beyond itself. The laws that it has passed, indeed, are the absolute denial of the nature of man and the nature of the State. For the common good, the welfare of its citizens, is the only reason for the State's existence and this welfare cannot be achieved by a State which takes away the most fundamental rights of its citizens, and denies that God who is the source of all good.

No, it is not any usurpation by the Church that is being punished by the governments of Central Europe. The crime of the Church is the crime of being the Church; the crime of divine Truth. Certainly the Church is subverting the efforts of the State in those countries, subverting falsehood by unceasingly proclaiming the truth. For this the Church is suffering, for this her prelates, priests and people are being persecuted. The situation is clearly put in the following words of General Bor Komorowski, head of the Polish government in exile: "If the Church would refrain from exercising its power, its influence over the cultural and social life of Poland, if it would consent to the suppression of the most fundamental rights of men, if it would not oppose the establishment of slavery as it now exists in Russia, the Communists might, perhaps, leave the Church alone."

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