

THE CRIB AND THE KREMLIN

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HE REVOLUTION WILL NOT SURVIVE. It will become as dead as old Marley; it will become more lifeless than icy Scrooge's fire. Neither candle light, nor carolling, nor tinkling bells will revive it. Out beyond hearing distance of Christmas hymns and Yuletide laughter, far from decorated wreaths and glowing trees, it will be finally buried—a deserted, unmourned corpse. When that happens, relieved men will come back jubilantly to the rejoicing City of God. Then there will be Christmas Cribs once more in the Kremlin. A dream? A Santa Claus fantasy? Perhaps, but one that recurs every year; and one that someday will become a welcome fact. For with each passing December, we Catholics make a momentous dare: the challenge of Christmas is offered to Russia; the challenge of the Crib is carried to Communism. Every choir boy's "Venite, Adoremus," every sincere "Happy Christmas," resounds the invitation to the Lenin Leftists to end the deadening spiritual blackout and to share in the warmth of the newly-risen "Sun of Justice." Maybe the time for change has come. If so, here is one way in which it may be made.

Such a challenge entails, in the first place, the acceptance of a unique "Manifesto." This is the great Christian pronouncement that is as old as man's yearning for Redemption. As the eternal doctrine of liberation, it was formed and preached from the "lecture platforms" of the mountains and in the "forums" of the deserts of Israel by inspired forerunners of the Messiah, such as Moses, Jeremias, and Isaías. In place of license, it advocated self-denial. Instead of drawing up lists of future victims for torture and planning "purges," it called for a sane, preparatory period of vigilance and prayer. To all workers for God, it promised abundant wages in terms of supernatural salvation. Under its influence, the "exploited" of Jehovah united in Faith and confidence. Not only were the chains of physical slavery to be lost, but also the more severe effects of spiritual starvation. No Marxian creed can equal this Divine emancipation proclamation. Never could any earthly Utopian scheme seriously declare: "For a child is born to us and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince

of Peace.”¹ Nor would any Bolshevik pamphleteer write: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God.”² But we, sure of our ground, dare to send these words echoing to the Moscow moulders of opinion. If our communication, or, rather, the Redeemer’s message, does not bound back after striking the wall of irreligion that hems in so many Godless wanderers, we can look for our dream to come true and for the Star of Bethlehem to shine brightly over the Urals.

However, the challenge of Christmas does not stop with mere assent or acceptance. Having offered the Communist wayfarers room in the Inn of the Saviour’s Heart, it further invites them to join actively in a revolution that will survive, and has survived. What has been built up in despair and hatred under the Hammer and Sickle will be torn down. The bloody November venture of 1917 did not curtail suffering. It added to the degradation of man, since it denied him even the consolation of a loving Creator. Only by absorbing the ageless Noel spirit can the duped Stalin satellites regain their worthy dignity as children of God. Towards the attainment of that end, out of Bethlehem comes the plea to them to reestablish an order of Faith and Hope within their darkened souls, and to work, in the future, for the restoration, not the destruction, of the reign of the Prince of Peace throughout the world. Without these first steps, peace conferences can accomplish little. Yet, happy eventualities of this kind do not just happen. They have to be planned. They require a pattern.

Before all else, if the movement to reform the champions of anarchy is to succeed, there is need for unity of effort on our part. Under the long-awaited regime that was heralded by the angelic voices on the first Christmas morn, the basis for such coordinated action is provided. Americans know what it means to get together for victory in war. Likewise, Catholic Americans, in union with the whole Church, can show the Soviets what it means to be one in Christ. The contradiction of a Brotherhood of Man without a Fatherhood of God is eliminated as soon as we admit and profess that the Word has been made Flesh; and realize that He now dwells among the scattered sons of Adam, whether they live in the shadow of the Stars and Stripes or pay forced respect to the Red Flag. Just as the rich and the poor, the learned and unschooled, joined in common adoration in the persons of the wealthy Magi and the ragged Shepherds, so all of us, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the workers and the industrialists, are to link arms in fraternal allegiance to the Infant Son of Mary.

¹ Isaiah 9, 6.

² *Ibid.*, 40, 3.

But for effective results in any campaign, singleness of purpose alone will not suffice. Decisive, thorough, energetic action has to follow. The revolt inspired by the silent Manger fulfills this condition too, for it goes deeper, proceeds more surely, and builds more strongly than any noisy, undisciplined mob uprising. Since the Lord of Heaven and Earth came in humility, we, the Christian "Party Members," are to labor with zeal to undermine the structures of pride and selfishness in ourselves. Because the Babe of Bethlehem's love is unending, anything like a "Five Year Plan" becomes obsolete. Our Christian upheaval involves a life-span of reform, guided by an intense program of charity. There will be no stirring "coup d'etat," no storming of our objective, if hatred prevents action. When hatred assumes control, the goal, the end of any movement, becomes blurred and indistinct. Consequently, the vision which every revolution requires is lost. Only with love as the driving force can we Christian revolutionaries keep the vision of the Light of the World before our eyes. Love brought God to earth (and gave us the first Christmas;) love is the power that will bring all men, united under the banner of the Christmas Crib, back to God. When that happy reunion occurs, the true revolution, which is inspired by Christ, will end.

Marley had surely passed away. But his ghost, weighed down by chains, came back. Today, in a certain sense, Christ lies dead in Russia. The corpse of Lenin is revered; the Spirit of God is officially ignored. Yet, as bells peal Noel, there hovers over the tragic Soviet Union the compelling figure of an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. Unlike Marley, He has no chains, nor does He speak; He only beckons calmly and points to Bethlehem. May the Collectivist State look up and follow collectively! May Communism take the dare of Christmas!