

BLACKFRIARS

I have never doubted that there are many sincere men among the Communists, but our sympathy for a few individuals must not lead us to sympathize with the teaching they adhere to as a whole, for this teaching is based on an untruth and aims to achieve its ends by immoral means. When advocating the possibility of a better understanding between Catholics and Communists we must be fully aware of that devilish perversion of mind which urges Communists to extol as heroic acts the denunciation of parents by their children. Certainly missionary work among Communists is necessary, and Catholics must prepare for it, but the time is not ripe for that task. In the meanwhile we must study Communism, understand its nature, and do everything we can to safeguard our co-religionists from being poisoned by a teaching which can indeed be presented under very alluring and attractive forms.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

G. JENSEN.

P.S.—Since this letter was written Fr. Prince has published another article in BLACKFRIARS (September). I agree with him while he denounces modern Capitalism, though I am surprised how he fails to grasp the fact that the so-called 'Communism' of Soviet Russia is nothing but Capitalism in its most ruthless and absolute form.

Perhaps the information given in my letter based upon official Bolshevik data as well as the appeals of the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna and the united hierarchy of Galicia and Poland on behalf of the starving Russian peasants will make Fr. Prince ashamed of his inverted commas in the 'Russia's starving millions'! It is the official policy of the Soviet Government to deny the famine whilst it is exporting grain, but it is painful to see a Catholic dismiss this fact airily as the 'news-papers' latest caption.'

ROME TO CANTERBURY

DEAR SIR,

With reference to your review of my book, *From Rome to Canterbury*, I hope you will do me the courtesy to insert the following corrections.

According to your Reviewer, 'Miss Almedingen asserts that she was compulsorily baptized into the Greek Orthodox Church—this statement is puzzling, for on page 1 she tells us also that none of her family ever married Russian brides. Baptism into the Orthodox Church was compulsory by law only when one of

CORRESPONDENCE

the parents belonged to her, therefore one of the writer's statements is incorrect.'

Your Reviewer is mistaken. On page 6 I say that 'my mother was English. She married my father, who was a Russian merely by his passport, but by law he belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church, and we, his children, had to be baptized into the official Orthodoxy.' My father, in spite of his foreign origin, belonged to the Orthodox Church for the simple reason that his grandfather, born in Russia, was baptized into the Orthodox Church. Why, I can't tell you, except that the first Almedingen, who came into Russia from Vienna, was a friend of Voltaire's and a self-confessed free-thinker. Religion did not trouble any of them, but one had to belong to some Church when one was a Russian subject. As they came to settle in Russia, they probably decided it would save a great deal of trouble if they associated themselves with the National Church of the country. Previous to that they had been Roman Catholics—nominally so.

Further, your reviewer says that 'also it seems curious that though apparently born and bred in Russia her knowledge of the language was defective.'

It was not my object to set out and write a detailed family history. However, since the above statement calls my truthfulness to question, I feel it is only fair that I explain the situation.

My people did not live together. I should have thought this was plain from the book, where I say that I never knew my father, who, however, died when I was almost fourteen. As I say, 'our upbringing was left to my mother,' who never got acclimatized either to the country or its language. The greater bulk of our friends came from the British colony in St. Petersburg. Otherwise, French was the universally accepted language.

As to the rest, it was not enough for me 'to find myself in uncongenial surroundings, to meet a few unsympathetic Catholics,' etc., to take the step I have taken, and if your Reviewer had chosen to exercise the precept, outlined in v. xiii, 1st Cor., he would have noticed that I say expressly (page 45), 'I had indeed observed things which might be classed as negative in the spiritual sense, but they, in themselves, had nothing whatever to do with my decision.' If, at any time, I had indeed allowed myself to be influenced by such secondary considerations, I would have left the Church of Rome years ago.

Yours faithfully,

E. M. ALMEDINGEN.

[*Note*.—We accept the correction of Miss Almedingen and apologise for the mis-statement of our Reviewer.—Editor, BLACKFRIARS.]