

resolves itself into the idea that the French Dominicans are "Communist" because they are "Anti-Fascist." To which our French comrade replies:

To speak bluntly, this is absurd. *La Vie Intellectuelle* has never undertaken "anti-Fascist" propaganda. It is a Catholic, not a political, review. It has said what it believed it was necessary to say when it saw a flagrant opposition between the activities of the Italian Government and the principles of Catholicism. But it does not regard it as its business to criticize Fascism as a form of Government which belongs to a nation which (let us never forget it) was once our ally.

Since it is notorious that similar things are being said about BLACKFRIARS we may make this explanation our own. On the same point we may refer to *Equals in Evil: Communism and Fascism*, by Paul Kiniery in the August CATHOLIC WORLD.

CONTEMPORANEA will be resumed next month.

PENGUIN.

## ESCAPISM AND THE LAND MOVEMENT

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS,

Sir,—I shall be grateful if you will allow me to reply, on a few points of fact, to the lengthy criticism of the Catholic Land Movement and *The Cross and the Plough*, which appeared in your August issue.

Supporters of the movement will appreciate highly your agreement that a real Land Movement in England "*grows increasingly imperative*." It is all the more regrettable that we seem to be at cross-purposes on the subject. Perhaps this misunderstanding can be cleared up.

1. You say that "spokesmen of the movement do not take criticism kindly." You will agree that frequent criticisms of the land movement have appeared in BLACKFRIARS. It is the fact that no criticism of BLACKFRIARS has appeared in *The Cross and the Plough* until the current number. Did you mean that we were long-suffering?

2. My specific criticism of BLACKFRIARS is not dealt with in your columns. The editorial on Escapism, to which you take exception, was not written with BLACKFRIARS in mind.

3. You say I plead guilty to the charge of Escapism. I did say, in a pivotal sentence which you do not quote, "The Catholic

test is not the new, but the good; not the actual, but the best." Do you dissent from this principle? And if you do not, are you also Escapist?

4. You say that "A cult of the primitive just because it is primitive, a contempt for the modern just because it is modern . . . neither need be, nor should be features in such a movement." I challenge you to produce any evidence that this position is held by responsible exponents of the Catholic Land Movement, or by myself in particular.

As I am responsible for the conduct of the Organ of the Catholic Land Federation, your readers will perhaps forgive me the enormity of quoting briefly from my own public statements on the subject, in order to confine this letter to practicable proportions.

(*The Cross and The Plough*, Editorial, Michaelmas, 1935)

"We are accused of loving things because they are old. It is a lie. We only love things when they are good . . . We have only one request, that our readers apply to all things this test of reason."

(My own contribution to *Flee to the Fields*)

"The Land Movement is realist. It rejects fashion; it rejects that denial of free-will which is involved in the dogma of inevitable progress. It will put back the clock as far as may be necessary to ensure the happiness and integrity of man. When noon is Angelus-time the clock is right."

(*The American Review*, April, 1934)

"For my own part, I protest that I have never loved anything because it was old. The age of Cathedrals leaves me cold. I never paced a sentimental way in Cotswold villages, nor, like Mr. Henry Ford, have I wished to preserve an old forge as a museum piece. A good new thing is always better than a good old thing, because it proves art and beauty still alive."

(*In Land for the People*, July, 1932)

"There are men and women who are prepared to undertake the arduous task of creating this new civilisation. It may differ from its rural predecessors in a hundred ways. We are no slavish copyists of the past."

5. Machinery. I have twice printed in *The Cross and The Plough* an assessment of the right attitude towards machinery from the pen of the late A. J. Penty. I am sending you a marked copy. The summary seems to me to be beyond dispute. Do you agree?

6. It is quite unfair in you to suggest that fully rounded villages, with craftsmen and other necessary personnel, are not a feature of our propaganda. On the contrary, we were probably

## CORRESPONDENCE

the first to bring this basis into prominence. Our official scheme, submitted in 1935 to the Land Settlement Association, makes explicit provision for a complete village on a small scale.

7. Finally, I invite you to say specifically in what way the propaganda of the Catholic Land Federation "misses the real point." Speaking generally, and excepting the impermanent first-aid work which you included, all the points which you endorse so handsomely have been emphasized by us from the beginning.

I am not in a position to know whence BLACKFRIARS has obtained its preconceptions on the Land Movement, but clearly not from the Land Movement itself. Our means of publicity have been limited severely by our poverty, and it is not our fault if rumour has been rife among the uninformed and the unsympathetic. But if you will be good enough to go into the matter from our authoritative statements, you will find that our avowed policy has been largely such as you now set out and endorse.

If our achievement has lagged behind our effort, it is chiefly because so many Catholics have evolved a picture of the Land Movement from their inner consciousness.

Yours faithfully,

H. ROBBINS

(Editor of *The Cross and The Plough*).

Weeford Cottage, Hill,  
Sutton Coldfield.  
3rd August, 1937.