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CRISIS CONTINUED

AS the winter approaches we are presented with prospects of hardships equal to those of the war, if not worse. The absence of physical danger from the skies is about the only alleviating circumstance. To many it may seem that, our elders having been asked for bread, they have handed us a stone. At the end of the war we had foolishly expected prosperity. We were the victors so that we could rightly demand more pay and shorter hours. Peace should bring relaxation, ease and contentment. But we had forgotten that war is itself destructive and that when it is over a greater effort is needed to pick up the pieces and fix them together again. More than that, the powers of destruction do not cease with the ending of hostilities; disintegration will continue unless some very strong measures are taken to stop it.

We have in fact witnessed the continued process of disintegration taking its course more or less unchecked. Unities which existed before the war have disappeared—the colonies, India, Egypt, Palestine; the relationship between nations; the internal unity of the individual nations; family life and morality. The unity of Britain has been breaking up ever since the end of the war. Is this the fault of the Government who got into power as soon as the war was finished? Many would like to think so, but in fact it may be said that none of the possible political rulers would have been able to do more. The powers of destruction were very great and it is unlikely that any Government would have been able to conquer them—at least not for many years.

the Library, built up so painfully after the similar disaster of twenty-five years before, was deliberately intended by the Germans. The attitude of the Rector, Mgr van Waeyenbergh, during the years of German occupation finds a proper acknowledgment. He refused to surrender on even the smallest issue to the enemy, and imprisonment was the inevitable price he had to pay. Already the University is doing everything possible to repair the losses of war. 350,000 volumes have been collected and catalogued, and the famous inscription (which never in fact appeared), *Furore Teutonico diruta, dono Americano restituta*, devised to commemorate the earlier restoration, may once more be proposed. Professor Lousse suggests that the German staff officers were convinced that the Library bore this inscription and that the insult provoked them to a new fury. However that may be, the work of reconstruction needs no remembrance of enmity to inspire it, and the University is to be congratulated on a sober and immensely moving account of its adversities and of its confidence for the future.

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TOTALITARIAN CLIMATE (Catholic Social Guild, 1s. 0d.) is the testimony of a German Jesuit, Max Pribilla, as to the causes which have brought Germany to ruin. 'The three main sources of the mistakes which the German people permitted are said to be political immaturity, lack of character and lack of a sense of community. Fr Martin d'Arcy, in a preface, emphasises the fact that these are not German monopolies and that 'the writer puts his finger on the source of Germany's fall and our danger when he refers to the spiritual vacuum caused by the decline of religious belief'.

Another Jesuit, Fr La Farge, the well-known editor of *America*, has been visiting Germany and has published his impressions in his paper.

'History and politics can discuss how far the cross of suffering and humiliation is justified. But a much more immediate and practical question confronts us: what will be the *effects* of that cross? Is it to be a prelude to complete moral and social disintegration? Or is it to be, at least to some extent, a Cross of resurrection? This, says Reinhold Schneider, is the capital question for the German people. But it is also the problem for the world at large. To that query there is an obvious answer. If the cross of Germany's agony is to be a Cross of resurrection and not of chaos, it must be a cross of hope: political hope and spiritual hope alike. There is no other solution'. Meanwhile, the Germans themselves, in such periodicals as the admirable *Die Neue Ordnung* of the Dominican Province, are facing

For the majority of people having adopted materialist standards have lost the notion of the Good, so that they cannot understand the *common* good. For the materialist, 'the good' is merely 'what works for me'. He does not know of spiritual good so that he cannot direct his thoughts and actions to something outside his immediate world. A consistent materialist cannot sacrifice himself or his happiness for another because that would be putting a spiritual standard above both himself and the other. 'Why should I work so long as farver 'as 'is 'ealf' is an excellent principle for one who considers that all men are equally bounded by and summed up in a physical body with its physical needs. Not many people would as yet accept such a position consciously but a great number of people do so in effect.

A return to the idea of the primacy of the Common Good and the corresponding notion of the need for asceticism would defeat this materialism, and it would defeat the crisis. The true asceticism of self-denial carries with it an active acceptance of hardship and difficulty for the sake of the higher good. The utilitarian standard of 'it must work for my benefit' gives place to the higher criterion which recognises the relation of means to ends and the relative importance of the different ends among themselves. And with this acceptance of the higher standard, and the need to suffer for it, should come an interior quietness, the peace of resignation, not merely the passive shrug of the shoulders but the inner peace which was to be found in some of the efficient A.R.P. officials during the war as well as in the dogged soldier. It is this spirit which could overcome the difficulties of the times without strikes and disturbances, with every member of society ready to share the burden peaceably.

But who or what could bring about such a conversion? The fear of crisis cannot move men in the same way as the fear of the enemy outside the gates. The crisis means largely a city divided within itself; the fear does not come from outside. Hunger and cold are different from the bomb or rocket. Publicists have harped a good deal on the plight into which we have fallen, with a view to stirring an interest once more in the common good and of fear of the consequences of neglecting it. But it cannot have the same effect as attack from an enemy. In any case, in peace time there should be some more positive motive. The fundamental virtue which is intended to hold the state together and keep it fixed on the common good is that of piety, and it is an increase of piety which the nation needs. Perhaps the degradation of the word into a term of sweet sentiment, roses and ravishings has helped to destroy the virtue. It is worth while repeating here St Thomas's description of the orderliness of the virtue of piety:

'It is by piety that we do our duty towards our kindred and well-wishers of our country and render them faithful service. . . . Man becomes a debtor to other men in various ways, according to their various excellence and the various benefits received from them. On both counts God holds first place, for he is supremely excellent, and is for us the first principle of being and government. In the second place, the principles of our being and government are our parents and our country that have given us birth and nourishment. Consequently man is debtor chiefly to his parents and his country after God. Wherefore just as it belongs to religion to give worship to God, so does it belong to piety, in the second place, to give worship to one's parents and one's country. The worship due to our parents includes the worship given to all our kindred, since our kinsfolk are those who descend from the same parents, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* viii, 12). The worship given to our country includes homage to all our fellow-citizens and to all the friends of our country. Therefore piety extends chiefly to these'. (II-II, 101, 1). St Thomas goes on to say that this virtue must be subordinated to general justice which presents the common good to us. Evidently piety and general justice must grow hand in hand, as they are both lacking in modern society. Such virtues of course require divine grace to carry them through. It is grace which shows that the Good is ultimately God, and that sacrifice is more than stoicism. If this be true, then the people to arrest the crisis would be apostles who had the vision of the Good and lived the life of the Cross.

THE EDITOR

OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM

EARLY in August this year a party of 24 men set out from Bishop's Stortford carrying a great wooden cross to Walsingham. The distance to be covered was a little more than a hundred miles; the return journey by another route was another hundred. The country between is not very populous; Catholics are extremely few, living scattered in isolated parishes. This was the first fulfilment of a hope expressed in these pages a year ago in an article¹ describing a similar pilgrimage to Vézelay. On that occasion a British party, widely representative, carried a cross from Dieppe, one of fourteen to be set up at Vézelay in an international congress of peace. The congress itself was disappointing, but on the road there was born in the hearts of the pilgrims a new inspiration; they discovered in the

¹ *Blackfriars*, September, 1946.