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CONTENTS.

EXORCIZING EUROPE		201
LITURGY AND THE VERNACULAR	Lancelot C. Sheppard	206
PERSON AND INDIVIDUAL	John A Creaven, S.M.A.	213
CATHOLIC NEWSPAPERS	Gerald Vann, O.P.	219
THE STUDY OF HISTORY IN AMERICA	Luigi Sturzo	223
A FRENCH CATHOLIC ON CHURCH AND STATE	Gabriel Slater, A.A.	226
REVIEWS :	Daniel Woolgar, O.P.; J. F. T. Prince; Langton D. Fox; M. Sewell; Walter Shewring; Gerard Meath, O.P.	231
NOTICES		238

EXORCIZING EUROPE

THE brilliant conclusion of the African campaign can compare with any of the major military victories of history. The Allies have a right to be proud of the achievement, and a duty to thank God for his all-planning providence. Events may in fact prove that Providence has so designed this to be the greatest step of the war towards ultimate victory and the beginning of peace. Even *Peace News*, which as a rule can be depended upon to adopt the gloomiest views, admits that this may be the beginning of the end of present hostilities. The Allied spirit has been greatly strengthened, and the *Te Deum* has been sung in many churches, and the gratitude to the Allied leaders and generals who have exorcized Africa so effectively also plays its part in this renewal of hope.

One might expect a certain slackening of effort with this realisation of success; the price of victory is so often presumption and false security. But there is little sign of such a relaxing, and all are anxious to press on to the goal. It therefore becomes increasingly urgent to recognize that the cleansing of Europe by force of arms can only be the prelude to a gradual process of spiritual cleansing if any sort of peace is to be won. This process of bringing health to a diseased continent will not be completed by the exorcism of fire and the sword, though the sooner that is done and the less wanton the present destruction, the sooner will the true exorcism be able to begin its work. To expect Europe to be righted at once is certainly foolish; that means that we should at once prepare ourselves for perseverance over a long period in trying to bring true peace. Exorcism has often to be repeated many times before the devil can be entirely cast out. The baptismal ceremony and the Lenten series of exorcisms from which that ceremony derives show the limitation of the power to drive evil spirits from the possessed. This is no fancy. There is a documented case of possession at the beginning of this century in Iraq, when a number of theological students were suddenly invaded in this way by evil spirits. They were subjected to exorcism many times, the effect being only partial and gradual, so that the whole process for some of the possessed continued for more than a year.

These allusions to exorcism may not be very far-fetched, for many have noticed the apparent inhuman power of evil characteristic of some of the German leaders, not to mention the literally diabolical treatment some of the conquered peoples have received from them. Thus we must be prepared to exorcize the the spirit of evil that will remain long after a military or political victory. And this kind of evil spirit is cast out only by prayer and fasting. In other words, the spiritual evil which we have at length recognized as the foundation of our present troubles cannot be dug up and cast away by feat of arms, however brilliant, but must be attacked with spiritual weapons wielded over a long period of time and with sustained effort.

Does this mean that the victorious Allies as soon as they have overcome the last pocket of resistance should set about imposing their own religious standards on the vanquished. 'I give thee thanks, Lord, that I am not as this publican, an extortioner. . . .' English hypocrisy is a bye-word on the Continent, and if we attempted to 'put it across them' after the war, it would only serve to harden their bitter antagonism. Moreover if we try this im-

position there will be three different standards imposed on these publicans and sinners, for the Russian, the English and the American each have a different message and culture which they are more than willing to force upon all in their sphere of influence. Who is to decide what new ideas are to be injected into Nazified Europe?

Yet no permanent results would be reached by weakening Germany physically, by disarmament and control of raw materials, while leaving her otherwise to her own devices, leaving the spiritual disease to spread more rapidly in a weakened frame. The exorcism needed is a long spiritual process, the disarmament of an evil spirit and the control of its spiritual raw materials. We may, therefore, be faced with the dilemma of being forced into a long-term office as teachers without being qualified or even knowing what we have to teach, of being constituted exorcists without knowing of what spirit we ourselves are.

There are certain principles which must be kept free from the blurring influence of passion in the victors or of haste in their desire to settle affairs to their own advantage. First, the cleansing of the soul of Europe ultimately rests on God's activity, for he alone can bring about spiritual health in this corrupting atmosphere of national self-seeking. Many have recognized this, at least implicitly in their *Te Deum* for the Tunisian victory, but many too will have to persevere in a life of deep spirituality and true penance if they wish to be fit instruments of God's exorcism. In desiring and working for the revival of the Christian spirit in the murderers of Poland, the prayer of the Pharisee must be far removed from our lips. Christ himself died for his murderers and prayed for them as he died; and we are sinners who must at the same time convict ourselves of sin. In that type of prayer alone lies the true Christian approach and the one way of salvation for Europe.

Secondly, the Allies must decide at once what is the goal they are to aim at in trying to rid Europe of this evil. Disaster alone can follow an attempt to civilize the barbarian without knowing to what end we are civilizing him. The process will take many years, but the final goal desired must be clearly before their eyes from the beginning. A recent article in the *Times Literary Supplement* (May 8th) on a 'Permissive Society' has pointed out that the dominant question of the coming age is to be the *motive* of civilization, no longer taking it for granted that 'civilization,' that is one's own particular way of life, is of itself a good thing and to be established everywhere without asking the reason why. This principle will be

as difficult to put into practice as the first. The English will unconsciously set out to teach the Germans to be good Englishmen, the Russians to teach them to be good Russians, because they each accept their own way of life as the only good way of life without considering what it is all for. The Indian problem has arisen largely because the Indians have been given a veneer of Western civilization which was not made to measure and hangs shapelessly on their shoulders.

As this article implies, the voice of a single Christian Church must be raised in order to show men the purpose and true nature of civilization, for the Church alone can rise above national prejudice and self-esteem and point to a universal goal for all mankind. That necessitates some intrusion of the Church into politics, as the Archbishop of Canterbury's critics are frequently reminding us, but it is inevitable that the ultimate goal should influence all the intermediary positions, be they of a political or a private nature. The State cannot impose a particular moral idea, for that is the duty of the Church; the State should 'encourage each man to inquire, and equip each man to discern, what the good life is *for him*, and enable him to live it'—hence a 'positively permissive' society. Such a doctrine of civil society without the universal directive of the Church would make nonsense, but granted a universal Church this seems the desired relation of Church and State in the future exorcism. The Allies should then dispose Europe in such a manner that the influence of the Church can be most easily brought to bear. In other words, it will be the Christian's duty to revive the spirit of Europe, not the duty of Englishmen, Americans or Russians as such.

Thirdly, and implied in the other two principles, the main pre-occupation will be to lead the Germans to be good Germans and to rear good German children who will recognize their responsibilities to mankind and to God. The German must be encouraged to inquire and to discern 'what the good life is *for him*.' 'The acceptance of this principle,' concludes the author of the article in question, 'implies a clear distinction between education, which consists in equipping men to choose, and propaganda, which seeks to impose a choice upon them. It would reject as an evil the intensive advertisement of ideas while welcoming a detached examination of them. It would, in brief, put partisanship, as we have hitherto understood it, out of date, and require of men and nations a cooler approach to political controversy.' He is evidently speaking here of the limited ends of a good civil life, and not referring to the universal end of the complete human, moral life. This demands a detachment on

the part of those who are victorious in arms which appears at the moment outside possibilities; Russia would find it difficult not to desire to sovietize the German race; America, if she does not as before wash her hands of the whole affair, will tend to expect the American type of freedom to take root in Europe; the character of England as a schoolmistress would approximate to that of a foster-mother anxious to gather all these peoples into her home, the British Empire.

The obstacles in the way of true exorcism of the spirit of evil in Europe seem superhuman. But at least the principles and the duty flowing from them are clear. What is demanded is first a recognition of the spiritual implications of victory, secondly a profound humility which alone can make the victors fit instruments in the spiritual work of God, and, finally, a detachment from personal or national idiosyncracies. 'Prayer and Penance' has become a hackneyed phrase; perhaps 'Humility and Detachment' might occasionally be used as an alternative for it means much the same thing. And we are certainly faced with a devil which cannot be cast out of Europe except by prayer and fasting.

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BLACKFRIARS asks pardon for its unclothed appearance necessitated by paper restrictions. Its handsome black and white cover has not been shed without many regrets, but it was thought preferable to depriving its readers of eight pages of reading matter, which was the alternative. The chief drawback will be that copies will become easily soiled, but this can be avoided by preserving the copy in a folded piece of cardboard.