There are some Catholics whose understanding of the faith is presented as quite obnoxious: Mrs Hogg in *The Comforters* and Dottie in *Loitering with Intent*. Fleur Talbot says of Dottie's faith that she was rather glad when she said she had lost it since she felt that if Dottie's faith was the true faith, then hers was false. Clearly, a veneer or a pretence of faith is as reprehensible as any other inauthenticity. Muriel Spark's respect for authenticity appears to be one of the essential criteria for faith. The characters she presents in the most sympathetic light have a high standard of honesty and integrity. Those openly reviled by Spark's narrative are fraudulent. They manipulate others and are nefarious and dishonest.

It would be quite wrong to interpret the elements of criticism of the Catholic Church in Spark's work as an indication that there is a waning of the importance of faith in her outlook. Her focus on life is witty and ironic because she refuses to present it as comprehensible in its entirety. Occasionally, such as in the Scripture readings in *The Abbess of Crewe* and in the Biblical quotations read out at one of Hubert Mallandaine's cult services by his secretary, there is a direct attempt to provide the reader with suggestions of an alternative perspective to that of the characters. But mostly Spark trusts that the very presentation of a fragmentary and bafflingly mysterious life will awake in the reader an admission that we see through a glass darkly. She expresses this perception with the rhythms and the imagery of poetry to confer on it a wonder of its own.

Aquinas and the New Europe

Kevin Doran

As the twentieth century draws to a close, Europe is the scene of what would appear to be two diametrically opposed processes of political development. We are witnessing the development of a European super-state in the West, while in the East we see the fragmentation of a major political and military alliance. Some six centuries ago, in a very different Europe, Thomas Aquinas argued that, because human beings live and act in society, there must exist some means whereby the group or society may be governed for the common good, so that it does not

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degenerate into a collection of people each concerned only with his own interests[1]. My purpose is to examine what contribution the thought of Aquinas may have to make towards an understanding of what is happening in Europe at the present time.

A number of preliminary questions may be formulated:

a   Do both of the political processes described above reflect a search for a better way of achieving the common good and attaining the common end of man?

b   Are these apparently opposing trends in fact in opposition, or are they simply different stages of the same development?

c   Can they both be interpreted as positive in terms of their likely contribution to the common good?

The European Community

The establishment of the Council of Europe, and the European Coal and Steel Community in the aftermath of the Second World War was motivated by the will to maintain peace in Europe, on the one hand, and to facilitate co-operation in economic development, on the other. The European Community is their direct descendent.

The Unity of Peace
For Thomas Aquinas there is no greater obligation on political leaders than to create, in the state or community which they govern, a unity based on peace. He says:

> The welfare and safety of a multitude formed into a society lies in the preservation of its unity, which is called peace. If this is removed, the benefit of social life is lost and, moreover the multitude in its disagreement becomes a burden to itself. The chief concern of the ruler of a multitude, therefore, is to procure the unity of peace.[2]

The member states of the Community have remained at peace with each other since the its foundation. A considerable degree of reconciliation has been achieved between former enemies, alongside the recognition of common interests and a common economic end. This is not to say that a degree of suspicion does not remain and sometimes

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surface between former enemies. One notable example of this was the fear expressed in many Western countries early in 1990, at the prospect of a united Germany.

The Social Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy are areas in which tension and suspicion tend to arise between the member nations. Member States which have subscribed to Community policy seek ways of derogating from agreements or circumventing them to protect national or regional interests. If the Community is to resolve these difficulties and prevent the occurrence of even more serious ones, it would seem that two conditions must be filled:

> a)   an increase in the authority of the Parliament of the Community and a corresponding reduction in that of national governments.
> b)   the evolution of a system of Community government which is perceived to be, concerned with the common good in its broadest sense.

Such a view would appear to coincide with the argument of St. Thomas, that disagreement between participants in government leads to instability, and that this instability can best be avoided in a situation where government is by one.

> Again, whatever is in accord with nature is best, for in all things nature does what is best. Now every natural governance is governance by one. . . . . Wherefore . . . it follows that it is best for a human multitude to be ruled by one person.[3]

There is, I would propose, a certain functional analogy between the king of St. Thomas' time and the centralising of government in today's Community.

Clearly the role of a European Court would become more extensive in proportion with the centralisation of legislative authority within the community. A European Court impartially administering a body of European Law for all the citizens of the community, would seem to contribute considerably to the unity of peace, because it would incorporate the two essential elements of justice, namely constancy and perpetuity. This ideal, presupposes the same laws for all the members of the community. However, failure to take account of the established regional or national customs would certainly not be conducive to the unity of peace. St Thomas comments that:

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> The people among whom a custom is introduced may be of two
> conditions. For if they are free, and able to make their own
> laws, the consent of the whole people expressed by a custom
> counts for more in favour of a particular observance, than does
> the authority of the sovereign, who has not the power to frame
> laws, except as representing the people.[4]

Defence of the Community would presuppose some common policy. At present, of the twelve member states of the European Community, Ireland is militarily neutral. Austria, which is also neutral has applied for membership. The question of defence is specifically ruled-out of the arena of the European Parliament and the European Council of Ministers. Clearly this is a situation which must be addressed if there is any further movement towards European political union.

The Economic Motivation
While Aquinas expresses a preference, in accord with the natural order, for a government by one individual, something far more significant and determinative and which

> . . .essentially differentiates one state from another is the end or
> goal towards which a government strives. Of these ends there
> are three: wealth, virtue, liberty[5].

In a kingdom or aristocracy, the measure of the excellence or the dignity of a citizen is the practice of virtue, whereas financial success is the criterion of excellence in an oligarchy [6].

The European Community has had a common monetary system for some years and plans are at an advanced stage for a common economy and a common currency to complement the single internal market which will be in place by the end of 1992. While Aquinas undoubtedly meant to imply that a form of government composed of a small group seeking their own wealth, would be bad government (oligarchy), it would seem that a form of government the primary motivation of which was wealth rather than virtue, even if not the wealth of the few in power, would be considered by Aquinas to be less than satisfactory. Its motivation would not adequately direct it towards man's final end, and it would inevitably tend towards elitism and privilege.

Now 'virtue is the good as fixed by reason'[7], and it must certainly be open to question whether all the progress which has taken place in Europe has been 'virtuous' in the sense that it accords with a reasonable view of the common good or the final end of man. European Community policy has brought prosperity to various groups from time

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to time, but has done so in many cases at the expense of significant changes in the industrial and economic face of Europe. Improvements in living standards generally have tended to emphasise the gap which has grown, even in developed countries, between the rich and the poor. Quotas have been introduced for agricultural production. Some traditionally agricultural economies have been replaced by manufacturing economies, often controlled from outside the community. Products are manufactured in one country and packaged in another, using materials manufactured in a third country, and then returned to the producing country for sale. Freedom of movement and employment rights across national boundaries, within the community, has had both advantages and disadvantages. Certain regions have been largely depopulated with significant social and cultural implications and, throughout the community, there has been a trend towards industrialisation and urbanisation.

The degree to which the determining motivation of the European Community is financial success would tend to suggest that the authority of a centralised Eurocracy ought to be strongly balanced by checks on its power through regional or national parliaments, whose primary concern would not be financial. Such checks might at least help to ensure that economic planning took account of socio-cultural considerations.

Subsidiarity
We are told in *De Regimine Principis* that the king in his state is like God in the world[8].The social order reflects the universal order. But if God works in things with respect for their own proper operation, which in the case of humans means with respect for their rational freedom, then it follows that a good king governs in a manner which allows his subjects a degree of local autonomy which is appropriate to their own capabilities and to the common good. In this way they feel that their talents are recognised and their needs are not ignored. As St. Thomas remarks:

> . . . it frequently happens that men living under a king strive more sluggishly for the common good, inasmuch as they consider that what they devote to the common good they do not confer upon themselves but upon another, under whose power they see the common goods to be But when they see that the common good is not under the power of one man, they do not attend to it as if it belonged to another, but each one attends to it as if it were his own.[9].

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This idea may be the basis of the Principle of Subsidiarity which has become established in modern times in the social teaching of the church. It was first formulated by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, as follows:

> Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to a group what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so too, it is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, for a larger and higher association to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower societies.[10]

The process of European integration is one in which political authority is already vested by right in the individual national parliaments, but is being delegated 'upwards' as it were to a higher authority. It would seem, however, that, while the context is different, the principle of subsidiarity still applies, and that the newly established 'higher authority' should not be allowed to arrogate to itself functions or powers which could equally well be exercised at national or regional level.

External Relations

Leaving aside the implications of a possible European military unity, the most evident feature of a united Europe is its economic power, by means of which, alongside other world powers, it can and does significantly influence the economies of less developed nations. This power gives to a single European economy a leadership role in world affairs, which is based not on election or 'divine right' but on the fact of relative financial success. Paradoxically, as internal frontiers disappear in the European Community and a single market is formed, a more significant and effective barrier to trade is thereby raised in the face of nations outside the community, many of which have been in the past, economically linked to European colonial powers, and who now have reduced market access for their produce. A new freedom of movement within the Community is balanced by a more restrictive Community-wide policy on immigration.

The Beginnings of the Soviet Bloc:

Two major events mark the beginning of the modern history of Eastern Europe: the First World War and the Russian Revolution. In 1914 Russia had become engaged in an unpopular and highly damaging war

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with Germany. Under the Czars, Russia, was not a place where the common good was easily perceived to be the motivation of government. It was a place in which wealth and privilege existed alongside considerable poverty and disadvantage. The war served only to underline the defects of government and administration. In this kind of environment, the 'friendship' between king and subjects, which Aquinas tells us contributes immensely to stable government, could not exist in any significant measure[11].

The Changes Brought About by War

With the amalgamation of many of the old duchies and principalities into new states, the boundaries of which were largely artificial, peoples of different ethnic origins and national traditions were thrown together without regard for the tensions and discord that might ensue. When we consider carefully the roots of such discord, it becomes evident that it arises almost always from conflicting perceptions of the common good and a feeling on the part of minorities that their interests are not taken into account.

The extension of Soviet control to cover most of Eastern Europe after the Second World War resulted in two separate types of structure which are relevant to any analysis. The first was the Soviet Union itself and the second what eventually became the remainder of the Warsaw Pact, those nominally independent Eastern European states over which the Soviet Union exercised control.

Tyrranical or oligarchical regimes were set up in all of the states influenced by the Soviet Union. Aquinas' description of the characteristics of tyrannical regimes is well borne out in the history of Eastern Europe. Tyrants, he says, are most effective in bringing about evil, in just the same way as kings are most effective in achieving the common good. The power of one who rules unjustly works to the detriment of the multitude, in that he diverts the common good of the multitude to his own benefit.

Up to 1990, there is not in the history of Eastern Europe the same pattern of integration by mutual agreement as we find in the West. This is because, of its very nature, the 'unification' of Eastern Europe was brought about by force and not by agreement. Throughout the history of the eastern bloc, the permeation of society by the secret police has been significant in creating an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust It is easy to see how, in such an environment, 'few virtuous men are found under the rule of tyrants'[12], because such a society is more conducive to distrust, lies, betrayal, and the hoarding of food and other basic commodities.

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A significant element of tyranny to which Aquinas draws attention is the invariable tendency of tyrants to see to it that friendly relations do not develop among their subjects,

> . . . so that they may not enjoy the benefits resulting from being on good terms with one another, for as long as one has no confidence in the other, no plot will be set up against the tyrant's domination. Wherefore they sow discords among the people, foster any that have arisen, and forbid anything which furthers society and co-operation among men[13]

Since tyrants undermine all the elements of friendship, and are perceived to be more concerned with their own interests than with the common good, they do not enjoy the benefits of real friendship themselves. It is for this reason that the maintenance of order in the countries of the eastern bloc has been associated with the excessive use of force.

The absence of a market economy for the sale of goods produced within the Eastern bloc has led to an inefficient approach to production and distribution. Economic growth has been negligible. The tendency of the totalitarian regime to act against trust and to give rise to corrupt practices has led to shortages and black marketeering. Aquinas says that a primary responsibility of the king is to ensure an adequate supply of the commodities necessary for a good life.[14]

The Quest for Freedom and the Removal of Tyranny

Tyranny restricts liberty and oppresses the people, but it rarely succeeds in eliminating completely the desire for freedom. For Aquinas, the type of government most likely to come about, when the motivation is freedom, is government by the many. This in fact is what we have seen happening in many of the states of eastern Europe since 1988, beginning with Poland. The process has not been without some difficulties which, in their own turn, threaten the unity of peace The opening up of the East as a market for consumer goods, inevitably offers the possibility of a new form of materialism and a new form of dependency to replace the old. Nothing is more calculated than this to destroy the unity of peace. Indeed Aquinas points out that it is an unhealthy situation for a 'city' to be dependent on supply from outside, partly because it leaves the city open to exploitation in peace-time and blockade in time of war.

It is only to be expected that when government is by the many, motivated by the search for freedom, laws will be less restrictive and

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more liberal. This can have negative as well as positive results, because the proper exercise of freedom presupposes the ability to use it well. To be free from oppression is not the same as to have absolute autonomy. When people have been oppressed in their exercise of freedom for so long, they become unfamiliar with it. This point was repeated a number of times by members of the popular government in Romania immediately after the revolution of December 1989.

All this notwithstanding, the peaceful removal of tyrants by popular pressure and by sheer weight of the public will is to be preferred to violent revolution. Aquinas says there are grave dangers for the common good in the violent removal of tyrants.

> if there be not an excess of tyranny it is more expedient to tolerate the milder tyranny for a while than, by acting against the tyrant, to become involved in many perils more grievous than the tyranny itself[15].

Certainly no decision to kill the tyrant should be taken by a private person because such a judgement is liable to be subjective and may just as likely result in the killing of a good king by an evil subject[16]. In other words, any decision to execute a king outside the due process of law risks undermining the whole basis of government. This is not, perhaps, without significance for the situation in Romania where the tyrant and members of his family were executed after a trial which, however fair in reality, had the appearance of a 'kangaroo court'.

St. Thomas outlines a variety of possible approaches to the problem of tyranny, depending on whether the right to appoint the ruler in the first place belongs to the people, or to a higher authority. In the matter of appeal to a higher authority, it is perhaps relevant to consider the extent to which the active interest of Pope John Paul II, as a figure of 'moral' authority, may have influenced the process of democratisation in Poland, and through that the rest of Eastern Europe. By allowing him to visit Poland, the regime there clearly allowed a situation in which virtue and friendship (or 'solidarity') could be promoted, and tyranny weakened[17].

Return of Nationalism as a Potentially Destructive Force

The removal of the strangle-hold of tyranny in the East has led to the re-birth of nationalist aspirations in many states which had lost their political identity. The desire on the part of significant units of population to have some degree of control over their own affairs is recognised by Aquinas as being in keeping both with nature and with

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justice. This has already been referred to above with regard to the European Community.

Unfortunately, the reaction to an excess of domination in the past appears to be an excess of nationalism. Old suspicions, and historical bitterness, together with the desire for absolute autonomy, have led quickly to the disruption of the unity of peace.

This raises again the whole question of balance between sovereignty and interdependence. No state in the modern world, however powerful, can consider itself to be truly independent of other states, in the sense that they all depend on the support, or at the very least the acceptance, of the others. The risks arising from the re-awakening of nationalist aspirations would seem to suggest the need for some kind of structures in Eastern Europe which would allow significant autonomy to all ethnic groups but under the umbrella of a co-operative regional approach to economic and socio-political development.

Constructing a Unity of Peace on the Old Foundations

It was clear that 'Reconstruction' (Perestroika) in the Soviet Union could not take place without a new 'Openness' (Glasnost) because, just as Capitalism has made a god of competition, the socialist 'dream' has tended to kill initiative by centralising responsibility. If people are to be expected to give of their best, they must also have a sense of participation in the process of government.

While some of the Soviet republics declared their total independence from the Soviet Union at an early stage, others sought a relative independence which would give their own laws priority over the laws of the union. The reality of inter-dependence, however, is no less evident in the former Soviet Union than it is elsewhere in the world. Given the way in which the USSR developed over the decades, none of the republics could expect to achieve its goals except in the context of mutual co-operation of some kind.

It is arguable that, since there already existed an infrastructure, however deficient, within the Soviet Union, an attempt to develop a new relationship within the Union would have been more practical and less likely to lead to economic imbalance within Europe. It is in this light that we must examine the treaty for a new Soviet Union which President Gorbachev proposed to the fifteen Republics in November 1990[18].This treaty sought to establish a central government for the Soviet Union, incorporating legislative, judicial and security functions, while at the same time involving the Republics directly in the process of government. To this extent, it would seem to reflect the view of Aquinas that the ideal form of government is as near as possible to government

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by one individual, while the best practical government is one which allows participation in decision making at various levels of society.

One significant difference between the draft treaty for a new Soviet Union and the movement towards European political unity in the West, is that the Soviet President was proposing his treaty from a position of de facto unity. In the terms of Aquinas, this would seem to represent an attempt to create a unity of peace out of what, to date, had been a unification founded on force rather than on friendship. In 1990 it became inevitable that problems would arise in so far as the treaty purported to delegate authority to Republics, many of whom hold that this authority was usurped from them in the first place.

The authority of the President to implement his proposals was largely dependent on his ability to deal with the food shortage and the problems of distribution. What he needed most in order to bring about a re-structuring of relations between the Republics was time. This he could have had, if the Western powers had offered him more than words of encouragement at the G7 summit in the Summer of 1991. In failing to do so they risked the destruction of whatever progress had been achieved in East/West relations. This would seem to illustrate the pragmatic nature of 'friendship' between nations which belies the real meaning of community.

When the crisis came in August 1991, there was one factor above all others which led to the failure of the coup and the return of Mr. Gorbachev: significant progress had already been made in devolving power to the people and to local assemblies. If the only authority in the USSR had been the Politburo and the Party, there could have been no co-ordinated challenge to the coup. Events in the Soviet Union would, therefore, seem to support very strongly the view of St Thomas that the unity of peace requires in practice that good central government be strongly balanced by well-defined local authority.

The Non-Alligned States:

By contrast with the two large political blocs in Europe, it is interesting to look briefly at the non-aligned states. These are well represented by Switzerland which has maintained a tradition of security and independence in a century marred by two world wars. In Switzerland, three ethnic groups, French, Italian and German are represented, and the co-existence of peoples seems to be quite harmonious. A significant feature of Switzerland is its system of semi-autonomous Cantons and the tradition of holding referenda on a wide range of issues, thereby

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giving the people a sense of participation in government. The case of Switzerland would appear to suggest that a mixed system of government, properly balanced between centralised and regional decision making, is a major contributory factor in the creation of the unity of peace within a country. It may also be that the relatively small size of the country is a help in achieving this unity of peace. As Aquinas comments:

> Experience thus teaches that one city administered by rulers, changing annually, is sometimes able to do more than some kings having, perchance, two or three cities; and small services exacted by kings weigh more heavily than great burdens imposed by the community of citizens.[19]

Conclusions

In conclusion, it would seem from the above that the process taking place in Eastern Europe is not opposed to the kind of process that is taking place in the West. It is a necessary pre-condition for any free association of states in the East that they first divest themselves of the artificiality and compulsion which has conditioned their relationships to date, and develop both internally and in their external relations the kind of 'friendship' which has been destroyed by tyranny. Nonetheless the process, involving as it does, both dis-integration and re-integration is doubly complex. For the new Commonwealth there is an urgency arising out of economic problems and the question of the control of the armed forces. Yet it would be unrealistic to expect to achieve in a year what the West has only imperfectly achieved in fifty years.

As to whether the developments taking place in the West and those in the East can be seen to be conducive to the common good, it must be concluded that both have significant negative aspects associated with them. The common good will best be served to the extent that their motivation becomes less exclusively economic, and to the extent that they achieve a good balance between central government on the one hand and regional autonomy and participation in decision making on the other.

St. Thomas frequently points out that human activity should imitate the activity of God, and that it's human method and results should reflect the natural order which is His doing . Piero Coda points out that the culture of Europe is essentially and inextricably linked with Christianity. It's diversity reflects the historical diversity of emphasis

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within the Christian experience.

> There are parallels between this Trinitarian faith and the unity in diversity which characterises Europe through the ages. One example among the many which Coda gives is that of the different approaches of East and West, both in their vision of Christianity and in their understanding of church/state relations; two traditions which together forged the identity of Europe, and neither of which is complete without the other[20].

There are two essential ways in which Europe could reflect the Trinity in its relations. Firstly, from an internal perspective, there would be an essential unity among all the nations; yet each would have its own individuality promoted by, rather than in conflict with, that unity. Secondly, the relationship of Europe with the rest of the world would be characterised by a giving of itself in service and solidarity and not, as has frequently been the case in the past, by the exploitation of less developed nations.

1   Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine Principis*, Trans. G.B. Phelan. Revised with introduction and notes by I.T. Eichmann, (Toronto, Pont. Inst. of Mediaeval Studies).
2   Thomas Aquinas, ibid, Bk. 1, Ch.2.
3   ibid.
4   Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I IIae., Q. 97, a.3 ad 3, (New York, Benziger Bros., 1948).
5   Bigongiari, D:, (Ed.) *The Political ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (New York, Hafner, 1953,) p.xxv.
6   Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II IIae, Q.61, a.2.
7   ibid., I IIae, a.55.
8   Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine Principis*, Bk.1, Ch.13.
9   ibid., Bk.1, Ch.4.
10   Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 79, (Vatican City, 1931.)
11   Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine Principis*, Bk.1, Ch. 12.
12   ibid., Bk.1, Ch.3.
13   ibid.
14   ibid., Bk.2, Ch. 3.
15   ibid. Bk.1, Ch 6.
16   ibid.
17   ibid., Bk.1, Ch.3.
18   cf. *Irish Times*, Dublin, 29. 11. '90.
19   Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine Principis*, Bk.1, Ch.4.
20   Coda, Piero. Cultura Europea: le tappe, le sfids, le promesse, in *Nuova Humanità*, Vol XIII, No.73, Jan./Feb. 1991, Rome, Citta Nuova, 1991.