

that penny pierces the poor man's hand, falls, pierces the ground, makes holes in the suns, streaks across the firmament and compromises the universe . . . One charitable act, one movement of pity, sings the divine praises from Adam to the end of time; it heals the sick, comforts the despairing, quells tempests, redeems captives . . .

RUTH BETHELL.

A 'COMMUNITARIAN' STATE

DURING 1942 a treatise, written, printed and edited in a French prisoners of war camp in Germany was then circulated in France through the agency of repatriated compatriots. It was the first of a series to be known as *Les Cahiers des Captifs* composed by Frenchmen whose enforced captivity had led them to alter or modify their pre-war views regarding government. One of these volumes is entitled *Les Fondements de la Communauté Française*—an attempt to outline the composition, function and powers of a State based on what may be called 'communitarian' principles. The treatise is divided into two sections, the first part dealing with basic principles and the second part with their organic applications.

In this article I make no attempt to transcribe the detailed working out of the plans proposed, but only to give the main reflections of this prisoner of war who believes firmly in the resurgence of his country provided she can achieve that national solidarity and cohesion she came so near losing.

To-day France is ripe for a new venture, and yet what she needs is to restate the old ideal which at bottom has always been treasured by the French people in all epochs of their history, at first instinctively, and then consciously—the 'Communitarian ideal.' In the 19th century France made the mistake of trying to restore a merely traditional past followed by the other mistake of transposing on to her soil institutions which were alien to her history, her national temperament and her genius.

The Individualist and the Collectivist corruptions of the Communitarian ideal have played havoc in society, upsetting the balance of the State. Though the individual must not be looked upon as merely a cell in the human collectivity, it must be borne in mind that a

nation is not composed of solitary individuals but of hierarchically ordered communities. If the driving power behind our activities is self-interest, the interests of some will inevitably be opposed to those of others; then the only solution is conflict, in which 'force' wins the day, creates its own 'right' and labels it 'justice.' The Individualist ideal can be quite, if not more dangerous to society than its opposite number which provokes a speedier reaction. Individualism is more difficult to discern and to cure just because it so often masquerades as progress and true democracy.

Now the Communitarian Society advocated by this writer is based entirely on the principle of the PUBLIC GOOD. But 'Public Good' does not stand for 'in the interests of all' in the sense of 'the sum total of individual interests.' History and experience have shown too often that individual interests have to be sacrificed in all those undertakings for the common good that transcend the span of one human life; he who sows does not reap, he who plants rarely lives to see even the first-fruits of his labour.

When we speak of the 'Public Good,' we mean in reality the preservation and development of those moral values without which no nation can remain great; within the family it implies the increase of its spiritual and material patrimony, in national enterprise it takes into account the harmonious functioning in the economic, technical and social spheres and in the State it pre-supposes due attention to the solidarity of its institutions, their conformity to the nature of things and to the national temperament, and their aptitude in furthering moral and economical development.

This concept of the Public Good necessarily recognises those of hierarchy and its corollary subordination; only when these two ideas are understood and accepted can the desire to serve the country be usefully directed. When a human conscience is involved in the call to service we speak of a *vocation*, and when a service is demanded by a superior authority in the common cause we speak of a *mission*.

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, all find a place in the Communitarian Society. Not a liberty which leads to ultimate enslavement, as is too often seen in an individualist milieu, but a liberty synonymous with order which liberates the soul. Not the equality clumsily expressed in the dictum that 'all men are born free and equal.' We know how false such amateur reasoning turns out to be; people are born into this world with regrettably unequal dowries of physique, health and intelligence. The equality claimed here is based on the absence of those privileges which would hinder citizens from attaining positions which their work or talents suggest; it is shown in the recognition of personal merit.

Again, since the principle of reciprocal service is stressed in a Communitarian Society, Fraternity is necessarily practised, but not that pseudo-fraternity which is shown in a vague feeling of good-will to all, but which in practice quickly resolves itself into a preference for those farthest away, or in an exclusive generosity towards one's own class, caste and family.

After having emphasised throughout the first part of this treatise the principle on which the community must rest, the writer proceeds to examine the structure of the State, its hierarchical composition and the importance of the right choice of a Leader in whom the ideal of the Public Good is incarnated.

Roughly speaking, a Communitarian Society is divided into two groups, there are the 'naturally constituted communities' such as the Family and the Nation (the aggregate of families), and there are 'intermediary communities' such as the Provinces, communities of labour, the liberal professions, the army, the cultural callings, and many others; legislation has the power to promote, regulate and maintain the just balance of the activities of these intermediary communities within the framework of the vaster national community. In this lies the Art of Politics. These intermediary communities are essential to the well-being of a nation; for nature, wisdom and commonsense show us that a human being can only develop his personality in a milieu proportioned and adapted to his capacities and to his social standing.

No citizen is really 'at home' in the State unless he has been trained progressively to take his place in this wider community by fulfilling the duties of a member of a family, and in carrying out municipal obligations. It is in the pursuit of such tasks that a man learns to measure his own experiences, and becomes known to his fellows and is judged by them.

Here we put our finger on one of the chief sores of the old régime. Modern man has awoken to the fact that he is a member of a class and of a civilisation, he is called upon to defend both, yet the ties that bind him to the family, to his calling, to his native town or village, in a word to those realities which give him roots in an historical stable milieu, have been weakened, often destroyed. Instead of being moved by the natural affections which humanise a man, he is swayed by vague emotions which, strange to say, can very quickly be fanned into passions and translated into violence. Even the 'élites' in the nation have not escaped these influences, with the result that they have not only lost prestige with the masses but the sense of their own responsibilities towards them. Never was it easier to delude a people into believing they were enfranchised

when they were only emancipated. The main task that lies ahead of us is to maintain all our intermediary communities as relatively autonomous groups, subordinated without enslavement in a society that recognises an hierarchical structure.

Although the régime discussed in this *Cahier* is authoritarian in conception, the whole question of national representation is carefully discussed; the methods employed are both elective and selective, that is to say, the ballot box *alone* is not considered to be in the interests of the Public Good, for the reason that it insures automatically the numerical preponderance of those least able to judge the Public Good over those who by vocation, education and experience are best fitted to do so. There is the danger of the advantage remaining with those parties or coalitions which are willing to propose to the masses the most facile solutions of their problems and who would be inclined to place the transitory interests of the majority over what is really the Public Good.

National representation is therefore envisaged in its double function. By means of straightforward and honestly organised elections, an authentic and complete image of the nation is reached. Then by a 'selective process' the various forces in the nation are brought into play. Among the élites in the intermediary communities certain representatives are selected so as to form a continuous circuit between those in authority and the people themselves. Voters who have been kept in touch with their various communal groups have acquired some first-hand knowledge of the men on whom they can rely; in this way something organic and of permanent reality is represented and not merely narrow interests and fleeting sentiments.

Two Chambers are suggested in the new Communitarian order, a National Chamber and a Communitarian Senate. In the former the 'naturally constituted communities' mentioned before find full representation; for only fathers of families or their widows are chosen to vote, it being supposed that they can best voice the interests of the family and national life. The 'intermediary communities' are represented in the Senate, and both Chambers make up the '*Etats français*.' These Assemblies nevertheless do not govern in the strict sense, they collaborate in the drawing up of laws.

The welfare of the Communitarian State naturally depends to a great extent on the wise choice of a Leader and the greatest importance is paid to his personal qualifications for this responsible position. He must have a sense of proportion, steadiness of purpose, an understanding of human nature, be quick to feel the nation's pulse and to realise the snares that lurk in the exercise of power. Although

the office of the Head of the State is recognised as being superior to all others, there must be no idolatry of his person.

The importance of the Supreme Council which works with the Head is also emphasised; the occupants of this high office must show competence, character and fidelity to their Leader. Competence without character is ineffective, character without competence is dangerous, and competence and character without loyalty to the Head is more dangerous still for this imperils the unity of the nation, its fundamental need.

The writer has many interesting things to say on the method of appointing, choosing or electing a Leader, on the nature of public opinion, on propaganda, etc.

But to sum up, we can best define this writer's conception of a stable order for his country as 'Communities of free persons united in pursuit of the Public Good, collaborating towards this end through their respective vocations and appointed missions, working under the recognised authority of a Leader, himself helped and advised by a Supreme Council, and kept in the closest touch with public opinion by means of two Chambers which represent the two main Communities into which Society is divided.' If one were asked in whom actually sovereignty resided, the answer would be: 'Neither in the Leader nor in the People, but in the Public Good, of whom Leader and people are each in their order the servants.'

Les Fondements de la Communauté Française is really a 'tract for the times' and contains many pregnant ideas of which I have selected those likely to prove of more than purely national interest.

E. POLIMENI.

WHY I AM SATISFIED: AN OPEN LETTER TO PROFESSOR JOAD. By A. C. Headlam, D.D., Bishop of Gloucester. (Blackwell; 2s.)

Dr. Headlam has written a useful and commendably brief reply to the strictures passed on Christianity by Dr. Joad in his book *God and Evil*. Here and there a sentence could do with correction in order that misunderstanding might be avoided: Dr. Headlam's views on the ethics of war and of capitalism would hardly satisfy the more thoughtful of his own communion to-day, and certainly not any non-Christian critic of our present state of society.

Those who possess Joad's book—in certain respects a work of great value—would do well to acquire this useful appendage thereto.

M.S.