

## BLACKFRIARS

### REMARKS

**THE CHURCH AND NATIONAL POLITICS.** It is unusual to find the Church criticized for not shaping its practical teaching according to one single political plan. That such a criticism should come from Anglicans adds to the novelty. Reviewing the relations of the Church with the different European States, *The Church Times* finds that even the highly organized unity of the Roman Church does not enable it to deliver its practical counsels to the nations with anything approaching a single clear voice; it may think internationally, but it has to act nationally. These are the facts as our contemporary sees them: in Italy the Church has compromised with Fascism; in France it has no political action; in Spain it supports a parliamentary democracy; in Austria an anti-democratic reaction; in Ireland a peasant democracy; in Germany it is the last bulwark of German freedom.

*The Church Times* explains the fact by the historic genius of the Roman Church for handling practical situations, adapting its policies in greater or less measure to the varying dictates of circumstances. There may be something in this, though we may remark that the Curia's reputation of diplomatic dexterity, like that of H.M. Foreign Office, is more a foreign than a domestic preoccupation.

The real explanation is to be found in the distinction between theology and politics. With the latter, which should deal with the various kinds of the morally permissible, the Church has no direct concern; its interests are theological, and even its government is concerned only with the consolidation and extension of faith and morals. In this it is sometimes aided, sometimes thwarted by the politics of a country. But never can it be committed to a political form, the best of which has never perfectly expressed the full idea of Catholic civilization. Strictly speaking, the application of Catholic principles to political and economic practice is a matter for the layman, not the cleric, and it is not without significance that by direction of ecclesiastical authority priests have been withdrawn from politics in that country which produced the great post-war figure of the priest-statesman, Ignaz Seipel.

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**THE CHURCH AND THE ITALIAN STATE.** *The Church Times* not only misreads the actual situation, but has a somewhat short memory when it writes that in Italy the Church is not free; the Pope and the Duce having consented for their own purposes to accept one another's existence and make the most capital they can out of the situation, the Papacy is only free outside Italy to preach the Gospel of the four evangelists and not the Gospel according to Mussolini. The fact seems to be that the modern Italian State gives much more elbow room for Catholic Action than the old Parliamentary Liberalism did; certainly there can be little doubt as to the greater vigour and extent of the action, whatever the cause; and in the sharp clash of principle three years ago, it was not the Papacy that gave way.

**VIENNA.** *The Church Times* then turns to Austria. Catholic peasant soldiers, it writes, led by Chancellor Dollfuss, a faithful son of the Church, spent a week killing a thousand anti-Catholic democratic townsmen : liberty in Austria is now completely suppressed. Thus is a complicated situation rendered in a few naive strokes. Other journals have been more explicit and have treated the tragedy as another St. Bartholomew's Day, and as a brutal and unprovoked massacre. It is not our present point that fewer lives were lost in this effort of national independence than are wasted every year in London street accidents, that the employment of artillery was in fact merciful, that petty vindictiveness is not a mark of the Austrian character, and that the Austrian Government seems to be managing the after-effects of civil war rather more courageously and humanely than we managed the situation in Ireland after 1916. What should be questioned is the identification of the Church with the reaction. It is true that the Patriotic Front represents a noble national tradition of which religion is an essential part, but it must be remembered that there are young Catholics among the Austrian Nazis on one hand, and, on the other hand, that a large part of the Catholic supporters of Herr Dollfuss were social reformers in the days of parliamentary government.

**ROME IN THE REICH.** Then the memory of the line recently taken by the Cardinal of Munich blunts the point of the following observation : ' Rome has clearly indicated that in

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standing out against the Nazis it is vindicating, not Christian principles, but simply the interests of its own adherents. We see no moral judgments passed on Nazi infamies.' For a Catholic to think of his own interests apart from Christian principles demands an artificial and violent effort of abstraction. But anyhow, to see you have to look, and unsupported by facts the passage remains merely a literary example of that high Gladstonian strain, which still lingers in our English judgments on Continental policies, ecclesiastical and lay, and which the two *Times*, ecclesiastical and lay, so congenially express.

**ECONOMIC SANCTIONS.** In the matter of disarmament the proposals made by the British Government early in the year were clear and sensible, but with regard to peace-security there was a serious omission. To secure peace it is necessary, not merely to affirm a general intention, but to organize all possible methods of bringing an offending state to obedience. Of these methods, the most effective and humane is the economic sanction, the refusal of financial help, the cutting off of supplies, the boycott on trade. As to what form these economic sanctions should take, on what occasions they should be used, these are matters for the immediate preparation of plans, both as regards Government offices and public opinion. It is probable that the formation of an International Blockade Commission will be necessary. All interested in this approach to the problem of peace should communicate with L. N. Fraser, Queen's College, Oxford.

**THE CAMBRIDGE SUMMER SCHOOL,** July 28th—August 6th. This year the subject will be the beginning and early development of the Church (A.D. 33-325). Tickets and information may be obtained from the Secretary, the Rev. C. G. MacGregor, The Catholic Rectory, Cambridge.

JACOBIN