

BLACKFRIARS

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EDITORIAL

IT is one of the curiosities of our time that democracy should have suffered such severe and sudden defeats. No doubt democracy has itself been to blame. It has taken for granted that any one could be a member of a democracy, which was true. But also it has taken it for granted that any one could be a good member of a democracy, which is not true. The democratic ideal is the hardest of all political ideals to carry through to success. It supposes that the majority will be wise, and that cannot be taken for granted. That a majority shall be wise can only be achieved by careful and deliberate means, by well-planned education, by gradual apprenticeship to political science, by restrained moral doctrine, by the inspiration of noble ideals. Now the last thing thought of was a deliberately planned democracy. Votes had to be given at once to all. The people was told that it was the arbiter of its own destinies. Conscience was to be free and unfettered. Education was the business not of moralists, but of teachers. Doctrine was to be banned from the schools.

No doubt this ideal of political equality (as far as that went) was not only right as an ideal, but also easily capable of achievement. But in a world where wealth was worshipped and no counter doctrine was permitted political equality only led to the demand for economic

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equality. Why should it not, if wealth is held in front of democracy as an end worth a man's while? But economic equality is not only wrong as an ideal; it is also impossible of achievement in a democracy. It can be achieved, but only by a tyranny. Only unlimited force can bring it about. Nor has it the power of endurance, for it is contrary to the variety in man. The United States which passed from the first ideal to the second finds that democracy is impotent to achieve the second ideal, though only democracy can achieve the first. Russia which had had no experience of the first was quickly in the hands of those to whom equality of wealth alone, since they were materialists, was worth having. Political equality, like liberty or justice or honour, was a mental concept, a spiritual ideal, which had no true value. Abstract justice is not even desired by the Leninist. His courts of law are governed by reasons of state, and deliberately so.

In Germany the case is a little different. The war treaties imposed a different condition. Moreover, a definite attempt was being made in Germany to propagate degeneracy. Hitler maintains with some show of reason that this propaganda was financed by Jewish money. Certainly the whole movement of nudism has collapsed under the new regime. The nudist craze was against the ideal of human restraint. The new force does recognise the spiritual value of life, and is opposed to the debasement of the will which is now being propagated here in our country by forces that are ignorantly lending themselves to degeneracy.

It would be difficult to prove that the Jews were really responsible for the indecencies in German literature, art, life; but even when themselves moral, people are often found financing immoral entertainments, not for the sake of the evil effects, but frankly for the sake of the monetary return from them. No one would compare the two cases as parallel, nevertheless Isabella of Spain began her great rule of Spain by expelling the Jews. In neither case was religion at the back of the policy, but a fear that the influence of the Jews was opposed to the deeper spiritual

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values of life. The complaint in Spain was the same as in Germany, that the national conscience was being dulled by forces which were concerned only with ideals that were financial. The Queen claimed that the immoralities of her father's reign were exploited by them in the interests of greed. We would not assert that the cases are parallel. We have no means of knowing the truth or falsehood of Hitler's accusations, for the censorship is too strict for us to know what really has happened or to be able to trust the government's arguments, since no criticism of them is allowed.

The point is that democracy has disappeared from the ideals of most of the so-called *great nations* (really *big nations*, which is not quite the same. Only the future will judge which were really great), and they have been replaced by dictatorships. But it is most probable that this is a stage needed to train men to be fit for democracy. A better way would be the Catholic faith. Perhaps that is what will happen in England. We seem to be the least successful over our dictatorships in history or in contemporary life. It looks as though we are being led another and a finer way to the new culture and the new age. In Italy some way has been found to combine dictatorship and the Faith. It has been possible only because the Pope impressed himself on the situation and demanded rights which at length were given. The Papal international position alone made this possible apart (if one can ever think of it apart) from the over-ruling grace of God. In Germany there is no one to fight for Protestant freedom, so that freedom has gone overboard. Yet in Germany the international Church was known to need satisfying, and has been 'satisfied.' The Kulturkampf had already too recently proved that need. We look for an age in which politically man will be brought to a finer democracy and religiously find unity in the Catholic faith.

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