

O B I T E R

WHATEVER may be the verdict of history on the Nuremberg Trials, lawyers are by no means united in their opinion as to the legal validity of the indictments. Thus in *Free Europe* for July, Professor H. A. Smith, Professor of International Law in the University of London, sees reflected therein the theory that 'denies to law any independent authority of its own and regards it merely as the instrument of political authority'. In Christian tradition

'The law of nations formed an agreed standard of international conduct to which the rulers of disputant states were willing to appeal. . . . Herein lies the real issue presented by the Nuremberg Trials. Do we accept the principle of the independent authority of international law, or do we think that the victors in a war have the right to re-fashion the law in order to be able to work their will upon the persons of their defeated enemies?'

Father Jose Manuel de Aquilar, O.P., writing in *The Thomist* (Washington) on 'The Law of Nations and the Salamanca School of Theology', underlines this argument:

'When the science of international law forgot the orientation received from Vitoria and his disciples, it travelled towards an inefficacious positivism which almost always has conceived a despotic tyranny of strong states. If the new international order wishes to establish itself strongly and orientate itself by norms of justice, then it must once again return to the teachings of Vitoria'.

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When Pius XI said that he was glad to be living in 'so glorious an epoch', his words were a corrective to that Catholic querulousness which is keener to unearth evil than to discover good. In *La Revue Nouvelle* (Tournai) for July, Jean Leclercq has a magnificent 'Defence of our Time':

'In hell, at least in that hell which St Hildegarde saw in vision, there is a place specially reserved for the punishment of those who were filled with despair at the prospect of the age in which they lived. . . . The Popes and Saints of the past did not think their age to be so blissful as we suppose it to have been; their times were just like ours: evil was at work, as it still is—perhaps even more so; it appeared to be triumphant, as has always been the case since original sin: and so it will be until the Last Day. Why should we only recall what is good in the past? Why should we only see evil in the present?'

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WHAT IS DEMOCRACY? asks a National Peace Council pamphlet (6d.), and Lord Lindsay, and Messrs de Madriaga, Laski, Bertrand Russell

and D. W. Brogan attempt an answer. The latter concludes:

'About "democratic" societies we can debate endlessly, but a free society is one in which the never-ending audacity of elected or unelected persons, with their trade-habit of self-praise, can be met (safely and often with popular approval) by the soul-liberating retort, "Sez you".'

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LA MAISON DIEU (Editions du Cerf, 29 Boulevard Latour-Maubourg, Paris, 7) continues its excellent work as the organ of the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique. A recent number contains a number of articles on the new Latin Psalter and emphasises the dual aspect of translation—exegetical and liturgical. Doubts are expressed as to whether the two are happily fused in this new translation authorised for private recitation by the Holy See. A summary of the discussion will shortly appear in an article in *The Life of the Spirit*.

Notable, too, is an article by Abbot Herwegen of Maria-Laach on 'Sacred Scripture in the Liturgy':

'Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy are precious gifts conferred by God on his spouse, the Church: both are sources of divine life, both are sensible expressions of the incarnate Logos. But the more indispensable of the two is the Liturgy, the vital artery of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church can exist without Sacred Scripture, and did in fact so exist in the first century of her history before the Gospels and the Epistles were written. But she cannot exist without the Liturgy, which has within it the Church's sacramental and sacral life'.

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COMMONWEAL (July 5 and 19) has published two articles by Père Sertillanges, O.P., on the meaning and importance of Thomism in the modern world:

'What our times lack is not knowledge but a harmony in knowledge and the linking of knowledge to an organizing principle. All around us wisdom lies scattered, but its condition is not achieved wisdom, because it lacks order. The task of wise men is to order: *Sapientis est ordinare*. Now pre-eminently St Thomas was a wise man, the spirit of synthesis one of the most characteristic marks of his genius, and his works testify thereto to a degree which truly cannot be surpassed'.

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A most notable article by Renée Haynes in *Time and Tide* (July 13) discussed supernatural phenomena—para-normal cognition, poltergeists and the rest—and their integration in the Catholic view of man's nature:

'It does indeed seem that after two hundred years of materialist taboo it is . . . becoming possible to take intellectual cognizance

of phenomena so long denied scientific attention; and often accepted only rather grudgingly and as "of faith" even among Christians, whose religion necessarily involves belief in personal immortality, in the existence of discarnate beings, in instances of foreknowledge, and in the collective subconscious of the "old Adam" on the one hand and of the Mystical Body on the other'.

ALDATE.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS:

Dear Sir—In your June Blackfriars (which is the one paper I *make* time to read here) you review the F.A.U. Annual Report and end up with the words: 'We wish the Catholics of England would follow their example'. Now may I leap to their defence and that of the C.C.R.A.?

We have at present 53 workers in the field, 22 in Italy, 24 in Germany, and 7 in Austria—we have been over 60. We began sending workers overseas in 1944, when we had only been in existence six months, and *as soon as* we were asked by the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad to do so. We were terribly handicapped by the fact that nearly all able-bodied male Catholics were in the Forces, and our first three teams were working under real difficulties for lack of males to do the loading and unloading of trucks (cf. the Friends, who had, in the nature of the case a big pool of first class male volunteers to draw on). Now things are easier—but the kind of young man the Quakers get, when he is a Catholic, usually joins one of the Orders: and, in fact, the relief work done by the Quakers is their main expression of the vocational form of service that takes so many rich and varied shapes in our religious orders. Financially—looking back—I can't think how we took the risks we did, both in the sending of teams and supplies; we really did verge on imprudence. And, until early this year when we received a 50 per cent. grant on past expenditure from the Treasury and a share of the combined food appeal by the relief societies, 99.9 per cent. of our funds were contributed *by Catholics alone*—whereas the Quakers have in the past deservedly earned such a high reputation and are so unobjectionable to English religious prejudices, that they receive funds from many non-Quaker sources. And we are still, in 1946, receiving clothes from all over England for relief purposes. No, I don't think English Catholics have done so badly in the relief line, especially in view of their other commitments.

Yours, etc.,

R. H.

Vienna.