

A FRENCH CATHOLIC REVIEW
APPEARS AGAIN

It is a great joy to be able to give some account, in the friendly columns of BLACKFRIARS of *La Vie Intellectuelle*, the Dominican review which started to appear again last February after four-and-a-half years of silence. That joy is all the greater, because during the occupation we always envisaged our work after the war as united to that of Catholics throughout the world, but especially to that of our English brethren, linked to us as they are by the closest of ties. It was indeed because I had tried to get into touch with them, despite the German occupation, in order to prepare for this work for the Church, that I, with one of my brethren, Père Dubarle, was arrested on the Swiss frontier in March, 1944. Only a few days after my liberation I was able to meet in France some of my friends from across the Channel, and now, less than a year later, on a visit to England, I can write, in an English review, something of what has happened and of our hopes for the future.

To begin with, let me recall what *La Vie Intellectuelle* stood for before the war. Begun in 1929, under the editorship of Père Bernadot, that indefatigable creator of reviews, who started *La Vie Spirituelle*, as well as many other publications, *La Vie Intellectuelle* was animated by a small group of Dominicans, with the active collaboration of many secular priests and lay people. Its aim was to contribute in France to that intellectual effort required in order to make the influence of the Church felt in the world. We know with what interest Pius XI, and after him, Pius XII, always encouraged such efforts. They are not without their dangers, and to have worked from the very start up to 1933, for the reconciliation between nations who could not forget an earlier war, and, afterwards, to have denounced the dangers of Hitlerian paganism under all its forms, meant that *La Vie Intellectuelle* had plenty of enemies. Hence, in 1940, after the occupation of Paris by the Germans, there could be no question of its continuing to appear.

But the review was able to continue its work all the same. The German administration was too methodical and logical not to have a few weak spots. The censorship of books was distinct from that of reviews and periodicals. A review could not appear without German authorisation, but a book could. The whole secret was not to appear as a periodical. But a publisher might have to suffer severely if by any chance a book did not meet with the approval of the Germans after its publication. Nevertheless, he did not have to

undergo the indignity of asking for a permit, and a measure of liberty was preserved in this way. Thus it was that the collection, *Rencontres*, could appear at intervals for 4 years. But there is no need for me to speak of that, since BLACKFRIARS has already done so in the kindest of terms.

Rencontres, we hope, will continue to appear whenever there may be a special need for documentation or information on a particular subject. In this way we shall pursue our investigation into all efforts directed to the rechristianisation of France. After the number devoted to the problems of city life there has appeared recently a parallel survey, by the Abbé Boulard, chaplain of the Jeunesse Agricole Chrétienne, of the problems of rural life, and soon there will be published a study of what a "missionary parish" ought to be, by a priest in a working-class district, the Abbé Michonneau. In the same way we intend, with the help of our English friends, to give to the French public, studies of similar English problems.

La Vie Intellectuelle itself, as we have said, began to appear again last February and its orientation will give meaning to the more detailed documentation of *Rencontres*. What, then, are these projects? Here I will gladly borrow an idea from one of my friends (who himself owed it to Bergson) and whose quasi-prophetic temperament sees more clearly into the future of the years to come than anyone I know: For 200 years, he would say, man has grown in every direction save one. He has developed physically and intellectually, but spiritually he grows poorer every day. He has triumphed over the whole universe, he has discovered unsuspected sources of power, he has infinitely increased his intellectual capacity and quickness of response: but these wonderful discoveries always turn to his hurt in the end because his spiritual life is not sufficiently vigorous to put these new capacities at the service of mankind. The frightening discovery of the atomic bomb has recently given a new meaning to such reflections.

For ourselves we believe—and that word connotes certitude for Catholics—that Christ alone and the preaching of his gospel can give the world the spiritual growth it needs. We have all his power at our disposal. Perhaps, despite the repeated appeal of so many popes, we have not used it with sufficient confidence. Not, indeed, that holiness has vanished from the Church. But holiness in our time has perhaps taken on too individual a character, and we still are men of too little faith: we lack the courage to face up to the wholeness of the world, created and willed to be such as it is by our

Creator, and to plant the Cross in its midst.

To do this a double task is necessary; a task which must, we think, be carefully distinguished. Some people, animated by the Christian spirit, will have the job of creating a world in which Christ's gospel can be preached, spread abroad and *lived*. Their immediate purpose will not be the building up of the kingdom of God, but rather that of the world—international organisation, and the reconstruction of our respective countries, so tried in the furnace of war. Thus we have, in France, men dedicated to this primary work, men of a Catholic spirit who gave themselves heroically to the task of resisting the German invaders and who now turn to the political field. They do not belong to any one political party with a Catholic label. Such parties find little favour in France. These men belong rather to different parties and they can collaborate for the time being with any party whose short-term and immediate policy seems to them directed to the good of France and the common welfare of mankind as those concepts are looked on by a Christian. *La Vie Intellectuelle*, however, does not directly work on this level. Its aim is precisely that of the Kingdom of God, of the Church; to see that the spiritual growth of mankind is assured. So that men can give themselves to the work of reconstructing the world in a Christian spirit, the Church must be alive and visible in the world. A Church which assuredly is not of the world, but is in the world. To assist in that task is the aim of *La Vie Intellectuelle*. The help of everyone is called for, and it would be intolerable presumption on the part of any one review to suppose that it, above all other, was designated for such a task. Yet all Christian must devote themselves to this work, according to the rich diversity of their gifts, of which St. Paul speaks. (I Cor. 12). So that the spirit may live in the Church, the intellectual work of theologians must continue, and it is the experience of our times that a review is indispensable for this purpose. In this small land of France (small now that the reign of "Les Bigs" has begun!) *La Vie Intellectuelle* will work, modestly, as a review, to help in that intellectual development which is demanded if the Church is to be at work in the world. To that end it will be necessary to keep its readers in the closest touch with all the new aspects of our culture as they emerge, (Literature, Philosophy, Science, Art, the Cinema, Radio, etc.). So too, it will be concerned with the multifarious happenings—economic, social, political, international—that are changing the face of our civilisation. And above all our review will keep a close watch over all those subjects from which, in the midst of a world in the

throes of a new life, the collective mind of Christians will draw the source of an authentic Christian life, at once personal and communal: the study of the Bible, under the guidance of tradition and under the inspiration of the teaching of authority; a common liturgical life, with the full realisation that every one of us achieves his true individuality through taking his place in the common action of the whole Church; a care for the unity of the Body of Christ, a longing for the return to union of our separated brethren, those sheep who are not of our fold, whom our Lord ardently desires to bring into unity with us, if only we desire it likewise.

So it is, living in the world and sharing in that life of the Church which transcends this world, which yet has claims to make on the world, we shall with the help of the Holy Ghost and guided by ecclesiastical authority, discern, in this new world itself as it emerges, those needs which Christ will not allow us to evade. We shall have to steel ourselves against the mood of the concentration camp, we shall, every one of us, have to spend ourselves in the work that awaits us so that we may draw from it all the material, intellectual and spiritual rewards it can bring. We must see to it that a new world organisation will subserve the peace and freedom of all. Many other demands will be made on us which, as yet, are hidden from our eyes.

But to achieve such an end, Catholics, the world over, must be joined together in unity, that unity of which, paradoxically, we have already caught a glimpse during the war. Of this unity too, I spoke a few months ago to some German Catholics, supported as I was by the prayers and love of so many French Catholics, my friends, who steadfastly prayed for their executioners. That unity, too, is one that we hope our English brethren may forward—and it has been a joy to discover that they have anticipated our message.

AUGUSTIN J. MAYDIET, O.P.

(Translated by Illtud Evans, O.P.).

P.S.—*La Vie Intellectuelle* counts among its collaborators many members of religious orders, priests and laymen, some of the latter not Catholics, but yet sympathetic to the mind of the Church. Here are some of the most faithful of our friends: F. Mauriac, J. Maritain, Etienne Gilson, P. Claudel, G. Duhamel, G. Marcel, P. Bouyer, M. Carrouges, P. de Menasce, Francois Perroux, R. J. Truptil, G. Dessus, R. P. Delos, Louis Leprince-Rurguet, etc., and among English writers, Christopher Dawson, Robert Speaight, Barbara Ward, Dennis Routh, Antonia White, etc.