

EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

HOLY WAR? Jacques Maritain has so persistently stressed that Christian ends can be compassed only by Christian means, he has so long preached the imperative necessity for a "*purification des moyens*," that many have wondered what he thought of the "holy war" in Spain. In LA NOUVELLE REVUE FRANCAISE (July) he declares himself unequivocally. Under various thin guises, he says, and notably on the pretext of "realism" too many Catholics are succumbing to the idea that "the end justifies the means." They attempt, in effect, to justify evil by the fact that good can be brought out of it. This "*consolation métaphysique à bon marché*" forgets that to promote the Kingdom of God in this way is "to add to the sorrows of Jesus on the cross and to the agony and bloody sweat of the Church." It forgets that, whatever good may be drawn from it, "evil remains evil, and that evils are multiplying all the time; that the horrors that have been done cannot be undone; that the griefs and the despairs of men—even one single tear or one single cry—which have been brought about by injustice cannot be effaced, will never be effaced—*never* . . . It forgets that errors and sin, lies and cruelties and blindness—all the apparatus of the "realists" who use bad means for good ends—are the very things that have been chiefly instrumental in landing Christendom where it is to-day." The great scandal of our time, (Maritain here recalls the Pope's own words), is the loss of workers to Christ. The dilemma that faces us is simply this: are we to regain them by the way of suffering, intelligence, energy and patience, or are we to "atheise" them completely and destroy ourselves and them by war? "Christendom must be re-made by Christian means, or it must be un-made utterly." Other means, and notably the use of war, to accomplish "Christian" ends, can lead only to the suicide of Christendom, and the final alienation of the proletariat. Maritain continues:

There is much talk in certain circles of a "holy war." This conception deserves to be examined. That the civil war in Spain—a social, political, class-war involving international interests

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and interventions—has more and more taken on itself the character of a religious war is a fact which is explained by unspeakably deplorable circumstances in the present and in the past. This fact aggravates the war, but it is not enough to make it a holy war . . . We should be sorry to hurt the feelings of many Spanish Catholics, but the matter is one which involves essential principles of the philosophy of culture and of theology which are of the utmost importance to modern civilization, and must be looked at absolutely objectively.

M. Maritain goes on to quote the work of a war-fevered friar of Salamanca¹ who argues syllogistically that Franco's campaign is a "holy war, the most holy war that history records." Allowing that a "holy war" is a possibility in a "sacral" society (as was that of the ancient Hebrews or of the mediæval Christians), it is impossible in modern secularized society. The programme of Franco's supporters (and especially of the *Falange*) is far from "sacral."

Whether just or unjust, a war (in modern secularized society) against a foreign power or against fellow-citizens, is just *war*; i.e., something profane and secular, and not holy: something moreover that opens the way to sin and to darkness. And if "sacred" values become involved in it, they do not render this profane thing holy; on the contrary it is the holy things that become profaned. The war is not made holy; rather the war makes holy things to be blasphemed. And the abominable methods of warfare which are employed nowadays make this inevitable. It runs the risk of creating an irremediable paroxysm of anti-religious hatred. If some imprudent Catholics fire on the people from churches, the people will be inflamed to destroy *all* the churches and anything that savours of religion. If some priests encourage the use of violence, *all* priests will be regarded as public enemies.

CHRISTIANITY AND FORCE. Quoting approvingly Fr. Gerald Vann on the necessarily "suicidal" character of modern warfare waged in the name of Christianity, Maritain goes on to enlarge his thesis:

We do not condemn the use of force *in itself*. We have indeed tried to show elsewhere, [in *Humanisme Intégral*] that in the hierarchy of "means," it is far from being the most noble, and

¹ *La guerra nacional española ante la moral y el derecho*, by R. P. Ignacio Menendez-Reigada (Salamanca, 1937). Maritain does not mention that a vital quotation from St. Thomas in this pathetic work is completely falsified by the omission of an awkward qualification!

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that history proves that Christians should employ it only in the last resort, but it is not evil of itself and intrinsically. Nor do we think that it should never be employed for the defence of religion (although it is quite certainly the least good way to defend it). But if, in certain extreme cases, citizens should have recourse to force in order to defend their religious freedom, this will be—in the atmosphere of our modern civilisation—because these liberties profoundly concern the general welfare of the nation and of civilisation, not because they are instruments of the “sacred.” Thus, in “sacred” types of civilisation, the primacy of the spiritual can find expression in the idea of the “holy war,” which was so familiar in the middle ages. But there is no room for such an idea in the “profane” civilisations of modern times. Though we may believe a war to be “just,” we have no business to call it holy. If we think we have got to kill our fellow-men, let us kill them in the name of social order or of our fatherland—that is horrible enough—but let us not kill them in the name of Christ the King, who is no warrior king but the King of grace and of love, who has died for *all* men, and whose Kingdom is not of this world . . . “The Son of Man came not to destroy lives but to save them” (cf. Luke ix, 54-56).

The application of the myth of the “holy war” to the present conflicts which afflict Europe would be an irreparable calamity. It would inflict on Europe itself incurable moral wounds; it would foster an internal metamorphosis which would approximate our religious conscience to that of Islam; it is Christianity itself that would be the victim of this myth. As its result it would have, in consequence of human misery, the universal multiplication of sacrilege.

God forbid that I should utter one word which might wound a single soul in good faith! I have friends in Spain on both sides; I know how their sensitiveness has been sharpened and how easily a single word may increase their suffering. There are some that are scandalised that I will not affirm that their campaign is a holy war; I have received insulting letters from them—that matters little. But I have received sorrowful letters and these have distressed me. Nevertheless, facts are facts. It is sacrilege in the most strict sense of the word to insult God in things and persons consecrated to Him, and by actions deliberately directed against Him. And it is sacrilege in a more spiritual, but none the less heinous way, to insult God in those whom His love has made His own and by actions inspired by contempt for Him. It is a sacrilege to massacre priests (even if they are “Fascists” they are ministers of Christ) from hatred of religion, and it is also a sacrilege to massacre the poor (even if they are “Marxists” they are the people of Christ) in the name of religion. It is an obvious

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sacrilege to burn churches and holy images . . . it is another sacrilege (though in religious guise) to decorate Moslem soldiers with Sacred Heart badges that the killing of the children of Christians may be "sanctified," and it is sacrilege to pretend to enlist God in the passions of a struggle in which the enemy is regarded as unworthy of either respect or pity . . . Testimony begins to trickle through about the "white terror" (in Spain) but what we already know makes us think that it has reached a rare level of cruelty and disregard for human existence. In the name of a "holy war" this is being done under the symbols and standards of religion, the Cross of Jesus Christ is made to shine as a symbol of war over the agony of the slain; neither human heart nor human history can bear that. A man who does not believe in God is led to think that such is the price of a return to order and that one crime deserves another. A man who does believe in God knows that there is no worse disorder than this; it is as if the bones of Christ left unbroken by the butchers on Calvary, are now to be broken on the Cross by Christians themselves.

The Spanish war is a war of extermination; it does not tend only to wreck the Spanish nation, but to set the spark to a world conflagration . . . A foreigner has no business to take sides in this civil war; he possesses neither sufficient information nor immediate acquaintance with the facts—nor yet the qualification. The fashion in which party passions have explained the Spanish tragedy to foster hatred in other countries is an indecency.

It has been possible for us to quote only a few salient passages from this closely reasoned and closely written study. It should be read and pondered in its entirety. We understand that a translation of the full text is to be published in the September COLLOSSEUM.

FORGOTTEN SPAIN. This exploitation of Spain's tragedy is perhaps its most hideous and dangerous feature. "Who now thinks of or cares for Spain herself"? asks André Toledano in SEPT (July 30) and continues:

The question is not so absurd as it seems. True, the name of Spain has never occurred so frequently in our papers as during the past twelve months . . . Yet who thinks of *Spain*? Europe and civilisation owe her too much that they can conveniently remember her; the thought of her is an embarrassment which would induce them to do something to save her.

But are not the foreign "volunteers" fighting for Spain? Can we say that the world has forgotten Spain when her sons are dying in Castille? Are not Guadalajara and Bilbao and Brunete real battles?

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They are indeed. Atrocious battles where all the most diabolical inventions of men are employed; where heroism shines on both sides . . .

Yet these "volunteers" are fighting for an ideology and not for Spain. They know little of her glorious past, and the real character of her inmost soul. Some internationalism, for them, is embodied in a doctrine; and these "volunteers," be they Germans, Russians, Belgians, Italians or Frenchmen are merely using Spain for their battlefield . . .

We read in the papers, for instance, that Italy might be disposed to withdraw her troops if England will take steps to recognise her Ethiopian empire. So, for Italy, Spain is just a pawn in the diplomatic game. That is why she has intervened, and for the defence of her ideology. Germany has done the same; so has U.S.S.R. . . England started to take a great interest in the cause of Franco as soon as he captured the iron-ore of Vizcaya. France with her Popular Front government receives the ministers of the Popular Front of Valencia and the Basque country—and then suddenly remembers French interests in the Mediterranean. Interests and ideologies are inextricably mixed up. The armament firms are doing a roaring trade. And, meanwhile, Spain bleeds away.

From this fanaticism of false ideologies, selfish interests, sordid materialism—if they are allowed to continue—Spain will die, and so will Europe.

"DOMINICAN COMMUNISM." Not only is Spain being bled and exploited for international greed and in the name of false ideologies, but, as Maritain says, the Spanish war is, in its turn, being exploited to the utmost to arouse partisan passions and hatred in other countries. Catholic sympathies with her martyrs in Spain, and Catholic fears that the Spanish Church will be destroyed by a victory of the Republicans, have, more especially, been utilised in the international interests and every effort has been made to convert these sympathies into blind hatred. Those who have kept their heads are not popular just now, and we are proud to say that Dominicans have been conspicuous among them. Totalitarian ideologies can think only in terms of "for" and "against"; and those who decline to take either side must bear the brunt of the hatred of both. "Dominican Communism" was the heading of a recent vicious and calumnious attack by the Fascist SERA of Milan on LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE. This attack, as do most of their kind,

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resolves itself into the idea that the French Dominicans are "Communist" because they are "Anti-Fascist." To which our French comrade replies:

To speak bluntly, this is absurd. *La Vie Intellectuelle* has never undertaken "anti-Fascist" propaganda. It is a Catholic, not a political, review. It has said what it believed it was necessary to say when it saw a flagrant opposition between the activities of the Italian Government and the principles of Catholicism. But it does not regard it as its business to criticize Fascism as a form of Government which belongs to a nation which (let us never forget it) was once our ally.

Since it is notorious that similar things are being said about BLACKFRIARS we may make this explanation our own. On the same point we may refer to *Equals in Evil: Communism and Fascism*, by Paul Kiniery in the August CATHOLIC WORLD.

CONTEMPORANEA will be resumed next month.

PENGUIN.

ESCAPISM AND THE LAND MOVEMENT

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS,

Sir,—I shall be grateful if you will allow me to reply, on a few points of fact, to the lengthy criticism of the Catholic Land Movement and *The Cross and the Plough*, which appeared in your August issue.

Supporters of the movement will appreciate highly your agreement that a real Land Movement in England "*grows increasingly imperative.*" It is all the more regrettable that we seem to be at cross-purposes on the subject. Perhaps this misunderstanding can be cleared up.

1. You say that "spokesmen of the movement do not take criticism kindly." You will agree that frequent criticisms of the land movement have appeared in BLACKFRIARS. It is the fact that no criticism of BLACKFRIARS has appeared in *The Cross and the Plough* until the current number. Did you mean that we were long-suffering?

2. My specific criticism of BLACKFRIARS is not dealt with in your columns. The editorial on Escapism, to which you take exception, was not written with BLACKFRIARS in mind.

3. You say I plead guilty to the charge of Escapism. I did say, in a pivotal sentence which you do not quote, "The Catholic