

INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS

The Catholic and the Secular Approach

DURING the month of July, two conferences on international problems took place in London. Both were held in semi-privacy, but their importance was such that the organizers of the conferences have seen fit to publish the details of the speeches which were given on these occasions. They present an interesting study in comparison.

At Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs arranged a series of debates from May 29th to July 7th on the Future of the League, and succeeded in obtaining for this purpose the co-operation of some of the best known and most competent students of international affairs in England. The debates have now been published in book form¹ and are invaluable for the large number of English students who cannot claim to the same competence as the personalities whose views are here expressed, but who seek to gain by their learning.

From the 3rd to the 6th of July, the Catholic Council for International Relations held a rather different kind of reunion. The general subject for conference was "The Part of Catholics in the Maintenance of the European Order," and those who took part were Catholic writers and lecturers from many countries, with an international reputation for their ability in these problems. Their conclusions have already been published in the Catholic press, and a fuller account of the papers will be given in the next issue of the C.C.I.R. organ, *A Catholic Survey*. The present writer is indebted to the secretary of the C.C.I.R. for the use of notes on the papers before they appeared in print.

The vital difference between the two conferences appears in the reasons given for their convocation. Both were intended to be practical, the one to guide Catholics as to their part in preserving the order of European Society, the other

¹ *The Future of the League of Nations* (Royal Institute of International Affairs; 3/6).

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to guide the public generally as to what they could expect from an organ which claims to be interested in the preservation of that order. But neither in the preface nor in the text of the debates at Chatham House is there any sign of the influence of the principles of religion. The Pope is suggested in one instance as arbiter, but that is merely because he has no political aims, not because he represents a religious authority; and several times the importance of the League's work for social welfare is mentioned, but the motive suggested is merely humanitarian, based apparently on love of one's neighbour for his own sake. On the other hand, the C.C.I.R. conference expressly accepts its inspiration from Catholic principles, divine in their origin, emanating from the Holy See and developed by Christian thinkers. These Catholic principles are repeatedly invoked during the conference, and political systems and international relations are viewed in their relation to Christianity. Naturally, there is here an appeal to the authority of the Catholic Church which one could not expect in an assembly of men who do not accept that authority. But one would expect more appeal to the general principles of the natural law, to the providential designs of God and to the power of the Prince of Peace, Whom all Christians should acknowledge as a supreme and genuinely totalitarian authority.

The first of the conclusions reached by the C.C.I.R. conference is that the Church has always aimed at peace amongst all peoples and individuals, of diverse race and language, and "that this peace can only be assured if the relations between nations are based on justice and charity and not on violence." Following out the teaching of the Church, it is the duty of Catholics to take practical means to prevent war and to use peaceful methods rather than force to settle international disputes.

This appeal to Catholics to make practical efforts for peace arises out of two points raised at the conference. Mr. Eppstein in opening the conference drew attention to the widespread secularism in the world to-day, which prevents effective action towards a really Christian peace, and added

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the sad truth. "We are faced by the surprising and possibly humiliating fact that the millions of Catholics living all over the world and forming the largest international community have had practically no influence on the promotion of peace among nations." Fr. Regout partly excuses this by very gently expressing the desire that the Holy See would give us a more definite lead on the matter. One cannot help sympathising with this desire. There are many of us who are convinced, not as pacifists but on the grounds of strict Theology, that no modern war which is not restricted to self-defence against actual aggression could have a cause whose justice would be proportionate to the evils involved. But what are we to do in the event of war—which all admit to be an immediate danger? If all war is unjust under modern conditions, then we cannot take part without being guilty of mortal sin. If it may still be justified, then we would like to have our grave doubts removed and our weighty reasons answered. The Pope has his own good reasons for silence; it is easy to foresee what confusion a clear statement for either side would create. But many peace-lovers among the Pope's children would receive his condemnation of war with joy, though they would loyally accept a statement allowing for its justice still under conditions defined by himself. As things are, with or without a papal definition, we are obviously bound to work for peace. Too many of us have taken the side of the war-mongers, who are at least equally at fault with the extreme pacifists and do much more harm. One of the most pitiful sights at the beginning of the Abyssinian war was that of Catholics attempting to justify the bombardment of comparatively defenceless natives with all the frightful methods of modern war, by applying to it the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas, who, if he thought at all of weapons, had in view the swords and arrows of the thirteenth century. Instead of meeting our Protestant friends with ill-applied justifications of war, we should achieve far greater results and win greater respect for the Church if we drew their attention to the Pope's efforts for peace, to the consistent teaching of theologians that war is an evil which must be limited as much as possible, and particularly to the growing number of

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theologians and highly placed ecclesiastics who condemn modern war entirely.

In one sense all the debates at Chatham House have in view this same object, namely to find practical methods of attaining peace and to provide for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. But the peace sought by those at Chatham House is not quite the same thing as the Catholic Conference had in view. The latter is quite definitely an international order, based on Christian justice and charity. The former seems to be largely a negative thing, an absence of war. There are indeed suggestions of something more positive, but the very diversity of views as to what is the nature of this desirable peace constitutes a serious difficulty in the way of attaining it. Mr. Gathorne-Hardy is very definite about the League's intent to establish a peace which means the preservation of European civilization, though even this is put in the negative form of asserting that the League must prevent that kind of war which would be a catastrophe for civilization. He sees that it will be necessary for this purpose to limit the League to Europe and to be prepared for collective military action. Dr. Toynbee, too, expressly rejects a mere negative peace as the aim of the League and of international co-operation. Unfortunately he weakens his very positive suggestion that "our paramount aim is the establishment of a reign of law and order in international affairs, such as we try to get in our social relations when they happen to lie inside national frontiers," by putting this first as a question and then making it a *controversial* starting point. Naturally this view is based on his vast knowledge of the history of civilization; it would have more force if it were based on philosophy rather than contingent fact. There is little or no attempt to relate the later discussions to this starting point, with the result that no clear conclusion is reached and no principles of solution established.

It is quite the contrary with the Catholic conference. The second conclusion recognizes the mutual dependence, cultural relations and solidarity of the nations, as a basis for a positive organization which has the approval of the Church,

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and suggests that Catholics should interest themselves in the existing international institutions with a view to eliminating the subversive and evil elements which are trying to use them for their own ends. Behind this conclusion is a clearly worked out philosophy, which is expressed most clearly by Fr. Devine, S.J. He looks for a League which will be a veritable society of nations, parallel to the juridical society of the State. Unlike the present League, it will possess a real authority, embodied in the threefold form, judicial, legislative, executive, with power to enforce the law. It will demand also some concession on the part of sovereign states in the same way that the freedom of the individual is limited for the good of society. The subversive elements in the League are recognized, but Mr. Eppstein condemns severely those Catholics who rejoiced in what seemed to be the downfall of the League over the Abyssinian conflict. It was generally recognized at the conference that the way to solve the problems of the world to-day is rather to co-operate with the League and try to improve it than to reject it altogether.

In the other conference, the subversive elements are not recognized at all. In accordance with the negative view of peace, but as an utter mockery of the view of peace as the expression of Christian order, Soviet Russia is regarded as a power for peace and her co-operation considered to be valuable. Nor do the debators work out a clear system on the lines suggested by Fr. Devine. They do however approach to the idea of limiting national sovereignty, which is generally recognized as the principal cause of dissension in the past, and to some recognition of the need of a supreme authority distinct from the member-states. Dr. Toynebee, for instance, demands "a readiness to surrender the traditional sovereignty of the state by allowing the organs of the League or of any collective world organization . . . to take binding decisions that may affect the state members' vital interests and even their territorial integrity." Sir Arthur Salter looks for a world-government as the only means of attaining permanent peace, and Mr. Horsfall Carter calls attention to the expression in Article II of the League Covenant, "The League shall take action," which seems to

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imply superior authority. Behind any such positive organization there must be a more or less instinctive and natural solidarity. The speakers recognize that this already exists and may be either a hindrance or a help. There is, for instance, in England, as Sir Norman Angell points out, "a strong feeling for the existing League. A new loyalty has been created. That is an asset." There is however another loyalty and a solidarity, which even Mr. H. G. Wells recognizes as "the most ominous thing in the world at present." It is the loyalty to Fascism or Communism or some other "ism," but it threatens to wreck the glory of Empire and the healthy, natural love for one's own people. He adds: "Now in 1914, when the war broke out, youngsters may have been a little credulous, but they really believed in the Empire, they really believed that they belonged to a free and fair system, and they gave themselves magnificently. That is not going to happen in this or in any other community to-day. It is over. That treasure was spent." It is necessary to derive for oneself the conclusion that somehow the old love of country must be restored, the unnatural and dangerous loyalties eliminated, and the recognition of a common interest in the affairs of other nations established.

The C.C.I.R. conference recognizes that most of our international troubles are the result of Communism and the Capitalist materialism to which Communism succeeds. The best means of fighting both these evils is to maintain our charity even towards opponents and to create a powerful Christian social movement based on the principles of the encyclicals. The only approach made at Chatham House towards this aspect of the problem was in the speeches of the Rev. Henry Carter, who insisted on the value of the League's social welfare work and the necessity of maintaining this and preserving its international character.

Pursuing the attack on Communism, the Catholic conference considers that it is necessary to form centres in each country for the diffusion of impartial documentation (whether from Catholic sources or not) on the subject of Communism, and simultaneously to spread the knowledge of the

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Church's social teaching. This admirable scheme is not even touched on in the other conference.

Both conferences recognize the danger from Totalitarian States. The C.C.I.R. speakers deplore their attempts to jeopardize the natural rights of man, though they add that we must not interfere in the affairs of other states any more than is necessary. They condemn such states for their attack on the Church and their state-idolatry. Finally, they call attention to the moral obligations of one state with another, and condemn the glorification of war as an instrument of national policy and the violation of solemn international engagements. The reference in the last condemnation is obvious, but it is recognized that Totalitarianism is not an exclusive privilege of the Fascist states. Among the Totalitarian states Russia is regarded rightly as the worst, with Germany not far behind nor very different in spite of her boasts about the defence of Europe against Bolshevism. The tendencies in Italy are dangerous, but the Church can exist side by side with the Fascist regime, which does not pursue its principles to their logical conclusion. Again the stress is laid on that positive order and Christian harmony which is identified with true peace, and therefore there was little mention of the actual dangers of war between nations. The Chatham House gathering, probably as a result of their negative concept of peace, paid most attention to the problem of preventing war or bringing it to a speedy end. Germany was, from this aspect, regarded as the greatest enemy of peace, though there was some mention of Russia.

As this whole article is a study of conclusions on the problem of international co-operation, there is no place for further conclusions. It is only necessary to call attention to the value of both these institutions whose concern is the welfare of the international community.

Although I have been at pains to show the weakness of the Chatham House debates, it should be realized that they were productive of much that is permanently valuable. The practical problems were honestly faced and the solutions were not so much false as inadequate; completed however by the Catholic solutions, they furnish a policy which, properly

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carried out, could eliminate most of our international ills. This goes to show the necessity of Catholic support for such institutions as the Royal Institute of International Affairs, which also provides valuable documentation with admirable impartiality on the problems of the day. If only Catholics had been present to take part in these debates they could perhaps have directed them on lines more in accordance with Catholic philosophy and supplemented the practical wisdom of the other experts. The C.C.I.R. Conference itself urges Catholics to co-operate with institutions which, though not specifically Catholic, exist for the establishment of good order in international relations.

But co-operation with non-Catholic organizations presupposes membership of those Catholic institutions which provide the necessary training and safeguards for this co-operation; it would be obviously disloyal and not a little dangerous for a Catholic to give his support to a purely secular organization and refuse his help to his own corresponding Catholic society. In this instance, the Catholic Council for International Relations has made a more satisfactory contribution to the settlement of these problems and, having less funds at its disposal, is unable to bring that contribution to the notice of a wide public. Therein lies precisely the limitation of the C.C.I.R. They seem to be doing very little because they are not able to bring their activities to the notice of the public, and although they are doing a great deal with limited means they could achieve a great deal more with a larger membership.

It is eminently desirable, at a time when international questions are of supreme importance, that both these organizations should be supported, but for Catholics the first obligation is to the C.C.I.R. and after that, if possible, to the Royal Institute of International Affairs. "Do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the Faith." The address of the C.C.I.R. is Kensington Palace Mansions, De Vere Gardens, London, W.8.

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