

JOSHUA OR JUDGES ?

OUR only English Dictator, Cromwell, has suffered from being sandwiched between a martyred and a merry monarch. And his rule of the Saints was not more acceptable to Cromwell's contemporaries than his memory has been to us. But to-day, confronted by the prospect of everlasting government, not by Dictators, but Cunctators, we are changing front and on all sides above the click of knitting needles, the clink of port-glass or the clank of trucks, hear the cry: 'We want a Mussolini.'

Rather more than a century ago, our attitude to the great revolutionary Corsican was to make a bogey of him: 'Boney will get you.' Then we opposed foreign political revolutions while inaugurating our own more fundamental Industrial one; to-day we admire the foreigners' polity and only fight shy of it because it may involve a new economic system also. We cannot help thinking that we might like the Soviets no more than the Saints.

It is, indeed, extremely difficult to separate the idea of political Dictatorship from that of economic crisis. The terrible complexity, or confusion, of finance, the world-dislocation of commerce and industry, have had more than an economic effect. They have made the ordinary citizen feel incompetent to take an active share in the solution of economic difficulties; they have absorbed more and more the attention of politicians until politics have almost become a branch of economics; and the final, disastrous consequence has been that the citizen, feeling that politics preoccupied with quotas, exchanges, currencies and the like are incomprehensible, has lost interest in them and with this the sense of responsibility. He has sunk from citizen to subject, Consequently Dictators, even when, **as in** Germany, they arrive as the result of other than economic causes, find the populace in a frame of mind that is passive to their purposes. Indeed men are ready for economic change, even though it may imply the end of political, **as well** as economic, individualism.

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The nations are turning from their old Captivity in Capitalism; but more is needed than that, for the **Exodus** of a nation requires a Moses or at least a Joshua. In England we are still in bondage, and are procrastinating in our march to Canaan. After all, who know where it is? Let the forty years search in the wilderness fall to others. Sufficient for the day is its own evil. The flesh-pots of **Egypt** are still to windward. Moreover, is it safe? Joshua, when he comes, may drive like Jehu; and there is always the danger of that Red Sea.

The reputation of Dictators will depend upon their success in economy. For this they were, in effect, created. But a Dictator is not a system, he is a person. He dies, and with him dies his régime. Once beyond the wilderness, we must look to new forms of life. The crisis cannot last for ever; if it does, it **is** not a crisis, but a condition. Yet for a while the sandstorm stays to become a desert. Who meantime will succeed Joshua?

Oliver gave way to Richard Cromwell; and the last of the Antonines was Commodus. But it is not only that incompetence or vileness may be its sequel. Dictatorship is dangerous to sound polity in life as well as death. The first Dictators retired to their ploughs with their brief task accomplished; the modern Dictator, remaining, apparently, for life, is technically a Tyrant. The temptations of such a position are old and obvious and few modern Dictators have allowed their tyranny to remain unmasked. A mask as sinister as the countenance of the Tyrant himself appears—the theory of the totalitarian State, the successor of party government, as the Renaissance Prince was of the Commune. The modern Tyrant dare not be known as the mere wielder of force and divine right. In appearance the Nemesis, he claims to be the Apotheosis, of representative Government, the mouth-piece of his country. He *is* its representative Government. A country may, indeed, find that its Tyrant is its friend, but history adds daily to the lesson that the trouble lies with the friend's friends, with the open-mouthed party that pushed him to power. None the less, the **doctrinal**

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consequence is inescapable, for if the Tyrant is really representative, then still more so must his followers be. They are the embodiment of the spirit of the State and, as a corollary, those who differ from these ideas are no loyal citizens; they have no harmony with the State's sacred Soul.

This is the political claim of the Fascist or the Nazi. The party, changed from a Sect to a Saviour, changes also the character of the State, for only a Corporate' State, one which looks upon the Individual as subordinate to State ideals, rather than one which looks upon itself as a guardian of the interest of the Individual, indeed, of all the Individuals, can excuse that political exclusiveness which makes, not only patriotism, but in effect citizenship, the prerogative of one party in the State. This is the totalitarian State. Only a one-party State can really be a Corporate one; and, paradoxically enough, it is the totalitarian State which regards only one section of its subjects as citizens. A State which gives civic functions to all its citizens cannot be totalitarian, because criticism, not of details only, but of fundamentals, can never be absent from citizenship. This simplification of society then is synonymous with suppression, for in the totalitarian State, criticism of the State party must amount to treason. On these terms to criticize is to step out of the State. This ideal of the Body Politic, of the citizens subordinating themselves to the Common Weal, as the members to the body, is a noble sounding, but dangerously inexact analogy. The State is not like a body. It is twenty years since Henri Poincaré spoke of '*comparaisons grossières comme celles des sociétés avec les organismes,*' but it seems well to-day

¹ Modern political terms are fluid, and recently some writers have identified the *Corporate* with the *Corporative* State, that economic structure of vocational trades unions. Corporate, however, seems to imply a Socialist attitude to the individual and property, whereas in Italy the Corporative State aims at preserving individual, family and proprietary rights as far as possible. The two are not one.

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to make the point again. In the human body all the limbs are dependent for all their activity upon the direction of the head; they do not feel joy or pain independently of it; they receive from it both sensation and impulsion. When, in a Corporate State, the misery of each individual citizen is felt directly by the Government alone, the analogy of the State and the Body may be complete. Until then, the Corporate State is a phrase the governors may use in order to excuse unjustifiable political interferences. The State which apes the Body rapes the Soul.

There are two other perilous results of the creation of the Corporate State by the Dictator and his necessary Janissaries. The first peril results from the nature of Dictatorship; the second from that of the Dictator's party. The first is centralization of Government; the second, a subjective standard of Justice. Where the State becomes an objective ideal, Law tends to be subjective. The first danger is a circumstantial necessity, for the very emergencies which cast up Dictators are results of a complicated state of affairs where energetic action is called for. Government must become a sword to cut the Gordian knot; but this perhaps necessary concentration of authority, which robs the citizen of his responsibility, must produce action to justify itself. If the Dictatorship outlives the crisis, the temptation will be to create the necessity for further vigorous action; if it fails to conquer the crisis, it may drown failure in blood. This is a danger from within Dictatorship, made greater by the distressing readiness of Occidental democracies to abandon responsibility, and transmute themselves from citizens to slaves.

The world has often suffered from the needs of autocrats for action. But the second danger is even more formidable—the destruction of objective codes of Law in favour of laws expressing a party's conception of the State, that party claiming indeed to be the State. The European conception of Law derives from such objective codes as *the Jus Gentium* or *Jus Naturale*, that is from some abstract conception of Justice. A Judiciary administered this Law which, in constitutional theory, stood apart from the

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Executive and could criticize and annul, not only the Executives' actions but even, in many States, those of the ordinary Legislature as well. Law had a sacred character, reaching back to standards of morality, very often originally Christian. This made Law essentially the expression not of power, but of righteousness. That conception is everywhere in danger of disappearing. **Not** only is the moral origin lost under shoals of administrative decrees, but as the basis of legislation it is deliberately exchanged for State interest as the dominant party conceives it, that is, in a totalitarian State, necessarily the interest of the party itself. The freedom of the body from moral restraint in order to achieve 'self-expression,' according to modern theories, is paralleled by the subjective legalism of the Corporate State. It may seem strange, if not merely jealous, for a Catholic, as a member of the strongest of corporate societies, to criticize the Corporate State. But here again, analogy is dangerous. **As** a body, the Church exists, not so much for the members to give life to it, but for it to give life to the members. The object of the totalitarian State is to glorify the whole by sacrificing individual parts. But the object of the Church is to secure the salvation of its individual souls. It does not wish to produce a generally prosperous appearance by a levelling out of individual excellencies. The one lost sheep is for ever its preoccupation—its glory or failure, its prize or shame. It is all for each, as well as each for all. The object of the Church is to produce, not a nebula, but a constellation.

Here, beyond the immediate desert of the economic Exodus, is the Canaan to which our Joshuas should lead us. **As** the Church aims at individual salvation, so should the State at individual responsibility. After Joshua, Judges, and 'in those days' you remember, 'there was no King in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes'—a condition we should look to as a Pole Star, not a port. There is, however, a double restoration for us to make, for tyranny by Dictators is not only **an** absolute, it is also a personal, government. **But Govern-**

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ment should be decentralized and official. The full responsibility of the Dictators, the irresponsibility of the subject, create a political balance that does not harmonize with the personal balance. The difference between men is one of degree, not kind. No man is fitted for political office in a manner different from all his fellows, so that his authority should be absolute; he is different only in degree. Hence note the fact that the Dictator's absolute authority comes from his *personal* abilities; absolute kingship by Divine Right is more *logical* than this absolute rule. A Bourbon claimed to be different in kind; a Buonaparte only in degree.

The Church teaches and practises the essential equality and responsibility of men. Governments, faced by terrible crises, have withdrawn their recognition of that responsibility. The crisis over, a grave problem arises, the restoration of citizenship to the subject, the devolution of duties, the decentralization of office. It is the duty of Dictators to work for conditions which will allow ordinary men to supersede them. Between the all-powerful government and the powerless subject there must be allowed again to grow up the traditional hierarchy of duty and authority. The family, the municipality, the province, must interpose a *cursus honorum* between subject and ruler, representing their likeness in kind and their difference in degree. The restoration of official dignity and responsibility to the intermediate spaces of Society will recreate the sense of individual dignity and simultaneously inspire interest in the fortunes of the State. The home will again be a castle. Each householder should have a mace in his umbrella-stand.

The corollary of common humanity and of natural equality is, indeed, official dignity. Men are the same by nature, but superior or subordinate by necessity. To guarantee the great fact of human equality degrees and ranks must be heavily stamped with the sign of office. Superiority and command must not have purely personal bases. Nor is this a point unaffecting individual relations, for the dignity of fatherhood, for instance, and its authority,

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should be the guarantee of the free intercourse of friendship between parent and children; the official dignity of the priest conferring a sacrament, a blessing, does not derogate from, but enshrines, his proper friendliness with the world. Nor does severity in office contradict charity in private life. The Christian magistrate, the Christian father, do not with their lictors' or their parents' rods, belie the love they must show as individuals to prisoner or child. These administer unswervingly a system which is directed to paternal, to loving ends; a system implies hard cases but that the official should alter a system at his own judgment, should unconstitutionally waver in his application of the law owing to humanitarian feelings, would be a gross act of arrogance, for he would be claiming to exercise as a private individual a rank and power entrusted to him only as an official. The silver cord of office, the golden bowl of rank, must hold firm and never lose the precious spirit of private love. When he that is most powerful seizes **upon** authority, when the guardians of the holy laws bend them to private pity and desire, the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken. The personal and official characters are identical in Christ alone.

But this social order, these offices that give men power to condemn, subdue and regulate their fellows, must have some super-personal, some unassailable foundation. The system must rest upon ideal Order, that is, upon a Law which is seen to conform to Justice, because originally drawn from morality, in its turn derived from God. The lowest police court owes its authority to a belief in the righteousness of the law whose details it administers. Where Law loses respect and reverence, evasion, as in Prohibition, is wholesale. Until there are more constables than citizens the law must approximate to the moral ideals or be contemned. So only will office, regarded as part of the Divine order of which the Law is the most sacred expression, confer and imply that sacred character which while it exalts one man over another, preserves both his personal humility and the full human dignity of the other he commands. 'Ye are a holy nation, a royal priesthood

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The antithesis is perfect. Where men are human, office must be divine.

The **task of** our modern Joshuas is, therefore, to restore by economic action a general condition of tranquillity **in** which the forms of peace may flourish—where administrative action is not urgent, the laws are stable and power decentralized. In fact, the eventual goal of Dictators must be, after the restoration of citizenship to the subject, the restoration to a predominant position in the Constitution of the Judiciary and the Law. In certain countries, the Judges are losing or have lost their Constitutional function of determining the limits which the Legislature have fixed to the action of the Executive. This is inevitable in a Dictatorship, where the Executive absorbs the Legislature, and the Judges must fall back upon their more general, but less magistral, task of administering Justice to subjects alone. Where, as in a totalitarian State, Justice loses its objective character, they may sink to the task of merely condemning those whom the party presents as offenders. That is the logical outcome of the one-party State. The more serene times must return when, to a supreme Judiciary, the State can be not only the most vulnerable of victims, but the most capable of criminals.

The East, bullied by the West, has taken a strange revenge. The West has taught violence and learnt passivity. Occidental Democracies have said Kismet—not to a Divine Fate, but to the technical knowledge of financiers and bureaucrats. To these Western man abandons his responsibility and perhaps his hope of a comfortable life. No Angel descends to stir the pool into cleansing activity. It may be that from an older, less apathetic East the remedy will come. The Patriarchs come striding out of strenuous and golden days, the kinsmen and neighbours at the gate help Boaz to a swift and effective decision. Judges are the ideal held up for rulers, a passive central government, concluding, not initiating action, and the law they administer is no fruit of a legislation springing from a mixture of expediency and theory, but a code implanted in the hearts of a people by a righteous God.

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Dictators may find their noblest justification in the practical benefits they convey, for prosperity is the foundation of peace, the destruction of politics. It is unquestionably the duty of governments to work for their own annihilation, to make great powers unnecessary. But that happy Canaan is very far off and meanwhile the nations in this Exodus may be grateful to any Joshua, as to the 'shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

P. D. FOSTER.

CHURCH, STAGE AND SOVIET

MY interest in the Soviet became active when, after a course in the art of pantomime, one of my pupils was asked to demonstrate my technique for the American section of the **M.O.R.T.** (which I believe to stand for Moscow Olympiad of the Revolutionary Theatre). It is obvious that the Soviet-minded in New York, 'where one of the strongest dramatic councils exists,'¹ where also there are so many languages spoken, would like to be acquainted with a wordless drama. We reluctantly decided against the proposal. I say 'reluctantly' because I confess to sharing most of the Communist's views with regard to the existing theatre, and even a few of his ideals for a future stage. I cannot disagree with his condemnation of 'the revue of the bourgeois theatre distinguished for its extreme banality, absolute absence of political coherence, abundance of triviality, pomposity and out-and-out pornography.' And not only citizens of **U.S.S.R.** might endorse the following: 'The broad masses of workers and peasants, crushed by political and economic oppression, did not know the

¹ The-extracts are taken from Bulletin No. 2 of the International Workers' Theatrical Olympiad published in Moscow by the International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre.