Library Signpost

How Shall We Fight?

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

The casualties of human life in a war are frightful. But a worse casualty is that of the soul. What good is it to beat down oppression and slavery and then find that our own souls are brutal? Christians cannot tolerate any pleasure in the monstrous means of war. The wave of enthusiasm which swept our country a couple of weeks ago because of the bombing of Japanese cities, I suppose it would be charitable to interpret as satisfaction over the turn of the tide in our military affairs. But what if the enthusiasm had in it any element of vindictiveness, of hardness, of pride? Good Americans would have to disown that protest against it, apologize for it. There is the horrible danger, otherwise, that what we are choosing to consider "the arsenal of democracy" may emerge from the war a bedlam of hate, not only with blood on our hands, but with murder in our hearts.

The morality of air-raids is a new issue for the moral theologians to thresh out. As for me, though I am one of the least capable in this exact science, I have an inescapable conviction that air-raids are an immoral means of war, even in search of military objectives, as long as they result in the slaughter of civilians not engaged in war. But no matter what vigorous pros and cons could be cited on this new issue of military means, there can be no doubt that we must protest against the ferocity of our fellow-citizens who jump with enthusiasm at the blasting of our enemies. That is something in which Good Americans can have no part.

A heroic sermon was preached in Nazi Germany last New Year's Day by Cardinal Faulhaber, which gave ten commandments to faithful Catholics throughout the Reich in their relations to the government. If we are going to be true to Christian principles in the conduct of the war, we will have to pay close heed to the Cardinal's ten commandments. He said:

"1. Resist evil with all your power; remain courageous, wise and confident.

"2. Neither spread false rumors nor join in empty maxims of authority. On the contrary, speak the truth.

"3. Do not unleash anger but conquer irritation so that neither your conscience is dulled nor your soul's power wasted in discouragement or discontent.

"4. Refresh the spirit from the best of our culture so that peace may find you as did war.

"5. Help build up the society that offers men goodwill; live in justice, freedom and truth.

"6. Do not draw away from the suffering of humanity, but love men with a warm heart and judge the enemy in full justice.

"7. Where you cannot act or take part in the development of events, do not merely wait and play, but contemplate the reason of all existence.

"8. Fulfill your destiny in the larger relations of the world, but not without humbly recognizing your share in the guilt of life.

"9. Praise light even in darkness, for light always remains light.

"10. Be human in order to be Christians."

Please note especially number 6, number 10, and the last part of number 8. If we take these to heart, there can be no comfort for us in the bombing of enemy cities, in the conversion of God's natural gifts to the horrible engines of total war, in the binding of our best energies toward destruction, in the smearing of our brothers (for our enemies are still our brothers) with devilish names and caricatures.

What our people must do for their government in the war, whether as soldiers or civilians, must be done with a sense of contrition. "For we all have sinned and do need the glory of God." We have accepted a set-up of life which is riddled through with injustice and inhumanity. We have enjoyed the benefits of an industrial order which bled thousands of our brothers dry, which has made the white man an object of distrust throughout the world, which has made the world the white man's checkerboard, which has bought cheap and sold dear. Yes, that's the price we've paid for our gadgets, our cars, our radios, our whole padded existence. It has been crying to heaven for vengeance these many years. Now we are reaping the whirlwind of the wind we have sown. We cannot legitimately defend ourselves with anything less than contrition and prayer in our hearts. For we share in the common sin: its fruits have been ours. We cannot exorcise the devil from our enemies with the devil's own spittle: only with tears of contrition and the ointment of charity.

Were Franco's soldiers such monsters when they said a prayer for the enemies against whom they were pulling the trigger?

American Christians, or Christians of any other land, cannot go all out for war. We have our hearts to keep. It must be true of all of us that our hearts are not in war. This need not subtract from loyalty, nor from obedience to any of the legitimate demands of government. It does mean that we keep our hearts in charity.

We cannot expect that all persons, even all Catholics, will take this message to themselves, human nature being what it is. But there must be, there will be, some few here and there in every place, whose whole thought is for peace and justice and charity. Who knows but that the Holy Spirit may breathe upon these separate Christians and spread their fire abroad to catch hold of the world when it is once again sick of its banquet of Mars? . . . even as with St. Francis and his Third Order in the Middle Ages.

Five Years Ago—

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER.

From May 13, 1937, Edition

Miss Marjorie L. Anderson, Nazareth Academy senior, won first prize in New York State in the Eighth Gorgas Essay Contest, it was announced at the Gorgas Memorial Institute headquarters in Washington.

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Warning was sounded that the Rev. Michael O'Flanagan scheduled to speak at Convention Hall under auspices of the Rochester Committee to Aid the Spanish Leftists was a suspended priest.

EDITORIALS

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commands, are our duty from the beginning of our use of reason. Later years may find us horrified, writhing and striving for a better grasp of this duty; a more complete understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Right thinking will prevent us from all danger of wrecking our lives by wilfully turning away from the ethics and morality which are so clearly taught to us through natural revelation and divine revelation.

MORE ON THE CASE FOR THE JEWS

Some days ago we spoke on The Case for the Jews, insisting that the ordinary laws of justice, of fair play, of Christian love of our neighbor, should apply in all our dealings with our Jewish brethren. Axis propaganda has spread many stories among our people concerning the Jews and the part they have played and do play in business, in finance, in our armed forces, in particular attachment to our country. There is much of interest and importance in an article by H. C. McGinnis appearing in the May issue of "The Grail," published by the Benedictine Fathers of Metlaka, Indiana. The COURIER quotes extensively from the article in today's edition, in the interest of a better understanding by Catholic Americans of the important contributions of Americans of Jewish race to our national history.

"It is the purpose of this writing to give a few well authenticated facts which may help to dispel the hatred that American international policies and our national economic set-up are entirely dominated by Jewry for facts prove that nothing could be farther from the truth." The author of the article states the facts, gives us needed information to correct false statements on the subject. Proof of the 550,000 Jewish soldiers who fought for the United States in World War I: 5% of the armed forces, though Jews form only 3½% of the population. Proof of the financial support given George Washington when he needed it most by Haym Salomon, a Jewish financier: $600,000 without interest when others were calling for 20% to 40%. Proof of the true proportion Jewish bankers, merchants, manufacturers, bear to the total population: and reliance in the truth that will be the foundation for your continued respect and regard for our Jewish brethren.

Forces that would divide Americans are at work. Anti-Semitic propaganda would divide us as a preliminary to enslaving us. It is no love of America or of American institutions that prompts the campaign of falsehood as a foundation for hatred of the Jews: true Americans will, in American principles of truth and justice avoid all such hatred.

'GIVE FOR BOTH'

Truly can it be said: "I Am An American," by all who do their part in filling the 1942 Community War Chest. "The Chest appeal for 1942 is our largest and most magnificent effort, its failure would be our most serious disaster," warns His Excellency, Bishop Kearney in his vigorous appeal.

The campaign, this year, is all embracing. We are being asked not only to give for our nine participating Catholic agencies and the other worthwhile institutions for the unfortunate here at home, but to add all we can for the men in the armed forces, the "crushed and broken abroad," and the vital sustenance of the American Red Cross.

This is a year of self-sacrifice. Fortunately by means of the Community and War Chest our personal sacrifice demanded is not as great as it would be if all agencies participating were to make individual campaigns. We are called upon, however, to sacrifice in greater manner than in years past. That do, and the marvelous program called for when the Chest Campaign goes over will be a decided factor in winning the victory, for which all of us must work and pray.

HE UPBRAIDED THEM

For their unbelief and hardness of heart, Jesus rebuked His Apostles. They had refused to believe the reports of those who had seen the Risen Christ, who had told of His resurrection from the dead. They had hardened their hearts against the truth. That unbelief and hardness of heart had not, indeed, been corrected: they themselves had seen the Lord, had looked with their own eyes on Him present before them in His risen body, Thomas had spoken for them His word of faith: "My Lord and My God."

Faith in Christ can never be a matter of indifference: it is and must be always a matter of personal obligation. For us today as for the Apostles of old, faith is a matter of conscientious obligation. The Son of God became man to save us. He died and arose again to save us. He lived and died to teach us the way to heaven. Only through faith in Him, only through following of His precepts, can we hope for salvation. Therefore, did Jesus in sending forth His Apostles to teach and baptize all nations, say: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: He that believeth not, shall be condemned." "Condemned," because of unbelief: because Christ came to save him, and he refuses to be saved: God's grace and pardon awaiting him, and by unbelief and hardness of heart he refuses to accept them.

The teachings of Christ were to be taught by His Apostles and by the Holy Spirit dwelling within the Church: through these teachings they were to be His witnesses till the end of time: they were to give this testimony of Him. Herein was to be always the content of the faith they were to profess and to preach unto men.

Let us look upon our faith as our tribute to the Saviour, a tribute made invaluable by the grace of God accompanying it. Let us treasure it as our means of being saved.

'Quiz' Corner

How does the Church know that those she calls Saints are in Heaven?

With the assistance of the Holy Ghost, the Church can and does know. The Catholic Church is the Body of Christ, or His Spouse; is in fact, Christ, and He knows what holiness is. The Church examines the life of the holy person, and says that such a life could not lead a soul to hell. The Church calls those Saints only whose heroic virtues has been proved. Perfect charity before death destroys sin, and all punishment due to sin. There is no place where such a soul could go except Heaven. Miracles wrought by God in honor of such a one are God's guarantee of his/her holiness.

The Blackfriars' "Savonarola"

By Rev. Francis H. Gille, C.S.P.

After reading the newspaper critiques on "Savonarola," Father Divine, Negro play presented by the Blackfriars' Guild, you would probably go to see it as a result of sensationalism, prepared in the usual journalistic way and expectation of something peculiar and unusual.

"Before the tributary theater has something to offer," you say, "I must have a taste of it for myself." You like the newspaper critic, but you do not agree with his estimate of [illegible] Alliance of the New York [illegible] wrote: "Father Divine's [illegible] are unconsciously dramatic. The chief [illegible] Richard Wright, Jr., of the Negro [illegible] as the grave and intelligent [illegible] a certain interest the writing was [illegible] to be sure, 'proper English' and [illegible] something of an achievement in the [illegible] used by way of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]