

# THE NEW COMMUNITY

By CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

## I.—FASCISM, DEMOCRACY AND THE ENGLISH TRADITION

Four years ago I wrote a small book on *Religion and the Modern State*, which was an attempt to reconsider the problem of the relations of Church and State as they were affected by the rise of the new political ideologies. I pointed out that the issue was not merely a conflict between Democracy and Dictatorship or between Fascism and Communism. It was a change in the whole social structure of the modern world, which affects religion and culture as well as politics and economics.

The forces that make for social uniformity and the mechanization of culture are no less strong in England and the United States than in Germany and Italy, so that we might expect to see the rise of a democratic totalitarianism which would make the same universal claims on the life of the individual as the totalitarian dictatorships of the Continent.

I think that events have justified this diagnosis of the situation, and that few people today will question the existence of this totalitarian trend even in our own country. It has indeed become the most vital and urgent problem of our time, how this trend is to be reconciled with the traditions of liberty and individualism on which not only the English State but the whole fabric of English culture and social institutions has been built.

Everybody recognizes the need for national unity and national organization, but there are few who realize how fundamental are the changes that this involves in our national ways of life and ways of thought, and fewer still are prepared to pay the price. For if we copy the methods of the dictatorships in a merely negative and defensive spirit, we shall lose our liberty and the distinctive virtues of the English social system without gaining any new inspiration or vision. While if we go the whole way and attempt to base our organization on the positive creed of a political party, we shall run the risk of producing a social conflict which will divide the nation instead of uniting it.

It is easy to take a pessimistic view of the situation and to say that England is now paying the price for the material prosperity and economic domination that she has enjoyed for the last century, and that she must now yield place to the younger and more ruthless powers that have learned in a hard school to adapt themselves to the new conditions. But even if this be true, it is no excuse for an attitude of passive resignation. The change we are witnessing is something much greater than the rise and decline of particular States. It is a transformation of civilization such as the world has never known before, and it affects every nation and every continent, whether they are young or old, whether they are weak or powerful.

### The New Barbarism

What is it that is happening? The old civilization of Western Europe which was so deeply rooted in the Christian and Mediterranean past has produced something different to itself which has no roots in the experience of our race—a marvellous mechanical monster that threatens to devour the culture that created it.

For the most disturbing feature of the new situation is the growing inhumanity of our civilization. It is not that we are personally less humane: on the contrary we are horrified at the cruel sports and cruel punishments of our forefathers in the not remote past. It is the system itself which is indifferent to humanity and which forces its servants and masters to be indifferent

also. We see this in detail in the case of the motor-car which exists to serve human pleasure and convenience and yet inevitably seems to bring mutilation and death to large numbers of harmless people. We see it on a large scale in the way that the modern industrial system, which exists to serve human needs, nevertheless reduces the countryside to smoking desolation and involves whole populations in periodic troughs of depression and scarcity. But we see it in its most extreme and devilish form in modern warfare, which has a nightmare quality about it that is hardly reconcilable with a human origin or purpose.

When we saw the recent preparations for war—the gas masks, the digging of shelters and the preparation for the wholesale evacuation of the population from the towns—it seemed no longer to have anything in common with the old warfare of armies set in array and the human thrill of battle. It was rather as though a human ant heap was threatened with destruction by some gigantic impersonal force.

If the world abandons itself to the domination of these inhuman powers, it matters little which nation or which group of States is successful, for this power is alien to every nation, and its victory means defeat for humanity as a whole. The militant ideologies of the Left and the Right may, no doubt, help nations to endure the shock with fortitude and even with hope, but they are like drugs which render the nerves insensible to the pain of the operation without in any way changing its character. For these gigantic forces seem to demand some super-human power, some pure intelligence, to govern them, if they are not to become devilish instruments of destruction; and the more completely a nation surrenders itself to the blind urge to power, the more easily are they carried away by the relentless drive of events which is pressing European civilization towards disaster.

The fact is that the same fundamental issues confront all the peoples of Europe, and the Fascist States are no more anxious than the democratic ones to make a complete break with the past. On the contrary, they have taken their stand in the maintenance of national traditions and national culture, and the traditions of Latin and Germanic culture are really no more adapted to mass organization and mechanization than are our own. It is only in the region of politics that their tradition of authoritative government and military discipline have made it easier for them than for ourselves to accept a totalitarian system, but this is not altogether an advantage since it causes the real nature of the change to be obscured by the romance of ideological myths and passionate loyalty to the personality of a leader.

### The Totalitarian Solution: The Party-State

But we have to face these problems in cold blood without any passionate belief in an inspired leader or a new gospel. It is therefore harder for us to take decisions, harder for us to choose a definite path, while on the other hand we still have room to look around and to learn from the mistakes of those who have attempted to solve the problem by drastic revolutionary methods.

Now the existing totalitarian régimes have all originated in the same manner: viz., by the capture of the State machine by a political party which has then proceeded to reorganize the whole life of the community according to its programme and ideology. Under the régime of parliamentary democracy, the State had become a neutral impersonal organization which was operated by whatever party or combination of parties happened to predominate at the moment, and since rival parties and rival interests tended, with universal suffrage and representation, to cancel one another out, the democratic State was incapable of deciding fundamental

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issues, and the whole government became weak and inept.

Fascism and Communism owed their triumph to a policy of revolutionary action which restored to the State a single will and purpose. But in order to do this they narrowed the basis of citizenship at the same time as they widened the range of political action. Alike to the Communist and the National Socialist the Community transcends the State, and the party is not a cog in the machinery of government, but the inspired organ of the Community or the nation and it possesses a divine absolute right to override legal and constitutional restrictions and to use the State as a means of realizing its super-political ideals. For the State exists only to serve the people; and the Party, or the Leader of the Party, is the only authentic embodiment of the will of the people.

Thus the new parties have little in common with their democratic predecessors. They are more like a religious order which exacts total obedience from its members and which trains them by a strict discipline to become the instruments of the corporate purpose. But while a religious order is always in the last resort the servant of the Church, the totalitarian party is the master of the State and bends it to its purpose. It is in fact more like a Church than a State, since its membership is based on the profession of a creed or ideology and on faith in the gospel of the leader rather than on citizenship. Nevertheless, though the Party is above the State and assumes super-political functions, there is an inevitable tendency for it to become fused with it sooner or later.

Alike in Russia, Italy, and Germany, it is no longer possible to distinguish the party from the government, so that the upshot of the revolution in all three cases has been an immense increase in the power of the State and in the range of its activities. Never perhaps in the history of the world has the State been so omnipotent and its power so highly concentrated in the hands of the ruler as in the three great totalitarian States today. There have been vast empires in the past, and emperors and dictators who seemed to possess unlimited power over their subjects, but never before have they been able to mobilize all the political, economic and psychological resources of the community and turn them to whatever end they chose. De Maistre wrote in a striking phrase of the revolutionary will of the First French Republic as "a battering ram with twenty million men behind it," and this is ten times more true of the will to power of the new totalitarian State, for apart from the greater population and wealth of the new States, their mechanization and their intensive organization of intelligence and propaganda give them a power of which earlier ages had no conception.

#### Can Democracy Survive?

Now the problem which confronts us today is how the democratic States are to make themselves strong enough to exist in face of the new powers, without abandoning the principles of personal liberty and tolerance on which they are based. And it is a problem on which the future of the world depends, for if the three great western democracies, England, France, and the United States, fail to preserve and maintain their tradition of freedom, no other powers in the world will be strong enough to do so, and the whole spirit of western civilization will be changed.

From the western political standpoint the régime of the totalitarian party State represents a brutal simplification of social life, a one-sided solution which ruthlessly sacrifices some of the highest cultural values to the cult of power. Yet this should not prevent us from recognizing that its achievements are genuine ones, or from admitting the weaknesses and vices of our own liberal democratic

system and the tendencies towards social degeneration which exist in democratic society.

If Western civilization is to be saved it is necessary to find some way of removing the divided aims, the lack of social discipline and the absence of national unity that are the weaknesses of democracy, without falling under the *tyrannis* of dictatorship and the fanatical intolerance of a totalitarian party. And we cannot do this by politics alone. No constitutional change will touch the roots of our weakness, for it is the life of society and not merely the government of society that needs reordering. It is through their realization of that truth that the dictators have earned their success. They have not been content to govern and tax and legislate, they have aspired to change the spirit of a people, to rescue it from apathy and despair, to give it faith in its mission and hope in its future. And if they have done it by crude and brutal methods, by the sacrifice of individual freedom and by the suppression and oppression of minorities, they would say that it is better to do it so than not to do it at all.

#### The English Political Tradition

But we on our side must ask whether it is not possible for a free nation to do all this without losing its freedom and by methods which do not conflict with the social traditions of our race. After all, Communism had behind it the tradition of autocratic violence which had already revolutionized the Russian State in the days of Peter the Great, while National Socialism can appeal to the tradition of a State that was built up by military discipline and the ideal of a people in arms.

We, on the other hand, have behind us a yet longer tradition of freedom; not, it is true, of democracy in the modern sense, but of individual liberty and corporate self-government. Our parliamentary institutions are not the artificial creation of liberal idealism, as in so many countries; they are an organic part of the life of the nation, and they have grown up century by century by the vital urge of social realities. We are too old to change this tradition for some imported ideology. If parliamentary institutions are unreconcilable with a totalitarian party régime (and I believe they are) then the new system is not for us. We must find some other method of reorganizing and strengthening the nation.

The British parliamentary system is of its very nature non-totalitarian, and its success through the ages has been largely due to the limited character of its aims and its powers. It has been the monarchy rather than parliament that has been the symbol and guarantee of national unity, and the monarchy, even more than parliament, depends for its very existence on its limited character. But what has always given the English system its unique strength and social solidarity has been the existence of a social unity behind the monarchy and behind parliament, a unity of which they are the political organs, but which itself transcends politics. It is this unity which makes it possible for our party system to function on a basis of common understanding without dividing the nation into two hostile camps with mutually exclusive ideologies.

In the past this unity was taken for granted: it was an unconscious social fact arising out of the natural structure of society, from the life of the people and the national tradition of culture. But today not only is this structure changing, it is also becoming self-conscious owing to the advance in psychological knowledge and the organization of sociological and economic research. And it is on this ground, rather than in the field of politics in the strict sense, that it is necessary to plan and organize, if any fundamental reform is to be made in the life of the nation.

It is true that the totalitarian States have attempted this fundamental work of social reconstruction by direct political action. But by so doing they have, as we have seen, made the party into a super-political organization which has some of the characteristics of a religious society, and at the same time they have destroyed personal freedom and narrowed the national tradition of culture by subordinating the higher super-political activities of the community to the intolerant and rigid tyranny of political partisanship.

### The New Political Orders

In the past Western society was made up of a number of interpenetrating orders, political, economic, cultural and religious, each of which was either autonomous or possessed a considerable degree of *de facto* independence. The political order was only a part, and in theory at least not the most important part, of the social structure, and within the political order itself the party held a relatively humble and unhonoured place. The idea that the spiritual life of society should be ruled and guided by a political party would have appeared to our ancestors a monstrous absurdity. The spiritual order possessed its own organization, that of the Church, which was held to transcend all the rest in importance and which exercised a profound influence on human life from the cradle to the grave.

But the time has long passed since the Church held undisputed sway over the mind and conscience of western culture, and the loss of Christian unity has brought with it a loss of spiritual order and of the sense of spiritual values in society at large. First, with the Renaissance, secular culture emancipated itself from the tutelage of the Church and created an independent order of humanism and science. Then with the industrial revolution economic life emancipated itself from the control of the State and created the vast system of financial, commercial and industrial relations which we know as the capitalist order.

Thus there have arisen outside the traditional historic organizations of Church and State these two independent orders to which western civilization owes a vast increase in its material and spiritual resources, but which, on account of their lack of organization and social direction, have become centrifugal and disintegrating forces. This first became plainly evident in regard to economics, and it was here that the first conscious attempt was made to restore unity of direction and bring the economic order under the control of the community. This was the origin of Socialism and, in a sense, of all the totalitarian movements, for the attempt to unify the political and the economic orders led almost inevitably to the confusion of social categories and the attempt to extend State control to every sphere of social life. Even in England, I believe that the decline of our political system dates from the day when the Trade Unions renounced their non-political ideal of being masters in their own house and aspired to be masters also in the House of Commons. For this led inevitably to the supersession of the Liberal Party, which was a vital organ of English political life, and the intrusion of a new principle which if logically carried out would involve a totalitarian order. For if all the workers are embodied in the unions, and if the T.U.C. decides the policy of its parliamentary candidates, it is obvious that the English party system could no longer exist, and the whole political order would be subordinated to an organization based on industry and governed by purely economic considerations.

Actually, of course, these possibilities have failed to materialize and the Labour Party, instead of absorbing the political in the economic order, has helped to bring

some measure of social responsibility and control into the capitalist system. Nevertheless, the creation of a party that has a non-political economic basis, and the introduction of the principle of class war into the party system, have undoubtedly weakened and narrowed the basis of agreement on which that system rests, and there can be little doubt that an attempt to realize the full socialist programme by constitutional means would strain the parliamentary system to breaking point.

But if it is dangerous to attempt the fundamental reorganization of economic life by purely political means, it is far more dangerous to bring politics into the order of culture, for this means the invasion of the human soul by the hand of power. This is the original sin of every totalitarian system, and this is why the English mind revolts instinctively at the idea of the forcible imposition by the State of any kind of ideology.

(*Mr. Dawson's second article, "The Non-Political Orders," will appear next week.*)

## CHANGES IN POLAND

(FROM OUR CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT)

A complete change in internal and foreign policy took place in Poland during the autumn of the past year. Externally, the regime is till the same, but it will certainly be modified to meet the profound changes which have followed the events of last October. The Munich Agreement, the solution of the Czechoslovakian question, and the *rapprochement* with the U.S.S.R., have shaken the structure which rested upon two fundamental foundations—the close collaboration with Germany and Hungary in foreign affairs, and the maintenance of a moderate dictatorship at home. Neither of these two principles has withstood the strains placed upon it by the events of the past year. Public opinion has shown an enthusiasm that represents the genuine voice of Poland, in calling for a return to the governing principles of the national tradition with regard to civil liberties and the defence of Polish national identity against the German *Drang nach Osten*.

The facts which express this development diplomatically are well known. Poland exerted herself to the utmost to obtain a common frontier with Hungary, and to prevent the establishment of a centre for Ukrainian irredentism at the doors of eastern Galicia. But the efforts of Colonel Beck were completely unsuccessful. They were energetically opposed by Germany; Italy, who at first approved the project, later withdrew her support. Rumania went so far as to risk compromising her alliance with Poland in order to avoid assisting at a further aggrandisement of Hungary. Hungary also disappointed the expectations of Warsaw; the Magyars did not dare openly to obstruct the Reich, and Admiral Horthy and M. Imrédy rejected the Polish suggestion to bring about a *fait accompli* by occupying Sub-Carpathian Russia. Moreover, neither France nor Great Britain were willing to listen to the advances made to them by Colonel Beck. The Quai d'Orsay was pre-occupied with overtures to Germany, which precluded much attention to Polish interests. So we witnessed the grotesque spectacle of the D.N.B. and the Havas Agency both upholding the inalienable rights of the population of Ruthenia, and sternly denouncing the imperialist aspirations of Poland and Hungary. Only

those present disadvantages which are an historical inheritance; nor can people anywhere be told to make themselves scarce and not to seek to multiply and fill the earth. The earth is to those who will people and work it.

We hope this visit will be the starting point in Britain for a more discerning attitude towards the other peoples in Europe. Whether or no there is ever a formal agreement between the great Powers there ought to be a common recognition of a joint European interest and an end of the mentality which considers all readjustments of territories or status as craven yielding to evil aggression. And, on the other side, we hope this visit will mean the resumption by Italy, under Signor Mussolini, of that work for peace through gradual revision in which he was for so many years the leader in Central Europe. What happened at Munich when Mr. Chamberlain and Signor Mussolini bridged the gulf between Herr Hitler and the French, still tangled in their Central European Versailles alliances, crystallized the underlying reason for the Rome visit of this week, the joint interest of both countries in the peace of Europe. The future of the Anglo-Italian pact is bound up with the future both of French-Italian and of Anglo-German relations. It is a beginning to something bigger than itself, and if it cannot grow, it seems likely to lose its virtue.

In the other and older Rome, the seat of the Holy See, the British statesmen meet no imposing array of material power; but they find themselves at the home and centre of moral authority, at a time when men the world over are seeing more and more clearly that human life cannot be carried on at all without such authority. By contrast with the new Italy, the Papacy is by far the oldest institution in Europe, the only living link with the great civilization of Rome, an institution which in Rome and in Europe has seen innumerable regimes come and go; and has sought to make the best of them all. The British statesmen go to the Vatican at a time when British relations with the Holy See are happily singularly smooth. For its vast size and population, the Catholic population of the Empire is small.

The two groups, the four hundred million people under the British flag, the three hundred million under the spiritual authority of the Holy See, only overlap to the extent of nineteen million, but the Catholic missions in Africa and Asia find the British flag and Government their strong support.

The old official mentality which distrusted missionaries has become an anachronism now that in every country, international and national propaganda is busily pursued, and it is essential that native populations shall receive a doctrinal grounding if they are not to become the prey of men equally hostile to the Catholic religion and the British political order.

It is a just observation and an important one, that in all the great countries of Europe—Germany, Italy, France and Spain—there is a large section of the population who are convinced Catholics, and as such, a moderating element amid conflicting ideologies, which is now well-disposed to Britain. Britain used to be the natural friend of a secular Liberal order abroad hostile to the Church. But today the cleavages are other. So of Spain today, it is particularly true that the forces most hostile to Catholicism would also, if they gained the ascendancy, be hostile to Britain as the embodiment of a capitalist imperial order. The first sign of what was coming in Spain after 1931, the first proof that extremists were making the running, came with the violent dispossessing of the Church; and on the Nationalist side the only element which disquiets the Catholics, the extreme nationalism at one end of the Phalangists, is also the only element with which Britain might excusably fail to get on.

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By CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

### II.—THE RESTORATION OF SPIRITUAL ORDER

#### Organization versus Anarchy

When Humanism emancipated secular culture from ecclesiastical control, it applied the traditional mediæval ideal of the freedom of the spiritual power to the realm of science and art. It sought not the destruction of the spiritual power, but the creation of an independent spiritual power in the natural order; and ever since then the freedom of scholarship and science and art has been the keystone of western culture. But the republic of letters was never a lawless one. Citizenship could only be obtained by a long and toilsome discipline which made the scholars no less a closed and privileged order than the clerics of the mediæval Church.

But modern civilization, while retaining the ideal of freedom of thought, and even extending it to regions which were formerly outside its domain, has at the same time destroyed the framework of social and intellectual discipline on which this freedom rested. With the growth of popular education at one end of the scale, and the development of scientific specialization at the other, the intellectual order dissolved into a vast and formless chaos controlled only by the power of the State over education and the power of capital over the Press. When these powers do not operate, the strange shadow world of the intelligentsia remains the last refuge of cultural independence like the last spot of dry land on which man and beast crowd together in uneasy fellowship before the rising floods.

Unless some order can be brought back into this chaos, nothing can save it from the ideological police of a totalitarian State, and there is already no lack of evidence of what that involves in the loss of spiritual freedom and the lowering of cultural standards. Better perhaps that the State should organize our culture than that it should be left to the mercenary leadership of the popular Press and the financial exploitation of its intellectual and moral weakness. But it is a choice of evils, either of which is equally hostile to the freedom and humanity of western culture.

#### Religion Transcends Culture

But what of the other spiritual power which still survives and still maintains its ancient claim to be the guide and teacher of mankind—I mean the Church? There is no doubt that the Church is by its nature and tradition better fitted to deal with problems of the spiritual order than the State can ever be. "Let us not forget," wrote Nietzsche, "in the end what a Church is and especially in contrast to every 'State': a Church is, above all an authoritative organization which secures to the most *spiritual* men the highest rank, and *believes* in the power of spirituality so far as to forbid all grosser appliances of authority. Through this alone the Church is under all circumstances a *nobler* institution than the State."

Nevertheless it is today impossible to return to the undifferentiated unity of mediæval culture. The rise of humanism and the modern sciences has created an autonomous sphere of culture which lies entirely outside the ecclesiastical domain and in which any direct

intervention on the part of the Church would be resented as an intrusion. Moreover, the Church is herself weakened by religious division and invaded on her own territory by the forces of anti-clericalism and paganism, and by the unlimited claims of the totalitarian State.

The great service the Church can render to western civilization at the present time is to keep her own inheritance intact and not to allow her witness to be obscured by letting herself be used as the instrument of secular powers and politics.

It is true that the present crisis is producing constant appeals to the Church to use her influence in the cause of "moral rearmament." There is a tendency, especially among the English-speaking Protestant peoples, to treat religion as a kind of social tonic that can be used in times of national emergency in order to extract a further degree of moral effort from the people. But apart from the Pelagian conception of religion that this view implies, it is not wholly sound from the psychological point of view, since it merely heightens the amount of moral tension without increasing the sources of spiritual vitality or resolving the psychological conflicts from which the society suffers.

Moreover, moral rearmament to serve the cause of the nation is not the Church's primary and essential task. Religion serves a higher creed than man can comprehend. Again and again we see the prophets, and One greater than the prophets, announcing the doom of their people, when on the short view they should have been devoting their energies to restoring the national morale. Certainly no modern government, whether totalitarian or democratic, would tolerate the behaviour of Jeremiah the prophet at the time of his nation's need: in fact, in most countries today his treatment would be condemned as unduly mild, and he would be executed out of hand as an agent of enemy propaganda.

Yet on the long view Jeremiah is justified even on national grounds, since, thanks to him and his like, his people still survive while the successful powers to which they bowed their neck have one after another gone down to the dust. Better for Israel, some may say, if they had shared the lot of other peoples and not continued to drag their weary way down twenty-five centuries of suffering. But that is where history, like religion, transcends the order of culture and enters the penumbra of divine mystery.

And the Church, no less than the ancient prophets, is the servant of this higher order. She is the hierophant of the divine mysteries, not the teacher of human science, nor the organizer of human culture. But if it is not the Church's business to organize culture, neither is it that of the State. It is an intermediate region which belongs to neither the one nor the other, but which has its own laws of life and its own right to self-determination and self-direction.

#### The Order of Culture

To restore order in this sphere is the greatest need of our civilization, but it can only be achieved by a power of its own order, that is to say by the power of ideas and the organization of thought. But it is not possible to do this by any kind of philosophic or scientific dictatorship, as was the dream of the idealists from Plato to the present day, for the intellectual world is as divided as the religious world, and philosophy has lost its ancient prestige and its hegemony over the other sciences.

Nor is it possible to restore spiritual order by a return to the old humanist discipline of letters, for that is inseparable from the aristocratic ideal of a privileged caste of scholars. A democratic society must find a correspondingly democratic organization of culture, which should be distinct from political democracy, but

parallel to it in another field of activity. At the present day, when everyone is educated a little, and when no one can master the whole realm of knowledge, it would be invidious to distinguish the scholars from the unlearned, especially since under modern conditions a man may attain vast scientific knowledge without any corresponding breadth of culture.

In these circumstances it seems to me that the form of organization appropriate to our society in the field of culture as well as in that of politics, is the party—that is to say, a voluntary organization for common ends, based on a common "ideology."

But is an organization of this kind conceivable in our divided and disordered civilization? That is the vital question on which the future of democracy depends.

The totalitarian parties, as I have pointed out, owe their success to their achievement in this field—the organization of national life and culture outside the political sphere. But since this function is not really consistent with the political basis of their activity, they transcend politics in both directions—by aiming at a super-political end and by using sub-political methods of violence and lawlessness in order to attain it. They become persecuting sects, like the Jacobins before them, rather than free organs of public opinion.

#### Culture Transcends Politics

Now it is the fundamental principle of the old English school of political thought that the national society and national culture transcend politics. It is common both to the Left and the Right, and was insisted on by Tom Paine as strongly as by Edmund Burke. Government, says the former, is no sacred mystery, it is simply a national association for carrying on the public business—*res publica*—and the greater part of the order that reigns among mankind is not the creation of governments, but is due to the free activity of the civilized community. Society, says Burke, is not an artificial legal construction, it is a spiritual community, "a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born."

But while English thinkers, whether Liberal or Conservative, recognize that society transcends the State, they did not realize the need for any deliberate organization of the non-political social functions. They believed that these things could be safely left to nature and to the free activity of individuals or, alternatively, to nature and social tradition. They did not see that some form of social control is necessary in the economic world in order to protect the individual and society itself from exploitation, and that some social discipline is no less necessary in the world of culture to save the national tradition from disintegration and destruction.

Today the Liberal individualism and the Conservative traditionalism of the nineteenth century have alike disappeared, and the policy of *laissez-faire*, which has already been abandoned in economics, is rightly being abandoned in culture also. Nevertheless, this need not involve the abandonment of the traditional English principle of the limitation of the State to its own political sphere. It is still possible to create an organization of national culture which would not be directly dependent on the State or on any political party; and I believe that a society so organized would be not only more free but, in the last resort, also stronger than a totalitarian State which is obliged to narrow and even impoverish its culture in order to keep it completely dependent on political control.

### Cultural Self-Determination

But in order to do this it is necessary to have a clear consciousness of our aim, and to pursue it with as much determination and perseverance as the servants of the State have shown in their domain. Hitherto the children of this world have shown themselves not only wiser, but also more capable of self-discipline and devotion than the children of light. The Machiavellian virtue of the statesman, low as it may be, has been a real thing, whereas the higher ideals of the humanist and the philosopher have been bloodless phantoms which were not strong enough to arouse passionate devotion or effectual action.

Yet few would deny that it is possible to serve the community in other fields than politics, or would hold that such a vocation is intrinsically less capable of arousing devotion and enthusiasm. What has been lacking hitherto is any satisfactory basis for common action, and for lack of this there has been an appalling waste and misdirection of the highest spiritual resources of the community which have been left to run wild or to expend themselves in an unworthy servitude to economic interests.

What is necessary is some organization which is neither political nor economic, and which will devote itself to the service of national life and the organization of national culture. At the present time in democratic countries, the realm of culture has become a no-man's-land which is given up to anarchic individualism and at the same time invaded from different directions by the organized powers of the State, and financial capitalism. Thus the Press, the Cinema, and the Theatre, which exert such an enormous influence on public opinion and popular culture, are as yet almost free in democratic countries from any direct interference by the State : yet their freedom is limited and their cultural value diminished in every direction by the financial motives and the capitalist organization that determine their character. The field of education, on the other hand, is relatively free from this slavery to economic forces. But here the State has already acquired almost complete control, and it would seem as though the power which the State has thus obtained over the mind of the community must inevitably bring about the triumph of a totalitarian order.

### The Ideal of Free Organization

Nevertheless, there remains a free element, a survival of the humanist tradition, which gives even our bureaucratic educational machine a leaven of freedom and liberal ideals. It is easy to condemn the snobbery and Philistinism of the English public-school system. Yet one must admit, I think, that it does stand, however incompletely, for this principle of the service of the national culture, apart from any political or economic motive ; so that one is conscious of the presence of something which comes neither from State organization nor the power of money, but which is the fruit of the unbroken corporate tradition of centuries of national life. It is inevitable that under existing social conditions some of them should have acquired a definitely aristocratic character as the preserve of a wealthy and privileged class, but this is by no means always the case. The school which I know best, and which is in a sense the archetype of the whole system, has never had any marked aristocratic or plutocratic character. It has always maintained its original function of training scholars who would be good servants of the community. In this it has been faithful to the spirit of its founder, the good chancellor, who was the trusty servant alike of King and Pope, of State and Church, of England and Christendom. And thus it has

preserved its place through all the social and political changes of five centuries as an independent spiritual organ of the community, a living example of an organized cultural institution which is neither the creature of the State nor the servant of the financial powers that dominate democratic society.

Now if it is possible for a school to have an independent cultural tradition and, as it were, a soul of its own, why should not the same principle of free organization be applied to other fields of culture which at present lie derelict and which otherwise will become the drill yards and machine yards of a totalitarian State ?

The main cause is the absence of any spiritual power to take the work in hand and the lack of any clear sense of national aims and social responsibility in matters of culture. But the time has come when we can no longer afford to neglect the non-political and non-economic sides of national life or to leave them to the unorganized activity of individuals. The new totalitarian parties and régimes have discovered that nations do not live by bread alone, and they have attempted to capture the soul of a nation by violence and to use the total psychological force of the community in their relentless drive towards world power. Thus, what is at stake is not the literary culture of a privileged minority, but the spiritual life of the people. It is only by the free organization of national life, according to the spirit of our institutions and traditions, but in new forms adapted to twentieth-century conditions, that we can save, not only our national being, but also the ways of life, the forms of thought and the spiritual values, which are the principles of Western Civilization.

*This article and the one that appeared last week are taken from Mr. Dawson's BEYOND POLITICS, due for publication by Sheed and Ward next month. They are printed here by courtesy of author and publishers. In last week's article the last sub-heading, The New Political Orders, should have been The Non-Political Orders.*

## THE FAMILY POLICY OF NATIONALIST SPAIN

### I

(FROM OUR BURGOS CORRESPONDENT)

A social law of great importance has just been promulgated in Nationalist Spain, to initiate the family policy inaugurated by the State. This law grants a family subsidy, proportionate to the number of children, to all workers and employees working in Spain under any employer. Catholic inspiration is explicit in the first article of the law, which reads :—

“It is the definite policy of our national movement to raise and to strengthen the family institution in its Christian tradition, since it is the natural and perfect social unit and the welding force of the nation.” Two million families and some ten million children will benefit by the new law; figures that show its vital importance.

For the purpose of fathoming the motive of this subsidy, it will be interesting to study “the population policy” which is planned for the new Spain. Mr. Roper Power has studied the demographic policy of various countries in THE TABLET (Nos. 5129 to 5133), but without touching Spain, where the religious factor has helped the family, with its high birth co-efficient,