

the final scene of Goethe's "Faust" into service, and what though the Carolingian Christian and the modern pantheist piteously protest the infringement of their rights? He treats them as if they were Belgium, and overwhelms them in the vast flood of sound. And for a while, the symphony, with its thousand performers, stuns the auditor by sheer physical mass. Soon, nevertheless, comes the realization that there is in the work neither the all-creating spirit that the composer invokes, nor the Heaven that he

strives to realize. They are in the music of Palestrina, of Bach, of Franck, because they were in the hearts of those composers. It was the tragedy of Mahler's career that all his life he should have struggled to capture them, and should never have seen that they could not be taken by force. His music bears testimony to his pitiful desire to find their beauty, which his restless, unhappy, arid personality wanted.

PAUL L. ROSENFELD.

A COMMUNICATION

The Real Implications of Conscription

IN his article, "The Free Man and the Soldier," Professor Perry has managed to avoid any very definite treatment of the quite specific questions which must occur to anyone who seriously considers the relation of conscription to democracy, and the ultimate object which conscription is designed to accomplish.

Among those very definite questions are these: How far is the control of political opinion by the state necessary to the efficient working of conscription? How far does submission to state control in matters of political opinion render a people unable to form sound political judgments, and so unfit them for democracy? And how far does state control of opinion unfit them, particularly, to solve the problems of international relationships?

Let us take the last question first. It is admitted by all parties to the discussion, and is most particularly emphasized by those impressed with the need for greater armament, that the outstanding problems of the international situation—immunity from the danger that each nation runs from the power of the others, the permanent maintenance of peace with due regard to right which it is the ultimate object of conscription to help secure—will demand for their final solution a capacity larger than men have heretofore shown for other-mindedness, for seeing the point of view of the other fellow, for a sane judgment of the facts between them, for a more rational control of certain primitive impulses and passions in one particular sphere: in short, a certain moral and intellectual evolution therein. Without that we shall obviously get no final solution. And yet, it would seem that conscription, to be thoroughgoing and effective in its mechanism, must and does deliberately oppose that particular moral and intellectual evolution, is obliged to try to prevent the only process which would make it possible. To get security from the kind of catastrophe now shaking Europe a certain political reformation is necessary. The firm establishment of conscription throughout the world threatens to create an immense, perhaps an insuperable obstacle, at least to that particular reformation. With this specific difficulty Professor Perry has not dealt, except to imply, in a most general way, that it is non-existent.

Let us just see how the thing works in the concrete fashion of Carlyle's two Dumdruges. The young man of France, or Austria, or Prussia, or Bavaria, having been in no way consulted as to his opinion concerning the mat-

ter, and with no option of refusal, finds himself one day confronted with the order to enter the trenches and kill the man opposite. Now suppose, being a Prussian, he should say: "I don't feel justified in killing the man opposite. I have followed this particular dispute between his government and mine, and upon my conscience I am not at all sure that he is wrong. I think there is a good deal to be said for his case. Particularly am I a little doubtful of my case when it is marked by the daily slaughter of children on land and sea. I cannot see that I do the best service to my country in killing the man opposite. He may not be altogether right, but I am at least sure that he is not so wrong as to justify me in putting him to death or torture."

Now, if what the Allies and their supporters have so often told us is at all true, western Europe has taken up arms on behalf of that young heretic—to bring about, that is, just the moral revolution on the part of his people represented in his attitude. Mr. Asquith has told us that the war is a spiritual conflict fought to defeat "a monstrous code of international morality" into which the German people have been entrapped "to the horror of mankind." The war was undertaken to liberate them and Europe from the menace of certain political doctrines and moralities (such as that whatever the state does is right, and that obligations to it overrule all others, and that the citizen must be, as certain members of the German government have been so proud of being, "for their country, right or wrong") and to replace those dangerous doctrines by—again to quote Mr. Asquith—"the enthronement of the idea of right as the governing idea" in international politics.

But if a nation is to know what is right in its relations with others it must in that matter allow freedom of conscience and discussion, particularly freedom to state the view of the other side. It is not an easy thing for even a third party to determine the rights and wrongs of a quarrel. As for the interested parties, it is humanly certain that each will be convinced he is absolutely right and the other absolutely wrong unless there is a deliberately cultivated capacity to "hear the other side." And as governments are made up of human beings, they too are just as likely to be incapable of fair and reasonable judgment in a case in which they are interested parties, unless drawn from a population that has cultivated the capacity for such judgment in the only way in which it can be cultivated—by the habit of forming individual decisions based on the

weighing of both sides; unless, in other words, they have learned to "tolerate the heretic" and are dominated by the tradition of the need for heresy in forming opinion.

Now the simple truth is that conscription cannot allow political heresy—opposition to the political religion of the state—in international affairs. And the penalty for it, in all conscriptionist states, is death. It sounds fantastic, but it is a mere statement of fact. Let us get back to the young conscript I have imagined refusing to kill the man opposite. Whether he be German, French, Italian, Russian or Turkish, and whether his situation be that of a submarine commander refusing to sink Atlantic liners or an Allied aviator refusing to throw bombs at Baden health resorts, if he really persists there is only one result for him. He is shot.

But conscription cannot in its authority stop short merely at the man in the trenches or under direct military command. Assume that this disposition on the part of conscripts to question the morality of their orders is due to a civilian movement of opinion, a religious or political agitation, to anti-war newspapers or writers. (At the time of the English war against the Boer Republics, and to a lesser degree when England, in her last continental war, was fighting on behalf of Turkish policy in the Balkans against Russia, you had such a movement of opinion, which if England had had conscription then, would probably have produced just the results indicated.) One of two things in that case must happen: either conscription, the compulsory element, that is, disappears, or its authority is extended to cover the writers and newspapers, to cover opinion as well as acts.

And that indeed is what does happen. Conscription, to be effective, must be a conscription of minds as well as bodies. To allow real cleavage of opinion concerning the justice of a state's cause to grow up by allowing the advocacy of a rival cause would be to break down national solidarity, to affect gravely the efficiency of the military instrument by tainting its morale at the source. Moreover, the state must take charge not only of the expression of opinion, but of the dissemination of facts which lead to the formation of opinion. And if the incident of the trenches I have described is not commoner than it is (though it is commoner than we suppose it to be) it is largely because states which, like Germany, know their military business have carried out the intellectual conscription, the "mobilization of the mental and moral forces of the nation," so thoroughly before the beginning of the war that the mind as well as the body of the conscript has been suitably drilled. The control of the press and of education, of the careers of all who teach or have influence, has been as much part of the organization of the nation for military purposes as the physical drill and regimentation. And if we wonder how it is that not only sixty or seventy millions of people in the mass, but great scientists, teachers and theologians as individuals, can subscribe to doctrines and support conduct which appear to the outside world as monstrous, it is merely because we have forgotten that any case, however monstrous, can be made to appear reasonable and acceptable if we never hear anything that can be said against it.

If we think that a people like the French could not pos-

sibly, when a like efficiency of organization has had time to do its work, show a like moral result, then we have probably forgotten certain incidents of their history, even quite recent incidents like the Dreyfus affair, and what we said about it and all that it meant at the time. But the French, as a matter of fact, have escaped the full flower of the Prussian result because the circumstances of their history during the nineteenth century—the fact that not once during the whole of that century did they have a government sufficiently national to set up a national orthodoxy—made it impossible to organize the system on its intellectual side. Since the revolution there have always been in France, until this war, large groups ready to put certain social and moral principles above national defense, above the state. The revolutionary wars of France were fought with a whole class of Frenchmen opposed to them, many members of that class actually fighting with the enemies of France. It is but a symbol of what has always been in post-revolutionary France that on the news of the fall of Sedan, because it meant the end of the Empire, Paris was illuminated; and that more Frenchmen were killed by Frenchmen in Paris in the struggle of the commune during that war than by Germans. You had here such ingrained habit of political heresy that no machine could readily cope with it. No wonder France has been intellectually free. Sufficient number of Frenchmen have always been ready to make national defense, the efficiency of the military machine, subservient to the retention of certain freedoms, as the Dreyfus case showed. But conscription—the military organization—has steadily fought these freedoms, and the tendency for the needs of the machine to override all other considerations has at times been so strong that, again as in the Dreyfus affair, the control of such tendency demanded for years at a time all the energies which the heirs of the liberal tradition could summon to the task. If, as a result of this war, France is "nationalized" in the sense of making all political differences really subservient to the needs of national power, the increasing efficiency of the military machine will make the next Dreyfus affair in its outcome a Zabern affair.

The question surely is this: If the democracies like England and France are to get the German degree of efficiency in the working of the national military machine, will it not be at the price of a control of opinion by the state, as complete as in Germany? And if so, why should we expect sensibly different moral results?

The present writer is not urging that the difficulties here indicated necessarily condemn resort to conscription in any circumstance whatever, but that we must face squarely what it involves. Only so can we attenuate its dangers. And it involves undoubtedly the suppression of freedom of conscience in certain political affairs. Indeed, the position of the modern political heretic is in one respect a good deal worse than was that of the old religious heretic. The latter, in order to be secure from the attentions of the Holy Office, had only to remain silent. That does not protect the modern heretic. He is taken out and compelled to kill with his own hand those whose political faith perhaps he shares, or himself be executed.

If anyone is disposed to think that this cultivation of rival group orthodoxies, the loss of toleration for heresies

and of the capacity to discuss them, is a small danger, let him look back on the Europe of religious wars—which was not the Europe of a savage age but of the age of Shakespeare and Montaigne. Lecky, among others, has shown that the rivalry of the modern political groups reveals in large part the psychology which marked the rivalry of the religious groups. Patriotism is the religion of politics. It is worth while considering whether we do not stand in danger of doing in the field of political religion just about what Europe did in the field of ecclesiastical religion when it became divided into two main religious groups.

She entangled herself then in a net of her own weaving—the work largely of religious professors, as our net to-day is woven so largely by political professors. Each group had convinced itself that everything it most valued on earth, the existence of any kind of morality, its spiritual freedom here as well as its eternal salvation later, depended upon its defending itself by military power against the power of the other—defense of course involving preventive wars. There was only one thing which could, and finally did, put an end to the resulting welter: a revision of the prevailing conceptions as to the relation of military force and power over the other group to those moral and spiritual values.

The modification of conception, theory, “sovereign idea,” what you will, was only possible as the result of certain heresies, of the conflict of one idea with another, and so the correction of both. But that one solution, the one means of egress, the man of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe for long deliberately closed by making heresy the gravest moral offense which men could commit. Each side killed its heretic: preferably in fashions that were “lingering and humorous.” What was more important, of course, they killed with him the capacity of the mass to think clearly—or to think at all on the subjects that the heretic raised, for a community which has no heretics, which is of one mind on a given matter, is on that matter mindless. If the rival communities had been successful in the attempt to protect themselves by military means from heresy within and without, we should have been fighting wars of religion yet, and organizing our massacres of St. Bartholomew. But certain forces—mechanical like the cheapening of printing, moral like the readiness of the heretic to suffer the humorous roasting processes—were too strong for the imperfect organization of the state or the Holy Office. But the modern state—as Germany proves—can be more efficient in the control of opinion and the consequent suppression of heresy. And we can hardly doubt that if unity of political belief is necessary to the successful conversion of a nation into a military instrument, the modern state will kill political heresy even more successfully than the church-state killed religious; and in lesser or greater degree with the analogous result of rendering Europe impotent to solve the very problem out of which conscription itself has arisen.

The upshot of it all is of course that if we are to adopt conscription we must do it with our eyes open. Not bemusing ourselves with the irrelevant consideration that it is in itself desirable, but recognizing its dangers and to that extent having the greater chance of escaping them, resorting to it for a specific and limited purpose, just as

we might administer a dangerous drug to an invalid, something necessary it may be for his very life, but something also which may cost him his life if we have to go on increasing the dose.

Does not this analogy apply to all purely military preparedness? Is it not the essential remedy without which our patient will die, but which also will kill him unless sooner or later we can enable him to do without it? And there comes a stage in the illness when the emphasis of our effort must be directed to that end mainly. Possibly the health of our modern world depends upon our understanding that we are approaching just that crisis.

NORMAN ANGELL.

CORRESPONDENCE

Emperors and Experts

SIR: A friend has sent me some recent numbers of THE NEW REPUBLIC. In the issue dated January 15th appears a letter signed “An American,” and its wholesome sanity moves me to endorse its every word.

It is not for an Englishman, even one who knows and likes America, and thinks (speaking broadly) he understands American psychology, to express dogmatic views as to what should be the attitude of the republic on the European war. I place firm trust in the fact that you *are* a republic. I am sure as that the sun will rise to-morrow that the overwhelming mass of your people will find the path of honor and justice, and follow it through the mists of policies born of high explosives, as the magnetic needle turns faithfully to the pole.

For a little while, strutting emperors and self-styled “experts” are able to confuse the issues. But not for long. The great tide of humanity flows on, and the Canutes are submerged forevermore. And the “expert,” with his diagrams, vanishes too. The emperors achieve real mischief. The experts astound the multitude and amuse the few, on the old, old principle of the charlatan that the simpler the trick the greater the mystification and consequent credulity.

Thus:—

Let A = B

and B = C

Therefore A = C

Or, again: “The position in Mesopotamia is undoubtedly disturbing. If neither the Russians nor the British succeed in taking Bagdad, the Turks will continue to hold it. Hence, sooner or later, Bagdad will be a rallying-point for the Russians, the British, or the Turks. Let us, then, envisage Bagdad from these three vitally conflicting standpoints.”

And so on, at 'steen cents per line, or even per word, while the glamor of the expert endures.

This cruel war is the outcome of a hateful system. When the silent, suffering, humbugged races of Europe awake to a sense of realities, this black plague will cease. If each thinking German or Austrian will ask himself this question: “Would there have been war if the Teutonic peoples governed themselves on a republican basis?” I think the answer will be the beginning of the end.

LOUIS TRACY.

Whitby, England.