

THE NEW EUROPE, THE DANUBE AND HUNGARY

BY

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At the moment of writing Europe is engaged in a life and death struggle. It is not merely a struggle for supremacy between the Great Powers, it is rather a *European* civil war in which the antagonists are both threatened by an outside power — alien to Europe. Consequently, whatever may be the war aims of the different nations, the result of the struggle must be either an entirely *new Europe* or a *Europe* greatly transformed from that which we knew before September, 1939.

It is possible the anti-European powers may be successful and that our civilisation may go the way of other civilisations which had their day and perished. The fact that it is Christian is no guarantee of its permanence; Christianity may survive the civilisation to which it has given a form and a spirit. If this civilisation were to perish, then the new Europe would only be a geographical expression and it would be idle speculation to suggest what Hungary's position might be after so deep a transformation.

But it is not likely that *Europe* will wholly perish. It is in fact quite probable that *Europe* will emerge from the conflict purified, ennobled and ready to enter upon a new phase of civilisation, changed indeed but true to its own best traditions. For *European* civilisation is different from all others on account of its inspiration from Christianity, a factor which must always remain incalculable. One thing is certain, that after the pattern of its *Founder*, *Christianity* achieves its results by suffering; and *European Christians* are at present suffering acutely. That very passion which Europe now endures may be the means of its salvation.

We are optimists therefore and have solid reasons for our optimism. Looking forward with confidence to the survival of Europe, we look forward also to the opening of

a new phase in history and expect to revive the old spirit of Christendom in a happier world.

We cannot re-enact past history, we must accustom ourselves to constant change in a finite world, but present and future realities have their roots in the past, and the new is not wholly different from the old. We look forward therefore to a *Europe* in which all that is best in the traditions of Christendom will be realised and given a new life.

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Europe or Christendom (for the titles are synonymous) emerged from the contact of the Roman and Barbarian worlds and the common inspiration of the teaching of the *Catholic Church*. The three elements go together and if any one is lacking, there is neither Europe nor *Christendom*. Latin culture, the youthful vigour of the migrating peoples and the supernatural power and gentleness of the Church were the leading factors in the formation of Europe. The peoples came on the whole from East to West and finally settled down in the lands which had been part of the *Roman Empire*. Roman power had to give way ultimately before the terrible force of the barbarians, but Roman culture remained and the *Catholic Church* persisted. The Church converted the barbarians and kept alive and even extended Latin literature beyond the former confines of the *Roman Empire*. Generally speaking however this process of formation worked itself out West of the Rhine and the Danube and had its centre in Rome.

In Byzantium another process was at work. The Roman Emperor had betaken himself thither at an early date and had constantly shown a desire to make himself supreme in ecclesiastical affairs, to expect the Church to be content with a reflection of his own imperial dignity and yet was not disposed to make any effort to defend his threatened territories in the West. It was not surprising that schism followed, and still less surprising that, while in the West the Church remained supreme at least in its own sphere, *Cassaro-Papism*, the subordination of the Church to the State, became the tradition in the East. Within the Eastern Church there were many divisions and the imperial city fell itself at last before the Turkish invasion; but the hatred of

East for West remained long after the destruction of *Constantinople* and superseded all divisions amongst the *Orthodox Churches*.

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Rome and Byzantium were both conscious from the beginning of their missionary obligations and endeavoured to spread the Faith to the neighbouring pagan territories and to the peoples now entering *Europe*. Over the *Danubian* region there was an inevitable struggle between the Eastern and Western influences. The final division was established in the tenth century by the decision of the Magyars who had settled in the Carpathian basin to accept their Faith from Rome and with that Faith the Latin way of life. The principles of tolerance and generosity, which are a part of the Roman heritage, were the foundation of St. Stephen's kingdom, and the institutions which he established endured through the vicissitudes of a thousand years and enabled Hungary to play a leading part amongst the nations of the Danube valley.

She was at the same time, with Poland, a bulwark of Western civilisation and was influential in keeping the Balkan nations within the orbit of the European system.

This equilibrium was largely destroyed by the events of 1919, which have led to divisions among the Balkan peoples, the collapse of Poland and the penetration of Asiatic paganism and the totalitarianism which sanctions all this.

The *European* frontier is uncertain, is gravely threatened. The Roman example shows us the importance of the "*limes*" and therefore of the necessity of doing everything possible to restore the system which made the "*limes*" firm and secure on the Carpathians and the Danube.

The tragedy of the present situation is that while the "*limes*" is insecure, Europe is also threatened from within. So long as we are fighting against Soviet Russia (whether in arms or in the spirit) we are struggling against something alien to *Europe*, against an outsider, an *Asiatic* power. But Germany is a part not merely of the geographical Europe but is heir with us to the European spirit; it is a part of *Christendom*. The tragedy lies in the fact that *Christendom*

has been betrayed from within, before she has been attacked from without.

France however does appear to have returned to the old conception of Christian Europe and understood the role that she is called upon to play, while powerful forces are bringing *Great Britain* to understand better the meaning of *Christendom*. *Italy* can scarcely avoid being loyal to her Latin tradition, which is a part of her very life, and has shown constantly her understanding of the *Danubian* situation and more particularly of *Hungary*.

Hungary herself is acutely aware both of the danger and the heroic part which she may be called upon to play. Merely by her survival she can help *Europe* to rebuild herself out of the ruin that the war will leave. For the elements that made Europe remain in *Hungary* are as strong as ever. The Latin culture, the *Catholic Church* and a strong and virile national spirit by their varied influences produce one of *Europe's* finest types and make Hungary a miniature *Christendom*.

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In the midst of the darkness of our times it is beginning to be possible to see a revival and a re-union of these elements. There is a widespread respect for the Papacy, a disgust for purely secular institutions, a realisation that the only hope for *Europe* lies in a complete return to its traditional Faith. The easy Utopias promised after the break-up of 1918 have now been found to be illusions. Communism especially has betrayed itself, and whatever its material success may be it can never again offer that real attraction to the heart of man that it once seemed to offer. Neo-paganism is itself a sign of the yearning that man has for some form of religion as opposed to militant but utterly negative atheism, and neo-paganism will soon give way to the supernatural truth of the *Christian religion*. We may differ as to the way in which religious unity will be achieved, but there is a rapidly growing consciousness, nourished by general persecution, that there will soon be unity and that the persecuted have more in common with one another than with the persecutors. The Roman centre remains and will remain as the source of spiritual strength for *Christendom*. *Italy*, the first home of that tradition, is acutely conscious

of her privileged position and is clearly watching for the opportune moment to assist Europe to find again what she once gained from ancient Rome. And the terrible threat of air-warfare has at least had this value, that it has made Englishmen more determined to know and appreciate the languages and literatures of Europe and therefore brought them into closer unity with the Latin world.

Nationalism is still a powerful and to some extent a disruptive force. But it is healthy in so far as it means a rejuvenation of peoples and the presence of a wealth of creative energy.

The nations that are now struggling so bitterly may come before very long to see the importance of living in harmony with others and accepting the same spiritual power as a uniting influence. Like those first foreign guests received by the Hungarian king they may learn to live as good neighbours with those who are not of their race and maintain their own admirable customs in the midst of widely different peoples. Even the East may be brought within this scheme. Soviet Russia may one day be converted. For neither *Christendom* nor that Hungary which was its bulwark were merely hostile to the East; they were hostile only in so far as the East attacked their way of life and they were prepared at any time to admit what was noble and good in *Eastern* thought and were acutely conscious of their mission to make known beyond the borders of Christendom the ideas which had given shape to their own system.

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Perhaps the most frequently expressed idea of the new Europe is that it is to be a federal system. The actual form is necessarily uncertain and it is well at this stage not to be too precise; but all this points to a more closely united Europe in which nations living their own special lives will co-operate freely for the good of all.

From every point of view it seems that *Hungary* will have a great part to play in the *Europe* that is to come. By keeping alive the elements which made the old Europe, by her historical example and perhaps even by her mere survival, she gives assurance of a better order of things after the trouble of this present time.