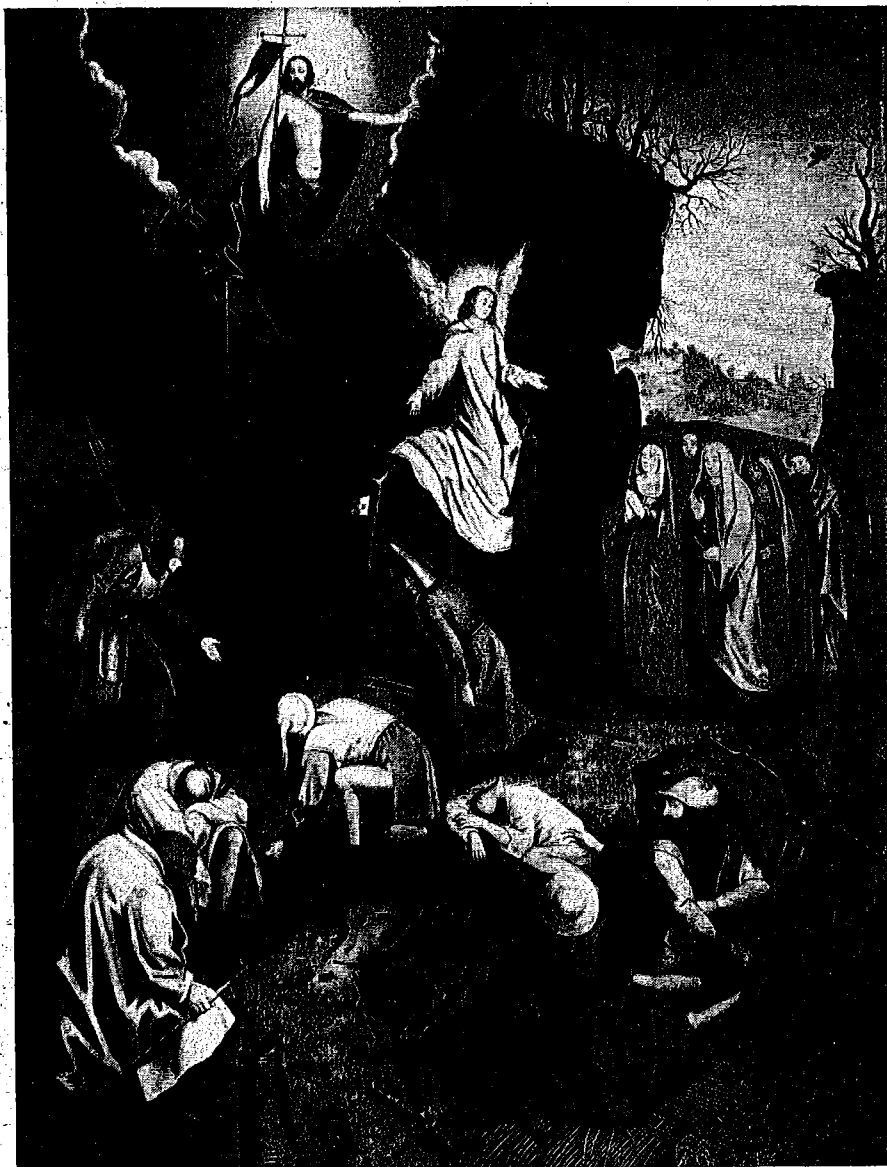


The Listener

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The Resurrection, after Pieter Breughel the Elder

Easter 1945

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Dumbarton Oaks: the Future of Security

Discussion between LORD WINSTER, CARL J. HAMBRO and SIR ARTHUR SALTER, M.P. In the chair: EDWARD MONTGOMERY*

Edward Montgomery: Let us begin by considering the problem of security, which is a question partly of opinion, partly of fact. Now is this a permanent problem, or does it change with conditions? In other words, are we faced in 1945 the same sort of difficulties that existed in 1918 in creating a line to prevent war, or are the difficulties themselves of a different kind?

Lord Winster: I should say that essentially the problem remains the same, but the methods by which it can be solved have become much more complicated. There are new weapons to consider; there is the principle of total war, which has led, I think, to a breakdown in human morality on the whole subject of war. So any war which aims at preventing war will have to take account of things like flying aeroplanes, rocket-bombs and, possibly, other and much worse things that the scientists may even now be inventing. War having become so much more complicated, the charter will have more holes in it. What we have to contemplate is the possibility of the knock-out blow delivered without any warning whatsoever. Flying-bombs and atomic bombs have been quite a nuisance, coming singly; and they have been the worst of their kind. What will happen if their later developments come in battalions?

Edward Montgomery: Of course that might mean that the attack would be overwhelming, and so quick, that no conceivable provisions could be made in advance.

Lord Winster: Yes, but the knock-out blow is a thing that cuts both ways. You can hit back at an aggressor, if you want to, just as quickly and overwhelmingly as he can attack his victim. The fact that total war can become so swift and so annihilating—that in itself and not only in itself at all may convince the nations that war does not pay.

Edward Montgomery: You don't suggest, do you, that the surprise attack is forestalled?

Lord Winster: No. And that's another of the differences between 1919

and 1945. The old idea was that armaments could be supervised. Even after the last war that was not too easy. But it is even worse now, because the new weapons are precisely the sort that are most difficult to supervise. A nation cannot build half-a-dozen battleships without being noticed. But a good many modern weapons can be camouflaged at every stage: design, development, trial and production. And it is not only the making of armaments that counts today. War has largely passed out of the hands of the armament firms into the hands of the scientist, and who is going to supervise the scientist? That would be a difficult job for the most efficient intelligence service.

Carl J. Hambro: There is one more difference, I think. In the war of 1914-18 many far-away places—Greenland, Iceland and distant islands of the Pacific—could remain outside the sphere of war. We have seen in this war that they may be vital points for controlling the airways and supply lines of the world. A modern war is not only totalitarian; it is global. In the whole of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals the word 'neutrality' never occurs at all. Before this war Belgium and Holland made the last stand on behalf of neutrality as a policy; in both cases it failed.

Sir Arthur Salter: I agree. I think that any country that accepts membership of the new organisation must give up any right to be neutral in a future war.

Edward Montgomery: Well, let us come to the new organisation itself. Who met at Dumbarton Oaks? What did they decide? How far does it bind us? What still remains to be done? And what hopes have we that the new proposals will have profited by the lesson we learnt in the past twenty years? These are your questions, Sir Arthur.

Salter: Well, Dumbarton Oaks is the name of a large house in Washington. In this house, officials of four Governments—the United States, Great Britain, Russia and—later—China, met last summer to discuss plans for what we may call a new League of Nations. They drew up what they called 'tentative proposals' which did not commit

* In place of Vernon Bartlett who, owing to illness, was unable to broadcast

Points from Letters

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Paper for Books

May I, as librarian to a unit serving overseas, add a postscript to the recent broadcast discussion on 'Paper for Books'? For our book supplies we are totally dependent on parcels of reading matter supplied through the Army Welfare Services, these being the product of local Book Drives at home. These parcels are, candidly, 90 per cent. trash—mushy Victorian novels, cheap thrillers and undistinguished throw-outs from lending libraries—which the men are driven to read for want of anything better. Night after night I get requests for non-fiction works, such as biographies, books on political or sociological subjects, scientific works, etc., or good modern novels which I am unable to satisfy. Naturally, nobody out here expects people at home to hand over the best books in their libraries for the Forces; but neither can anyone expect a serviceman to encumber himself with a private library in addition to his other baggage. Is it not time something was done to provide the serviceman with the better-class reading matter he really wants?

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God and the State

At the session of the Brains Trust on March 20, Dr. Joad treated with the utmost ridicule the view held by Hegel that in the life of the State is embodied the life of God. If we think of the history of the Prussian State since Hegel's death, certainly such an opinion seems not only absurd but blasphemous. There are, however, one or two considerations which may serve to modify our indignation.

(1) Some interpreters of the philosopher maintain that by 'the State' Hegel meant not only a system of government, but the whole organised life of civilised man within a single system; so that a trade union and even a debating society or a working men's club are organic parts of the life of the State. In this sense the State is equivalent to the *polis* of the Greek philosophers, which Aristotle declared to exist for the sake of the good life.

(2) Whether this interpretation of the Hegelian State is right or not, there can be no doubt that Christian theologians from St. Paul onwards have consistently held that in the life of the Christian community the life of God is embodied. Yet the history of the Church so regarded, whether it be the medieval Church with its papal abuses or the fanaticism and intolerance of numerous Protestant sects, appears scarcely less scandalous than that of the Prussian State. Dante's theory of the divine partnership of Church and Empire is well known. Beatrice says of the Tree of Empire (*Purgatorio* xxxiii 58-60): 'Whoso robs it or rends it, offends God by his blasphemous act (*con bestemmia di fatto*) Who alone created it holy for his use'. Yet no one knew better than Dante the shortcomings of both Popes and Emperors. The paradox of the spotless Bride of Christ is exactly parallel to that of the divine State. Dr. Joad has written much on the problem of evil. Might he not with advantage consider this aspect of it a little further?

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Poetry in War Time

Mr. Reed flatters us. I do not think that either I or Mr. Richards could give him points in the

non sequitur handicap. And, unawed by his somewhat superior reproof, I must still maintain that he did, most clearly, say and not merely suggest, that good poets had lacked appreciation in the past. There is his letter. I have just looked at it again. He speaks of 'the perennial absurdity of the contemporary'. He says that it 'is no new thing', but that Tennyson and Wordsworth and Coleridge and Keats were belittled or 'coldly received' and he feels quite sure that Shakespeare would have been thought 'uncouth' by those brought up on Marlowe. And he clinches these statements by his 'one only' reason, *viz.*, 'the ineradicable human belief that only the dead are harmless and praiseworthy'.

There is nothing here about 'a vociferous subcurrent of criticism' (whatever strange sort of noisy silence that may be). It is perennial and universal, 'an ineradicable human belief that only the dead are praiseworthy'. Now, the modern poets whom Mr. Richards and Major Hunter and I fail to appreciate are, I believe, still alive. Very well then—*sequitur*? Now, in his last letter, Mr. Reed agrees that good poets are appreciated in their lifetimes. But it does not follow that all poets who gain applause or have a following in their lives are good poets. The age that produced Dryden also produced Shadwell, who 'never deviated into sense'. The age that produced Pope also produced Colley Cibber and the other even less admirable heroes of the Dunciad. The age that produced Keats also produced Thomas Haines Bayley. The age that produced Byron also produced 'hoarse Fitzgerald' of the 'creaking couplets'—and so on. Mr. Reed need only consider the list of Poets Laureate from Pye to Alfred Austin to see that Messrs. Eliot and Auden and Pound are not safe yet. For all these forgotten versifiers were admired during their lives. All had a following.

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