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THE THREAT IN GREECE

THE ugly threat of civil war in liberated Europe has been brought abruptly closer by the serious outbreak of fighting in Athens; and the danger of this state of affairs spreading over the whole of sorely tried Greece increases despite the measures instituted by General Scobie as G.O.C. General Scobie's measures in declaring martial law for Athens and the whole of the Piræus were obviously intended to remove the compact military and police units of the Communist-controlled E.A.M. to the more distant districts of the country, so as to keep the main areas under firm control and thereby to safeguard not only administrative tranquillity for the Greek Government but strategical requirements, as well as the possibility of proceeding with the feeding and the rehabilitation of the country. General Scobie in his remarkable proclamation to the Greek people, issued last Friday night in Athens, clearly set forth the aims of Allied policy, fostered by no other intention than of keeping order and of preventing Greece from gradually slipping into chaos. He certainly acted in the conviction that the very great goodwill shown by the Government to Mr Papandreou in the interests of reconciliation was only exploited by the Left Wing extremists, who were already enjoying extremely disproportionate representation in the Government of National Unity, and met with no response but fresh demands to satisfy the extremists' own ends and purposes. In other words, General Scobie must have realized that the cleavage of opinion between the different forces had grown too wide to prevent disastrous consequences.

There is no doubt as to the principal implications of the general situation. Some of the methods employed may be open to question, at any rate as long as we have to rely on inconclusive evidence. But even if things could have been better handled, as many people suggest, no doubt exists that the Communists who are in control of E.A.M. have systematically and deliberately driven towards the cleavage. Deep-seated differences of views in the liberated countries between those who have actively fought in the resistance movement and the returning authority are natural and almost inevitable. A generation has grown up in those countries which knows no law but arms. That in itself was bound to create a difficult situation. But there is more than this. In Greece, as in a number of other recently liberated countries of Europe, this dangerous situation is being quite deliberately and most ably exploited by one small but highly trained group. The Law of Arms is in most cases supported, organized and directed by men and women with a long training in the Comintern school. This Communist minority has thrown its shadow over all the liberated countries and particularly over Greece. E.A.M.

and its military formations (E.L.A.S.) long prepared to make the bid for control. When the country was under the German yoke, it was E.A.M. which not only fought the intruders but which prepared for the day when liberation would be achieved by terrorizing the civil population and by carefully storing away a considerable part of the weapons sent to them, mainly by this country.

E.A.M. has never been anything more than an exceedingly small minority. Liberal estimates put the figure of its militarily organized adherents at about 20,000 to 30,000. Politically the majority of the population remains unaffected. Some two weeks ago E.A.M. organized mass demonstrations in Athens which, in spite of a week of preliminary propaganda, attracted only about 150,000 people. When a few days later the Greek Air Force returned home from the Middle East and paraded in Athens, well over one million people cheered them. The same state of affairs is reported from other parts of Greece. Yet E.A.M. has determinedly gone on in its bid for power, pursuing the same pattern from the time before the liberation of the country. The method already then accepted was not give and take, but take and ask for more in spite of signed agreements or pledges, with the obvious intention of disrupting the legal authority in order to defy it at a later date. That date has apparently now arrived, shortly before the Government could effectively establish its authority. What is happening now is the consequence of a policy already adopted by E.A.M. at a much earlier date and signified by the previous mutinies in the Greek Army and Navy in the Middle East and by E.A.M.'s attitude towards the Lebanon Charter, first agreed upon and signed by its representatives, and later defied until the Government bought up resistance by more concessions. The question is not whether some of E.A.M.'s demands have been justified, but whether they were thrown in at the different junctures with the sole intention of preventing the cementing of national unity.

The question today is indeed an even graver one. It is whether or no we are to give in to an attempt to establish minority dictatorship by force of arms. It has been suggested in some quarters that to stand up to the Communist controlled E.A.M. tommy-guns is an undemocratic thing to do. We are unable to agree. For as Mr Churchill said in the House last Tuesday, what is happening is that "the tommy-guns which were provided for use against the Germans are now used in an attempt to impose a Communist dictatorship without the people being able to express their wishes."

There is certainly, as Mr Herbert Morrison reminded us last week end, nothing democratic about Communism—or about Communist methods. They are not more democratic in Greece when they attempt

MEN & BOOKS

Il Miglior Fabbro

Four Quartets: T. S. Eliot. *Faber*. 6s.

IT DOES NOT disquiet me that there are passages in these four poems that I still do not understand, for whenever I read them, as I do often, the wonderful varied power of the language they employ holds me completely a victim, and I do not mind the uncertainties. Nor does it distress me that the particular religious inflection which their author intends the poems to have comes from a religion which I no longer find myself trying to believe in; for even if the things which Eliot says were not also "true in a different sense", I think that the alternating gentleness and forcefulness of the voice that is speaking would completely suspend my disbelief. Perhaps it is the gentleness of the voice that is the real magic; the agonized gentleness which we do not hear since Tennyson, whom Eliot calls the saddest of English poets:

*Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only through the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground.*

That, somehow, is a voice one can trust. So is this voice:

*The brief sun flames the ice on pond and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or
brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit.*

After the exquisite language of these poems, whatever one tries to say by way of criticism or analysis sounds uncouth. One has also the feeling that one is slightly off the point, because they are poems which can be communicated only in their own words. But since they are difficult and elusive, it is necessary for a critic to say what he thinks they are about. Time is their theme. (That is not quite true, but it is as near as one will get.) They aim at discovering a means of facing time; at discovering an attitude towards time which shall be something different from a subservience to the passing of the years; at discovering a capacity for thinking of the present moment not as a bridge between past and future, but as a point in an eternal pattern. To conquer time we have only one weapon given us—time. And at this point one wonders if one would not do better to say the poems are about life rather than about time.

Eliot's examination, or quest, begins simply (so far as he is ever simple) and hesitantly in *Burnt Norton* with one particular "aspect" of time; the highest complexity and difficulty are reached in the second and third movements of *The Dry Salvages*; the problem is solved in *Little Gidding*. The over-all drama of the quest is stressed by the sequence of the four symbols, air, earth, water and fire, which the four poems suggest. The intensity of the poem increases from the quiet of *Burnt Norton*, through the disturbances of *East Coker* to the tumult of *The Dry Salvages*, and relaxes to a final tranquillity at the end of *Little Gidding*. In each of the separate poems (which all follow the same structural design) there is a separate drama of crescendo and diminuendo.

In *Burnt Norton* we are given a fairly easy exercise in perception: Eliot recalls to us that not

uncommon moment when the common sequence of minute after minute seems suspended, when two kinds of consciousness seem to cross. This may happen in a variety of ways; perhaps Proust encountered the same thing when he tasted the *madeleine*; for Eliot, in this first poem, it is the coincidence of a vision of what is, and a vision of what might have been. What *is*, is a deserted garden and a drained pool; what might have been, is the shrubberies full of children's voices, and the pool filled with water. Both moments seem equally actual: the double moment of "actuality" is *reality*, a state we cannot bear for long; it is a moment quickly to be seized and quickly gone; a "hint" of a greater experience. That experience, we are told later, is the intersection of eternity and time at the Incarnation.

The opening of this first poem presents a way into the problem of time; the core of the rest of it is the effort to break free from—

*the enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body.*

East Coker is a study of the onset of age, and of the discovery that age, contrary to all the promises, brings neither wisdom nor the solution to our tragedies:

*We are only undecieved
Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm.*

*The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.*

In this poem the pattern as distinct from the sequence of life is once more emphasized; and in this pattern the dead also are involved. This is an advance from the moment in the garden in *Burnt Norton*. The poet desires:

*Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.*

In *The Dry Salvages*, the themes of eternity and death are announced. The climax of this poem is an echo, one gathers, of Krishna's words to Arjuna in the *Gita*; but it reminds us also of "Make perfect your will", and of "Take no thought for the harvest, but only of proper sowing." It is an admonishment—significant only to the religious man, perhaps, but not beyond the appreciation of others—to live each moment, regardless of past and future, as if it were the moment before death.

*O voyagers, O seamen,
You who come to port, and you whose bodies
Will suffer the trial and judgement of the sea,
Or whatever event, this is your real destination.*

The movement towards the faith of Christianity is already clear; and it becomes clearer still in *Little Gidding*. At the end of *The Dry Salvages*, we are told where our duty lies: in "prayer, observance, discipline, thought, and action." In *Little Gidding* we go to a place where "prayer has been valid", where the Holy Ghost has once descended to flame in men's hearts. In this poem the themes of the earlier poems are resumed and rounded off. We are left with the Christian choice: to be redeemed from the fire of hell by the flame of Pentecost. The fifth movement of this poem is a masterpiece of concentration; in it the poet reminds us, in a way that usually only the allusions of music can, of all he has had to say. Above all, he tells us that what he has to say is not anything new. He has already said in *East Coker* that all he can do in his poetry is to rediscover what has been found and lost before. That is all one will do in life itself, however, one goes about it.

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Ah-mee! *Ah-mee!* *Ah-mee!*

Book Prize: John Grant.

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The name and address (or pseudonym) of a competitor must be written on his MS. and the coupon on page 1100 attached to it (closing date TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19th). Address: Competition, TIME AND TIDE, 32 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1. Results will be published in our issue of December 30th. Under no circumstances will manuscripts be returned.