

WHY doesn't the Pope stop the war? That is a question which many people are asking nowadays. And not without some reason. Because among the warring nations there are millions on each side who look to him as their spiritual Father and guide. Surely, one would say, if he spoke out and forbade Catholics in Germany and Italy to join in acts of aggression against other States the power of the dictators would be paralysed and the war would end.

But in reality things are not so simple. The far-reaching powers which the Catholic gladly recognises in the visible Head of the Church are given him for one reason only—to further the spiritual interests of his vast flock. The Church admits in the State a similar authority and responsibility for the material well-being of the people.

It is obvious that matters of peace and war fall directly under the power of the State. On the spiritual side the last court of appeal in every case is the conscience of the individual man. In such a matter the citizen needs guidance and direction. It is impossible for the man in the street to know the right and wrongs of the cause he is to fight for. He cannot know, but the head of the State can, and must know. The man or men who have power in the State are ordinarily in possession of the facts—to decide is their responsibility. It is to their knowledge and authority that the individual normally looks for guidance.

Eternal Principles

What about the Pope? We Catholics believe that because he is the successor of St. Peter he is the Shepherd and Teacher of all Christians. Surely he would have a vital interest in the tremendous issues of war and peace. Yes, for it is his duty to proclaim those eternal principles of justice and charity without which peace can be neither recovered nor established.

At a recent diplomatic luncheon one of the English representatives asked the Papal Nuncio, "What are the principles of the Pope's policy?" "The New Testament," was the reply. The great aim of all the peace moves and diplomacy of the Vatican is simply this: that men everywhere be enabled to know, love, and serve God according to the Christian revelation.

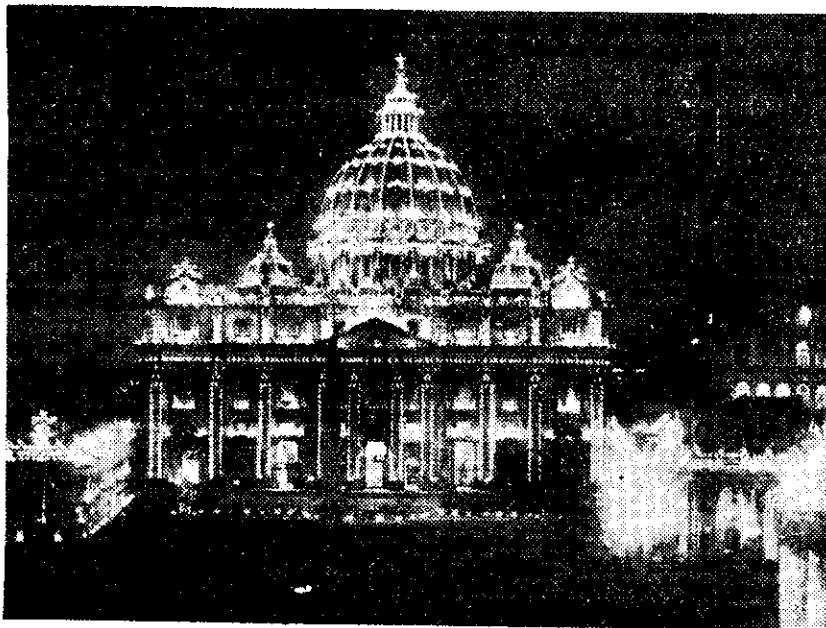
To bring about that end the Pope uses every legitimate means in his power, in the first place the spiritual weapons of prayer and sacrifice, but also the well-tried human means of diplomacy and conciliation. The Holy See is in no way ambitious for wealth or territory in this world; its mission is a purely spiritual one.

Wisdom of Long Experience

It is natural that the Vatican should have a unique approach to the problems of nations, for there is even from a merely human standpoint a tradi-

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(Written for "The Listener" by the Rev. Dr. F. WALSH)



THE HEART of the Vatican City State: An impressive picture of the great dome and facade of St. Peter's, illuminated during canonisation ceremonies a short time ago.

tional wisdom about an institution which has such roots in history. In the pursuit of the spiritual welfare of his flock the Pope makes use of a system of law and diplomacy inherited from the Roman Empire, tried by long use, and developed over two thousand years of human experience. Such an agent of peace is not to be despised in the present struggle.

The Holy See has no quarrel with this or that particular form of Government. Experience has taught the Vatican that all are imperfect, that all can be tolerable. The Church has seen Empires rise and fall, great nations pass away. The next oldest government in the world is the British monarchy; but the Papacy had already known a thousand years of turbulent history before the British Monarchy was born.

Sovereign Freedom

Although the Pope has no territorial ambitions he must be free to be effective. Because he is the Father of all he can be subject to none. That is why in the present war the Papacy can work more effectively for peace than in the last one—since 1929 the Pope is the head of the independent, sovereign State of the Vatican. The size does not matter—it is only 100 acres. The population does not matter—it is not much over 1,000. But the Vatican State is recognised by international law because it has clearly defined territory, a genuine Government and it owes allegiance to no other power. To-day 34 nations, in-

cluding Great Britain, have permanent missions to the Vatican, while President Roosevelt has taken the extraordinary step of sending a personal representative—at once the sign and the instrument of the remarkable growth of Papal influence among men of good will everywhere.

This is the basis of the unique position of the Pope as the one surviving great neutral. He has the power to condemn but he refrains from using it. For he realises that it is as a mediator rather than as a judge that he can best help suffering humanity. Pope Pius XII. has a personal knowledge and experience of world affairs which is almost unrivalled even in the annals of the Papacy. He knows and loves England; he has visited both Americas; he has lived for years in post-war Germany; his Cardinal Secretary of State has a similar acquaintance with France. Between them they have a full, accurate, first-hand knowledge of all the problems and personalities of this war-wracked world.

Relations with Warring States

Meanwhile the Pope exercises his independence. He did all in his power to avert strife and to keep Italy out of the war. The Vatican newspaper presented to the Italian people a picture of the war different from the Fascist Press. The Vatican radio does not hesitate to proclaim the facts of German and Russian atrocities in the invaded countries. To the heads of those countries the Pope sent strongly worded messages of sym-

pathy and encouragement. The Vatican has relations with nearly all the warring States; its diplomatic activity has been constant and intense; its aim is to mitigate suffering and open negotiations for peace. In spite of much provocation from Nazi Germany, the Pope has not closed the door in Hitler's face, but kept it open in the hope of easing the lot of the conquered and of providing a basis of sanity for the pacification of Europe.

The Pope a Realist

The Pope is a realist: he has not set himself to judge or arbitrate. Such a course could be effective only if he had been called in by all parties who would moreover agree to abide by his decision. Such a state of affairs does not exist in the modern world. But he has given to the world peace proposals which would avoid the mistakes of Versailles and serve as a useful basis of discussion. These are his five points:

1. The right to freedom of all nations great and small.
2. Mutual disarmament.
3. The creation of some international institutions to guarantee fidelity to treaty obligations.
4. Recognition of the just needs of nations and racial minorities.
5. The growth of Christian goodwill founded on "a hunger and thirst after justice."

There is the Pope's charter for justice and freedom in the world. He will not by any untoward, imprudent act prejudice his chances of gaining for men by prayer and conciliation the lost, well-loved, longed-for blessings of Peace.

FASCIST HISTORY

Paintings "Looted" by Napoleon

A CABLE message from Rome on July 15 stated that the University of Rome, through its official journal, "Fascista," had demanded the return of all the art works "looted" from Italy by Napoleon, including the Mona Lisa and other paintings by Da Vinci and Titian.

Here are some facts about Da Vinci's paintings in France.

Mona Lisa

Was acquired by Francis I., King of France, and hung at Fontainebleau in early 16th century. Remained in the Royal Collection until it passed into the National Collection of the Louvre.

St. John

Sent by Louis XIII. of France to Charles I. (of England). Was bought back from England by a French banker and presented to Louis XIV. Has been in Royal Collection and Louvre ever since.

Vierge aux Rochers (Virgin of the Rocks)

Was at Fontainebleau in Royal Collection in 1625 and has been there and in the Louvre ever since.

Virgin and St. Anne

Bought in Italy by Richelieu. Was brought to France in 1629 and has been there ever since.