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In Memoriam
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In Memoriam

EGBERT MUNZER

The « Bulletin des relations nidustrielles » not so long ago lost one of its most distinguished contributors : Dr. Egbert Munzer. No use trying, in these few words, to draw a full-size picture of that great personality. Let us stress on just one detail, by far the most important: however prominent a sociologist, however, well posted in Philosophy or Mathematics Professor Munzer may have been, however wide may have been his experience of the intricate problems facing Europe and the whole political world, — Dr. Munzer has put all his encyclopedic science, his amazing experience and his great heart in the service of only one cause, for the carrying out of just one end : to be a Christian.

In effect, as we know more of his letters and as we study more deeply his class notes and his manuscripts, we shall realize more and more that Dr. Munzer had devoted his whole life for the triumph of Christianity against the materialistic powers which are now on their way to definitely conquer the world.

In 1940, when he could chose either the University of St. Francis Xavier, in Antigonish, or an American University, he adopted the former because he wanted to settle down in a country which was opposing Nazism. After three years of teaching at St. Francis Xavier and three more years as a professor of Statistics at the University of Toronto, he finally came to Laval University. He was very fond of Quebec, which, he decided, would be his adopted country. Three weeks after arriving in Quebec — November 24, to be accurate — he wrote to his wife, who was still in Toronto : « If I am to die here, I know that I shall sleep in sacred soil... »

His wish has come to reality in a most premature way. Canada shall do honor to the mortal remains of a European of such uprightness; it is its duty towards Liberty, for which it is fighting so hard.

The most striking idea which emerges from the lectures he has delivered at the Faculty of Social Sciences is this one: a terrible and ineluctable option faces our world of today: either go back to Barbarism or come back to God. And all continents, all nations are responsible for this choice. This collective responsibility comes from the profound meaning of History, which stands as the manifestation of the progress of men and nations towards or against God. Today, we are just beginning to understand, through Dr. Munzer's correspondence, that he had foreseen the necessity of this choice long before events had obliged the world to realize it.

On November 29, 1940, while still in London, he wrote to the Reverend Father Joseph D. Ostermann, the then Executive Director of the « Committee for Catholic Refugees from Germany », in New York, the following prophetic words:

« We (Catholic German Refugees) are convinced that only Christian forces will prove capable of reconstructing the future Europe... I see only one alternative — either Christianity or Communism — and if we do not succeed in mobilising our sympathizers I doubt whether Germany can be prevented from permanently joining a more or less outspoken Soviet System. Germany and the world are suffering not because principles of Liberalism, Communism or Socialism have been violated but because of the un-Christian attitude of the German government. Under this aspect it is far more important to organise moral and religious powers in the world than merely material and economic weapons. Spiritual power alone will be able to conquer in the long run. Extreme nationalism is one of the sources of the present evil, expecially in its pagan German type. Nationalism, however, can be overcome by super-national forces only, be they either Christianity or the social imperialism of the Communists. If Christianity proves too weak to regenerate Europe, then the way of universal Communism will be the only one ».

The life of this great master and thinker constitutes a tragic drama: he, who loved his motherland with indefectible loyalty, had to end his life in voluntary exile, so that he would not have to live under a dictatorial and anti-Christian regime. For all of us he remains a perfect example of courage, abnegation and great-heartedness.

LÉON DION