

MERCIER'S LETTER TO THE POPE DEPLORES PARTITION OF NATION

Dual Organization Adopted by Occupying Power Means Attempt to Disrupt Belgium and Divide Affections of the Flemings and Walloons—Praises Loyalty of Staffs at the Ministries

Explanatory Comment

ISOLATED as he was, especially after the recall of the American minister from Brussels, Cardinal Mercier was never for any lengthy period out of touch with outside facts distinctly bearing upon his own position and upon the rights of the Belgian people.

Von Bissing's cynical posthumous disclosure of German intentions in Belgium was published in a German magazine in May, 1917. In August of the same year the primate reveals his entire familiarity with the "Denkschrift" or "Memoirs" in his letter to the Pope concerning the administrative partition of the invaded territory.

The late Governor General's program for absorbing Belgium is comprehensive and explicit, as witness the following extract:

"When religious teaching will have been made compulsory, like the other matters of education, it will be possible for us to exert, in conjunction with the clergy, a profound influence upon the schools, now so different in character and tendency.

"That policy will provide many occasions for reconciliation and for common action between the German administration and the Catholic clergy which must lead us to believe that under German rule the church is better than under French influence."

Von Bissing, doubtless recalling with chagrin the Cardinal's resistance and the flaming pastorals, also advocated ingratiating the priests by "making their tasks easier," and exercising such an influence over the clerics that, as was fondly hoped, they would be reduced in time to the position of those alleged "intellectual" German theologians who were among the ninety-three scholars signatory to the manifesto indorsing the imperial policy at the outbreak of the war.

Cardinal Mercier's Story

Including his correspondence with the German authorities in Belgium during the war, 1914 to 1918, edited by Professor Fernand Meyence of Louvain University and translated by the Benedictine Monks of St. Augustine's, Ramsgate, England.

THE Holy See, through the medium of the Nuncio, manifested a desire to be accurately informed as to the attitude of the Belgian episcopate toward the administrative separation imposed on Belgium by the occupying power. The Cardinal complied with this request in a long and detailed letter addressed to his Holiness Pope Benedict XV.

Malines, Aug. 5, 1917.

Most Holy Father—I regard it as my duty to give to your holiness exact information as to the attitude of the Belgian episcopate toward the measures the occupying power has decreed in order to accomplish what it terms "administrative separation."

In reality it is not with measures of administration that we have to deal, but with an attempt to effect national disruption. No one doubts this in Belgium and no one outside Belgium will have any doubt of it after the publication of the late Baron von Bissing's "Denkschrift" or Memoirs. In our former Governor General lays bare his hope that in "flattering the crude aspiration of a few ardent Flemings of a separatist frame of mind Germany will, on the one hand," ultimately succeed in detaching their affection and perhaps also in fact from the Walloon part of the population, and on the other hand will hinder their withdrawal from under the hegemony of the German empire. Belgians have come to the conclusion that they must oppose by all legitimate means this anti-national policy, while the almost complete unanimity of the Flemings as well as the Walloons, embracing Belgian citizens of every party, whether in the occupied or unoccupied parts of the country, have rallied around their king and government.

The Belgian episcopate has considered that it ought not to be last in the ranks of those who do their duty, while for my part I have not only in private conversations, but also first at a deans' meeting, a second time at a meeting of the rectors of episcopal colleges and a third time at a meeting of the masters and mistresses of the training schools, clearly declared what is our patriotic duty and at the same time what our Christian conscience dictates in such a contingency.

In a pastoral issued by me long before the war—on the feast of the Epiphany, 1910, to be precise—I said that patriotism, which, following St. Thomas, I called patriotic piety, is binding in conscience to such an extent that to fail therein in serious matters is to commit a grievous sin.

Taking my inspiration from this principle, I declared to the deans that anybody countenancing these attempts to break up our national unity would be a traitor to his country, and to the directors of the seminaries and episcopal colleges I added that I forbade our seminarians and young students to take part in such partisan meetings, where, under cover of what they term activist propaganda, the king, as well as the religious authorities, is insolently attacked.

While we were issuing these general directions to our clergy the occupying power multiplied its separatist efforts to attain its own ends. At the outset it proceeded slowly and stealthily. But so early as November, 1916, it duplicated certain posts at the ministry of sciences and art, intending thereby to introduce a twofold set of officials, classified in two categories, namely, Walloons and Flemings. But to soothe the consciences of those concerned, the German commissary formally declared that it was only a matter of internal economy special to the teaching services and by no means the beginning of a separatist administration for the whole country. In the city and district of Brussels and in the great towns of the Flemish provinces numerous families of Walloon extraction or of French customs give their children a partly French education. Various steps were taken to forbid this bilingualism. At last, on March 23, 1917, the Governor General threw off the mask and decreed the partition of the Belgian administration into sections, one Flemish and the other French, and created a separate central bureau for each of them.

Infringement of Liberties

These measures are contrary to Article 43 of The Hague convention of October 18, 1907, and are an infringement of our constitutional liberties in the matter of language. Until now the functions of the central administration were carried on by delegates of the lawful authority under the supervision of the occupying power. For the future there will be no central authority of national origin. The occupying power, in order to lead everybody outside Belgium to believe that this dual organization has the approval of one part of the nation, usurps the rights of the whole nation, and so well does it know this that it has tried to effect this change by reusing the hateful and grotesque comedy of the Council of Flanders.

The staffs at the ministries, mindful of the loyalty they owe the Belgian Government, were prepared in great numbers to resign their posts rather than lend a hand to a policy of national scission.

Some persons, nevertheless, foreseeing reprisals

*This letter was read by the Cardinal in the course of a retreat preached to the clergy at the beginning of September and was taken down by one of the retreatants and published in "Cinqante Mole d'Occupation Allemande" by L. Gille, A. Coms and Delands-Herre, Brussels, 1919, Vol. VII, pp. 412-418.

at the hands of the occupying power, and more anxious to protect the private interests of officials' families or to safeguard certain party advantages than to preserve intact the supreme interest of national unity, would have advised all the staffs to humor the whims of the occupying power in order to avoid a greater evil. These two opinions were submitted to the government at Havre, which substantially replied as follows: "The lighter officials ought to resign; the lower may remain at their posts." Immediately the directors general and the secretaries general of all the ministries complied with the wishes of the Belgian Government and were, just as was expected, led away captive to Germany.

The occupying power thought itself capable of checking the exodus of the staffs by taking these violent measures, whereas all with very rare exceptions risked their family position and their liberty with a lofty disinterestedness that one could not but admire. The logical consequence of these events was that a fresh question arose, viz., what was to be done respecting the new dualist arrangement? Were we to treat with it, obey or oppose it with passive resistance?

Opinions were again divided; some deemed it best to break with rather than appear to recognize this new situation; to close the colleges, the training and private schools. The majority, and I sided with this view, refused to proceed to extremes at the first onset. The Belgian Government itself gave the example of moderation, by not demanding from all officials equality of sacrifice. Duty called for a protest against a separatist administration, but practical life is made up of obstacles unaccountable by formal logic. In consequence, we decided to leave the primary schools open in order not to consign our children to vagabondage, but we proceeded to draw up a protest in the case of the colleges and training schools for elementary teachers.

There are in Belgium free normal schools, official normal schools, communal and provincial schools and state normal schools. There is, moreover, a central state board before which those who have not followed a regular course in the normal schools may appear.

In the normal schools not belonging to the state a state delegate has the right to assist at the final examination and the certificates receive governmental approval by a stamp being affixed to them. Now we decided after consulting the masters and mistresses concerned that the final examinations would take place as usual at the end of the scholastic year, but in private; that is to say, without inviting the German officials to assist at them and without submitting the certificates for their signature.

We subsequently carried our decisions into effect quietly, unostentatiously and liberally. We anticipate the withdrawal of the subsidies granted to the normal schools by the state as well as the scholarships awarded to the scholars in subsequent years. What would happen to these schools? What would the parents say? All these questions were looked squarely in the face by those present at the meeting convened by us. They were peaceably solved in that spirit of national loyalty inspired by the motto: "Do thy duty, God will do the rest."

"Providence Will Provide"

A mistress of the normal school in Flemish Campine stated that she needed an annual sum of 15,000 francs to pay the salaries of her lay mistresses. All her school children belonged to Flemish families of the lower middle class. We were for the moment certain that the Belgian Government would in its turn legalize the certificates of our private boards and pay us the grants which the Germans might refuse, yet we had not absolute certainty. This particular mistress contented herself with saying, "Providence will provide." Yes, Providence will provide. It has provided. In fact, M. Pouillet, our minister of science and arts, wrote us congratulating the head teachers on their courageous attitude, promising that the certificates granted should be legalized on his return and the financial deficit met. The parents have raised no objection to this and the scholars with only one or two exceptions have approved.

As soon as this decision was arrived at, I informed the official authorities responsible for the management of the normal, communal and provincial schools, and without hesitation they adopted our way of thinking and followed the same line of action as ourselves. In the state normal schools nobody could prevent the Germans from setting up a board to their liking. The board was set up, but the scholars themselves refused to appear before it.

Our last remaining resource was the central board. Each pupil of our private schools had the right to present himself before it. By establishing a board of an official character on our premises we would actively have co-operated in realizing the German plan; by permitting our pupils to go before a central board we should not assume any direct responsibility. It was, therefore, taken for granted that parents would decide whether or not it was expedient to present their children before this board, while we on our part stood aside. The central board was likewise a fiasco.

Lastly, the certificates granted by the heads of colleges and schools on the completion of humanities had to be ratified by the central administration at the ministry of education. It was decided that these certificates should not, as was customary, be sent collectively to the ministry, but that each individual pupil concerned could demand his certificate for himself and hand it in to be officially stamped. As a matter of fact no certificate was asked for or forwarded to the German central authorities.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

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A DAUGHTER OF TWO WORLDS

A Story of New York Life By LEROY SCOTT Author of "No. 12 Washington Square," "Mary Regan, etc."

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The next morning, just as on her first morning here five years before, she looked with sickened eagerness at the papers which the maid brought her. There all was forcing the war to share the first page headlines with her. It was a sensation such as disillusioned and sensation-weary reporters get a chance at only once in every five years or so, and their typewriters had made the most of it. Jennie gasped when she read all the details set down in order and perpetuated in print.

Nothing was missed. The daughter of the notorious Black Jerry—flight to escape punishment for forgery—her long and carefully planned residence as a student among the exclusive girls of Braithwood Hall—her marriage, her amazing social success—her complete deception of the socially supreme—and then the end—the truth of the old phrase that blood will tell—her new incursion into the field of forgery, with the inevitable exposure—and now her second flight to escape justice. It was a wonderful romance—particled with the color and interpretation which she knew had emanated through careful suggestion from Kenneth and Mr. Harrison.

Why, all New York knew about her now and were talking about her! What were her high friends saying as they read this story—Mrs. Shipman and the others? And Mrs. Harrison? She felt much more sick than Uncle George had represented her to be when she thought about it always. They had been true and loyal and frank—so genuine in their affection! But what were they thinking now?

And she thought of her father, drafted again from his sought-for security into first-page prominence. He had tried so hard to help her and this was the end of it all!

She shivered at every sound approaching her room. More and more such of her mind as was not possessed by fear, was concerned in Uncle George's plan to get across into Canada. If she could only get into Canada!

She was thoroughly unnerved and frightened, and she became truly a sick young woman, as much so as if she had been prostrated with brain fever, sick with that unnerving and exhausting illness which is a combination of fear, suspense and enforced inactivity. In feverish flashes she looked back upon her glorious past, and what stood out most clearly in it was the figure of Kenneth. Cynical, bitter and frightened, he had looked back upon her with a look of scorn and contempt, and she had hated him. She recalled that Kenneth had said that Gloria was the one who had exposed her. But how had Gloria learned that? From Slim Jackson, undoubtedly. She tried to reason out Slim's motives—but her surmises never satisfied her, and she still longed after the very different circumstances, did she learn the truth.

The truth was really far from complete if one fully understood Slim's attitude. That young gentleman, tingling to make Jennie suffer for her rebuff of him, had with peculiar cunning considered how he could gratify his desire for revenge and also make a profit by the same act. He had thought of telling Kenneth directly. That plan he had dismissed; it might injure Kenneth, but it would not hurt him. Also such direct procedure might lead to unhappy eventualities with Black Jerry. He then had what he conceived out of his inspiration, Gloria Raymond. He remembered how Gloria hated Jennie—how Jennie had been the instrument of giving Kenneth's infatuation for Gloria. By telling Gloria, making her swear to keep secret the source of her information and allowing her to have the credit of exposing Jennie to Kenneth, he would be the winner on every count and he would place Gloria under eternal obligation to him. And after Gloria had acted, who knew what might not happen? One thing, though, could collect upon that obligation.

And as Slim had planned, so had he done. Uncle George had said that Jennie would learn from him again until his plans were made and it was safe to try to execute them; this might possibly mean weeks. There now followed slow and painful days of aching illness which possessed her. During these days while Jennie waited, tossing about her bed, and ignorant of every-

thing except that which she gathered from the daily papers, much was going on out in that great world which so lately had been her own. The proceedings for the annulment of her marriage to Kenneth had been formally instituted. Kenneth went about with the subdued, retiring manner of one who is stricken with public shame. He received much sympathy for his misfortune. There was a quiet meeting between him and Gloria, deftly arranged by Slim Jackson. Gloria was more than willing to see Kenneth; despite the notoriety brought upon him by his wife, he was a far more important and promising percentage than he had been the summer before when she had so boldly gone man-hunting for him. At this meeting she easily convinced him that the letter which had caused the breach between them had been just another sample of Jennie's ability as a forger, and that the affair with Slim Jackson had been no more than a bit of a foolish girl's summer nonsense. It became understood between them that as soon as Kenneth was legally free, they were to be married.

Kenneth was mightily pleased at this prospect; despite his father having helped him out of his recent predicament, he saw that he was going to need money, and need it badly. Likewise, when Slim Jackson learned of this understanding, he was also mightily pleased. Matters were working out as he had hoped they would. There was no doubt that he would be able to collect—and big—for Gloria had endless money of her own.

Two days after the closing Black Jerry had received by the hand of a messenger a letter written upon the paper of a smart uptown hotel. The letter was written in a large, sprawling hand and requested Jerry to call upon

the writer at once. It was signed "Doris Dorraine." Jerry was well enough acquainted with stage affairs to know who "Doris Dorraine" was. He decided to go, but not knowing what might be afoot, he decided it would be well to have a witness. So Uncle George went with him.

"I read what happened to your daughter," she said to Jerry, "and I think I can tell you some things that will interest you." Her grayish-green eyes, whose archly coquettish glance she had counted such an asset on the stage, were now alight with fury. She went straight to the heart of what she had to say, not bothering to give an explanation of why she was saying it. But for all her sophistication, she was a simple type and her motives were simple. When Slim Jackson, in his passionate appeal to Jennie to come

with him had said that he himself could get the evidence necessary for a divorce, Slim was speaking the truth. One source from which he knew he could have secured it was his dancing partner. There had recently been an artfully concealed affair between Kenneth and Doris Dorraine, which Kenneth had abruptly broken off. And when Slim Jackson had ended his season, she had asked about rehearsals for the "revue." Slim had told her that they were through as a dancing team, but she no longer had the necessary class. Her vanity, her vanity, her vanity—she had no desire to strike back at both men as hard as she could, and she was using the method of striking natural to a woman of her type.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)



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