

On Flanders Field Again

ALL SOLDIERS killed in battle must have a Valhalla; that is their compensation for having died in vain.

In the haunts of the ghosts of Attila's hordes loud must be the guffaws and cynical their sneers these days. As their modern imitators swarm over the lowlands, paying with their lives for a bit of eyanescent glory for themselves and some real estate for their masters, the butchering heroes of the past must indeed wonder whether man is capable of learning anything.

Caesar's legions and the Grande Armee of Napoleon, Philip of Spain and Wilhelm of Hohenzollern—to mention but a few of the bloody predecessors of the mad Adolf—sought on Flanders Field that which none of them ever achieved. They only fertilized with their bones, and the bones of their victims, the countryside which peaceful, industrious peasants have intermittently enjoyed. It is only in peace and prosperity that man gains glory.

Holland particularly has learned this lesson. The Dutch, it is true, have to some extent followed the pattern of conquest; the vast rents obtained from their colonial possessions are the source of many of their fortunes. But even here their avarice has been constrained by a sense of human values, and their colonial administration is noted for kindness and justice. In contrast with the experience of England in India, France in Northern Africa, Holland has had practically no trouble with the natives of her colonies in recent years.

At home, perhaps the greatest economic achievement of Holland, besides the reclamation of large tracts of land to afford her crowded population a new source of wealth, is the institution of a rental system which in this area is an important step toward precluding exploitation of the workers on the land.

Holland has also followed a free-trade policy which has added much to her prosperity. Her revenue tariffs are insignificant. Unemployment is a very minor problem, and alongside her record of strikes our own industrial struggle seems like a major war. In culture, in the development of the arts and sciences, the Dutch have achieved a place far out of proportion to their population of eight millions. Seventeen Nobel prizes have been awarded to her scientists.

Save for the very brief and almost bloodless 1830 Belgian revolution which ended in the separation of the two countries, Holland has enjoyed peace for over a century and a quarter, that is, since Napoleon. (Compare the records of Germany, France, England, the United States.)

The Dutch people's struggles with its kings, which were traceable to the governmental policy of forced labor in the colonies, through the royally owned Netherlands Trading Company, resulted in a complete liberalization of the constitution. Since 1848 Holland has enjoyed full ministerial responsibility, complete control by the States-General of public finance and of colonial administration, direct elections, freedom of assemblage, and many other features characteristic of the liberal parliamentary system.

This is the country which the apostle of totalitarianism is ravishing. He will fail, as Philip failed and as Napoleon failed. The nightmares of world conquest have proved only one thing: that war as a means to social betterment is a failure. Ghengis Khan, Alexander and Caesar were followed by a complete collapse of their respective regimes. War is the end, not the beginning.