

NO PLACE FOR POLITICS IN CHURCH

It is fitting that after the successful completion of a major military campaign in which the anxieties and hopes of the whole nation were engaged the established Church should arrange a national service of thanksgiving. It is equally fitting these days that it should invite the participation in the service of churchmen of other denominations. This the Church of England intends for July 26 in the storied spaces of St. Paul's Cathedral and the intention is entirely welcome.

When Church and state come together in this way the order of service and the character of the occasion are matters of some delicacy, for the two embodiments of the nation will see the events that are being recalled from different points of view. Uppermost in secular reflections are feelings of pride (justified), thankfulness, and magnification of those who directed and fought the cam-

paign. The Church may share those sentiments in some measure, but it would defect from its high calling if it allowed its commemoration to become the centrepiece of a victory parade or to take on the character of a Roman triumph. It appears to be under some pressure of that kind.

The service will presumably have three threads: thanksgiving for success, commemoration of the dead, and reconciliation with our enemies. Some ideas for expressing these motifs have already been mentioned. One is for the inclusion of a reading of Pope John Paul's homily on peace which he delivered at Coventry. It was an inspiring expression of the Pope's view of war as an anachronism which has to be averted by long-term strategies for peace. Although his fears that any war nowadays is liable to spin out of control into mass destruction proved unfounded in the case of the Falklands

the text remains relevant and appropriate to the occasion.

Another felicitous proposal is for the recital of the Lord's Prayer in Spanish as well as English. It is regrettable, deplorable, that the Prime Minister should have used the prestige of her office to signify in the House of Commons her desire that the idea be dropped. Can she really suppose that such a symbolic recognition of the fatherhood of God common to the soldiers who fought each other insults the memory of our dead?

These are the kinds of difficulty that arise from the conjunction in one ceremony of the benediction of the Church and the display of secular authority. Patriotism will be experienced and will be expressed. But the Church cannot allow it to be forgotten that it acknowledges a law transcending the laws of nations and ministers to a salvation transcending the safety of the state.