

Plans for World Reorganization

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IN the various plans and programs for post-war reconstruction and world organization, it is possible to discern two general types of approach to the problems of international politics. One might be defined as the historical and realistic school of politics. The other is rationalistic in method and idealistic in temper. In the first all plans for the future are dominated by the question: Where do we go from *here*? The broken process of history is emphasized and it is believed that new ventures in political organization, however broad their field and bold their purpose, remain under certain conditions and limitations which human history never transcends. In the second school, the primary concern is not with perennial conditions but with new possibilities, and not with the starting point but with the goal.

The historical school realizes that certain perennial problems of political organization emerge in new forms, but are of the same essence on each new level of the political integration of human society. The idealists are more conscious of novel and radical elements in a new situation and are inclined to believe and hope that old problems and vexations will disappear in the new level of political achievement.

In the present situation the idealists rightly insist that the economic interdependence of the world demands new international political organization. They believe in the necessity of some kind of world government, which will make our economic interdependence sufferable and which will organize the potential world community and make it actual.

I

The realistic and historical school does not deny these new necessities and possibilities. But it views the task of realizing them in the light of its knowledge of the stubborn inertia of human history. It wants to know how nations are to be beguiled into a limitation of their sovereign rights, considering that national pride and parochial self-sufficiency are something more than the mere fruit of ignorance but recurring forces in all efforts at social cohesion.

All these differences of temper and viewpoint are finally focussed upon one crucial issue: the problem of power. The historical realists know that history is not a simple rational process but a vital one. All human societies are organizations of diverse vitalities and interests by power. Some dominant power lies at the center of every social organization. Some balance of power is the basis of whatever justice is achieved in human relations. Where the disproportion of power is too great and where an equilibrium of social forces is lacking, no mere rational or moral demands can achieve justice.

The rationalists and idealists are inclined to view history from the standpoint of the moral and social imperatives which a rational analysis of a situation generates. They look at the world and decide that its social and economic problems demand and require a "federation of the world." They think of such a federation not primarily in terms of the complex economic and social interests and vitalities, which must be brought into and held in a tolerable equilibrium. Least of all do they think of the necessity of some dominant force or power as the organizing center of the equilibrium. They are on the whole content to state the ideal requirements of the situation in as rigorous terms as possible.

Sometimes they wring their hands in holy horror when the tortuous processes of history do not conform to their ideal demands. They declare in self-righteous pride that since the statesmen of the world refused to heed their advice, and since the people of the world were too obtuse to see the light, they themselves can do nothing more than consign the world to its deserved doom. During the past decades they have been too preoccupied with the task of condemning the nations for their obvious defiance of the new requirements of a world civilization to be much concerned with the immediate perils which the crisis of our civilization has brought upon us.

This word of stricture upon the idealists will betray the bias from which this analysis of the two schools is attempted. This analysis assumes that, on

the whole, the task of world organization must be attempted from the standpoint of the historical realism. This conclusion could be justified by the simple fact that no historical process has ever, even remotely, conformed to the pattern which the idealists have mapped out for it. It must be added immediately, however, that the truth does not lie simply on the side of the realists. Without an admixture of the temper and the insights of the other school, there could be no genuine advance in social organization at all.

The realists understand the perennial problems of politics, but they are usually deficient in their sense of the urgency of a new situation. They know that politics is a problem of the manipulation of power. But they easily interpret the problem of power in too cynical terms. Sometimes they forget that political power is a compound of which physical force, whether economic or military, is only one ingredient. They do not fully appreciate that a proper regard for moral aspirations is a source of political prestige; and that this prestige is itself an indispensable source of power.

II

In the present situation the idealists, in making plans for world organization, either disregard the problem of power entirely or they project some central pool of power without asking what tributaries are to fill the pool. In the former case they are sometimes under the illusion that "national sovereignty" is merely the fruit of faulty conceptions of international law. They would write new international laws in which the absolute sovereignty of nations is denied; and they believe that such a legal refutation of national claims would be sufficient to tame the stubborn self-will of nations and to maintain "law without force." [This phrase is the title of a recent book upon that subject, written in the temper just defined.]

In the latter case they conceive of some federation of the world with an international police force and with a newly and abstractly created moral and political prestige, sufficient to maintain itself against the divisive forces which will inevitably challenge its authority. Usually they refer to the creation of American nationhood as analogy and proof of the possibility of creating such a new authority. It happens that the history of the American Constitution and of American federalism conforms more nearly to this pattern than any other national history; but it does not conform as completely as the idealists imagine. They forget to what degree the sovereignty of the several states was actually abridged in the heat of a desperate conflict; that even this conflict did not persuade the states to go as far as it was necessary to go; and that when they did take the final step, many of them did so with mental reservations in the direction

of separatism which finally resulted in a civil war. That war was necessary to prove that the nation was really one and that the constitutional commitments, by which it was formed, were irrevocable.

Generally the idealists think it possible to create such a new international authority and then make a moral demand upon the nations to submit themselves to it. They do not realize that no collective group in human history has ever made decisions in vacuum. Sometimes nations are able to say B, if history has previously established the A upon which the B follows. But that is about as far as collective volition goes.

As against these illusions of the rationalists and idealists, the historical realists are more correct. They are right in looking to the mutual commitments made by the United Nations in the war as the real source of possibly wider commitments for the future. They are right in looking to the immediate necessities of a war situation for the compulsion which will abridge the self-will of nations, and in hoping that the necessities of the peace will be obvious enough to persuade the nations to extend, rather than to disavow the commitments thus made. It is always possible of course that the necessities of peace will, though equally urgent, not be equally obvious; that nations will refuse to conform to them and that another and even more tragic chapter in world history will have to be enacted before the nations bow to the irrefutable logic of history. This logic is irrefutable because an economically interdependent world must in some sense become a politically integrated world community or allow potential instruments of community to become instruments of mutual annihilation.

The weakness of the realists is that they usually do not go far enough in meeting new problems and situations. They are so conscious of the resistance in history to new ventures; and are so impressed by the force of the perennial problems of politics, which manifest themselves on each new level of history, that they are inclined to discount both the necessity and the possibility of new political achievements.

III

In the present situation, both the idealists and the realists may be divided into two subordinate schools of thought. One group of idealists does not deal with the problem of power at all. They would simply organize the world by law without asking where the power and authority to enforce the law is to come from. The other group is conscious of the problem of power, but they deal with it abstractly. Among the realists, one school of thought would merely reconstruct some new balance of power among the nations, having no confidence in international political organization. The other group believes in some kind

of imperial organization of the world, with some small group of dominant nations furnishing the imperial power.

The most brilliant exposition of the school of thought which thinks in terms of reconstructing the balance of power as a principle of world peace, is Professor Spykman's very able book: *America's Strategy in World Politics*. The book has the merit of recognizing all the geographic, economic and other elements which must enter into any kind of international equilibrium and which cannot be disregarded on any level of political achievement. But it does not fully realize that an unorganized balance of power is potential anarchy and cannot preserve peace. The introduction of a single new factor into the precarious equilibrium, or the elaboration of a single new force of recalcitrance (as for instance the air power of Germany) may destroy the balance. The world community requires instruments for the manipulation of its social forces. Without them it is bound to fall into periodic anarchy.

For this reason the imperialistic realists actually have a more hopeful program than the "balance of power" realists. They know that a balance of power must be organized and that a dominant power must be the organizing center. They expect either America, or the Anglo-Saxon hegemony, or the four great powers, Russia, China, Britain and America, to form the organizing center of the world community. I think they are right in this thesis and that there is no possibility of organizing the world at all, which will not be exposed to the charge of "imperialism" by the idealists who do not take the problem of power seriously.

But the imperialistic realists usually do not take the problem of justice seriously enough. An Anglo-Saxon imperialism might be a great deal better than a Nazi one; but the Nazi order is so purely destructive that a new imperialism could be a great deal better than Nazism and yet not good enough to bring peace to the world. The new understandings with Russia, which cannot be overestimated, probably preclude the possibility of a pure Anglo-Saxon imperialism; and that is a great gain, however difficult the adjustments between Russia and the western nations may prove to be.

But the real question is to what degree smaller nations can be drawn into the post-war reconstruction constitutionally so that their voice and power will be fitted into the whole scheme so that it will prevent the power of the dominant elements in the organization from becoming vexatious. Fortunately, many small nations are already related to the inchoate world scheme in the "United Nations." But unfortunately the policies of the United Nations are not being democratically conducted. The Roosevelt administra-

tion, despite its great superiority in political astuteness over the Wilsonian one, is failing at this point. Washington negotiates with many partners separately, and with Russia and Britain jointly to a considerable degree. But there is little indication of the gradual development of a democratic process on an international scale in the deliberations of the United Nations.

IV

It would be unjust to claim that the realists are consistently unaware of the problem of democratic justice in the realm of a gradually coalescing unity. There are many shades of thought among them. A few even manage to be imperialists in one breath and to speak of the "imposition of order" upon the world by dominant power, while in the next breath they elaborate plans for an ideal democratic federation of the world. But it is fair to say that, on the whole, the realists do not take this problem seriously enough.

It is of course a desperate problem. It includes not only the relation of smaller powers to the dominant ones, but the relation of undeveloped nations, who have no power at all, to the nations which do have power—in other words, the problem of imperialism in the stricter sense of the word. It includes the necessity of apportioning responsibility to the proportions of power as they actually exist. For constitutional arrangements which allowed smaller nations to determine policies, which they lacked the power to implement, could become as fruitful a source of new anarchy as unchecked dominant power could become a new source of tyranny.

Nor will any amount of forethought be able to solve all these problems. The solution of some of them depends upon the internal structure of the nations participating in world community. While it is not true that a just world order depends altogether upon political and economic democracy prevalent in the constituent nations, it is true that the stronger the internal political and moral checks upon the imperialistic impulse are, the easier will it be to solve the problem of external checks. If a stable peace depended altogether upon the achievement of an ideal democracy in the constituent nations, we would have to resign ourselves to decades of further purgatory. For obviously history does not move consistently in these matters; and we will have to include many nations of varying internal structures in any new world arrangements. The proposal for the federation of democratic nations only is a fantastic one; no less fantastic than, let us say, a plan for the exclusion of "poll tax" states from the Federal Union.

When all the difficulties are surveyed and all the necessities are kept in mind, it becomes almost axiomatic that anything like a perfect world organization

is bound to elude us. There must be a tolerable equilibrium in it, and that equilibrium must be politically implemented; there must be an organizing center for it; and that center must be surrounded by checks to prevent its power from becoming vexatious; the organization must include many regional arrangements; and yet these regional arrangements must not run counter to the basic fact that the economic and political life of the nations is integrated in world, rather than regional, terms. The hazards to success are so great that we must be prepared to accept anything which keeps the future open; but we must also be prepared to contend for everything which represents a basic requirement of justice.

From the standpoint of Christian faith it is important to recognize that Christianity cannot be equated

with "idealism" and that the Christian answer to a problem is not simply the most ideal possible solution which the imagination can conceive. A profound Christian faith knows something of the recalcitrance of sin on every level of moral and social achievement, and is, therefore, not involved in the alternate moods of illusion and disillusionment which harass the world of idealists and secularists. It knows something of the similarity between our own sin and the guilt of others; and will therefore not be pitiless if ideal possibilities are frustrated by the selfishness of others. But it also hears the divine command in every new historical situation. The Christian ought to know that the creation of some form of world community, compatible with the necessities of a technical age, is the most compelling command of our day.