

Problems of European Reorganization

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IN ANY discussion of European reorganization the chief point at issue is which power is to be called upon to furnish the authority of government.

Two opposite solutions of this problem present themselves. Either the victorious democracies must take the lead, assume the responsibility, and supply the tangible power necessary to establish and secure the new order, or they will withdraw from the scene (both Britain and Russia being empires which reach into Europe but are largely extra-European) and leave it to the continent to work out its own internal problem.

It should not be assumed that the second alternative would abandon the continent to another Hitler. The crushing defeat of Hitler and everything for which he stands is the precondition of the entire arrangement. Without his defeat there is no hope for the world. The shock of that defeat, on the other hand, after the intolerable strain and exuberant promises of the Nazi years, will leave deep marks on the political character of the German people.

Unless we adhere to a racial theory of German wickedness, we must recognize that national as well as individual characters are formed and reformed by the interplay of inner forces and outer experiences. The main character-forming event in Germany was probably the Reformation, which taught Germany the ethic of an unconditional surrender of the individual to the state, whose power, however selfish, was meant to check the disruptive egoisms of individuals and groups. This doctrine made even the bourgeoisie in Germany immune to liberalism and democracy. The Germans may dislike the Nazis, but they obey them by virtue of their innate reverence for the power of the state. If the most concentrated

form of that power is decisively beaten and its ruinous character revealed, as did not happen at the end of the First World War, then at last there is a reasonable hope that Germany may revert to more liberal ideals of government.

However, this change in Germany would not suffice to make the continental solution possible. The organization of Europe must be acceptable to Germany's neighbors. They are the victims of Nazi frightfulness; their endurance and their final uprising to help the invasion armies of the United Nations must be decisive factors in the victory; the solution depends on them.

There may be a chance for their reconciliation with Germany. Many envisage something similar to the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War. Religious fanaticism and aggression reached their climax in that war and were spectacularly demonstrated to be suicidal. Two-thirds of the population of the continent perished in the war and its accompaniment of epidemic and famine. There has been religious peace ever since. So it is hoped now that the continent, emerging from the ocean of horror, would have only one longing: to get rid of nationalism and militarism once and for all. A wave of international tolerance would sweep national boundaries and armies away.

But this would be possible only after the exhaustion of a thirty years' stalemate. In case of a real victory no prospect of a German conversion will prevent an unparalleled outburst of hate and revenge. No differentiation will be made between Germans and Nazis; for while the Nazis gave the orders and took the lead in frightfulness, it was German soldiers who perpetrated it, loyal to their orders as always. The seed of hatred is beyond any imagina-

tion and will germinate. The German soldiers know this and are thereby drawn closer into the community of fate with the Nazis.

The Nazis have, furthermore, used all means of their propaganda to whip up the ancient tribal feuds between neighboring peoples, including their own satellites, in the southeast. They have incited the Croats and the Hungarians against the Serbs, the Bulgarians against their Rumanian allies as well as against the Serbs and Greeks, the Rumanians on the one hand and the Slovakians on the other against the Hungarians, all three of them members of the Axis; they have taken every quarrel as a pretext for infiltration and stricter control. There is less hope for reconciliation between the indomitable peoples of the Balkans today than there was for a generation. To count on the European continent to work out its own peaceful organization is the most unrealistic of all dreams; the immensity of the present catastrophe makes it impossible.

Whatever organization of power we create, this hatred is also the gravest danger to the future peace. There is no escape from this conclusion. To underestimate the German crime would make us accomplices; to recognize it makes us appear as advocates of retaliation. To preach forgiveness as a political solution would seem ridiculous. Yet revenge is not peace and must not be tolerated in the peace.

The spirit of revenge has begun to influence even England. It is rationalized in Vansittart's racial theory of German wickedness and epitomized in the phrase that the only good German is a dead German. It has, unfortunately, been adopted even by Churchill. He has said that there are seventy millions of malicious Huns, some of them killable and some curable. Many elements in this country, particularly among the young people, were thereby driven into isolationism. But this hatred is not in any way the predominant attitude in England. Protests have been vigorous; there is every hope that the inborn fairness which is such a conspicuous national virtue of Britain, may only be made more militant by such errors. And our own country will, it is hoped, see to it that this worst kind of emotionalism is checked.

However that may be, hatred of the Germans, and mutual hatred of too many small peoples, makes the hope for an intra-continental solution illusory. To stabilize the peace devolves on the victorious great powers. If their lust for revenge corrupts their task, the only alternative is rekindled nationalism in the defeated countries. And if, on the other hand, they should abuse their power and reduce the continent to a colony of Anglo-Saxon imperialism, there is again no alternative but continental Communism.

These dangers are real. They must be recognized if they are to be met. There is a very good chance

for them to be met, as the situation stands at this moment. Imperialism is being melted down by the war itself and the conditions of victory. Roosevelt outweighs Churchill on ideological matters. Being forewarned we are not likely to capitulate again to the evasions and dishonesties of Versailles, though they were not half as great as Nazi propaganda and American isolationism would have us believe. There is no hope for a peaceful continental solution; there is a reasonable hope for a real peace imposed by the victors.

The problems which must be settled by them are formidable. Whatever comprehensive organization of Europe and the world is attempted, it presents two interrelated problems: the reorganization of the southeast and of Germany.

An organization of the southeast, as any organization, requires an integrating principle. The old Hapsburg monarchy broke down for lack of inner coherence. It would not be possible for the peace program of the Second World War to reestablish this particular monarchy the destruction of which was a major item in the peace program of the First World War. To demand this is a typical Tory policy, even though it uses democratic slogans today.

The Catholic religion is predominant in all succession states, although there are numerous Protestants in Hungary, Hussites in Czechoslovakia, and atheists in Vienna. The Catholic Church is, of course, an immeasurably stronger social tie than any Protestant creed anywhere in the world except in England. But even so it is doubtful whether the Church would be capable of reintegrating the peoples she failed to keep together in 1918. She may strengthen her hold on some, but lose her hold on others, by her natural conservative inclination towards legitimism.

History and tradition as such, no doubt, can integrate different nationalities into one body politic and have done so in innumerable cases, most conspicuously in Switzerland. But the tradition of unity has been violently disavowed by the Danubian peoples, and it is doubtful whether the tradition can be reestablished, a generation later. If the present is unbearable, it does not follow that the past, rejected for valid reasons, can or should be restored. To the traditional elements something new must clearly be added; and it is difficult to see what this could be but a far-reaching social reform, to arouse both enthusiasm and material interest and prove to the peoples that this is really a new state in a new system of states.

The German problem overlaps that of the southeast in the question of the Germans in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. The Austrian socialists continue to advocate Anschluss of Austria to a

democratic Reich. In another respect the two problems are complementary, in that a unified German national state, in the boundaries of 1919 or larger, would require to be balanced by a stronger organization of the southeast rather than a looser federation of German national states. How thorny the question is, and how much wisdom and moderation it will demand to take the barbs out of it, need not be stressed.

A strong case can be made for carving several German states, on a regional and never abandoned historical basis, out of the present Reich, mainly a western and southern German Catholic state, whether or not joined with German Austria. But a strong case can also be made for preserving German national unity—its destruction may rekindle German nationalism more than its preservation would do, although this again is far from certain. The entire discussion, even among non-German democrats, is charged with an atmosphere of emotion and anger. There is only one goal, however, peace; and everything else, the dreams of German national unity as well as those of German partition, must be subordinated to it. Those who are emotionally addicted to either one of these

programs are disqualified, except as witnesses. For nobody who goes to the limit in advocating one special interest in a highly complex world can be recognized as a single-minded servant of peace.

All this sounds discouraging. The one essential contribution to peace, whose value is not uncertain, is a domestic reorganization in the leading countries which will produce stability of employment by an extension of economic democracy and a system of national and international public works. Real democracies as victors will inspire greater confidence than victors suspected of imperialist designs. This point cannot be too strongly made. And while nationalism is not a product of economic interests, it easily amalgamates with them, particularly in the depression when international exchange breaks down and the individual states try to shift the loss between them. Economic frustration, moreover, is bound to throw people, and has thrown them, into an over-emphasis on natural values as an emotional compensation. It was the decay of the democracies which produced nationalism; democratic reformation is needed to reconstruct the world.