

# F O R U M

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## The War to End Europe

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**I** HAVE NO QUARREL with anti-Fascists when they paint a gloomy picture of what Europe will be in the event of a German victory in the war. As a rationalist and an individualist, I can scarcely conceive of anything more antipathetic to me personally than Hitler's dictatorship, except its equally brutal and less efficient quasi-ally, the communist dictatorship in Russia.

Where I do take issue with the trend of official opinion in Great Britain and France and with a good deal of unofficial opinion in America is in refusing to believe that all will be for the best in a happy world if only Hitler is defeated.

I was talking with an American "interventionist" friend in Paris shortly after the outbreak of the war. He was blithely predicting five or six years of sanguinary struggle, in which he wished America to supply a good deal of the cannon fodder. I suggested that civilization would not last so long.

"To hell with civilization," he said. "We're going to beat Hitler."

With all due respect for my friend, a brilliant and well-known figure in his field, I could not repress my feeling — what a juvenile viewpoint. And how doubly juvenile in the light of the recent experiment in making the former Kaiser the source of all human ills.

Is there any reason to believe that the downfall of Hitler will be any surer pledge of the future peace and security of the world than was the deposition of the Kaiser? Is there not a fair chance that Bertrand Russell may have been right when he suggested that what would come after Hitler in Germany would be as much

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worse than Hitler as Hitler is worse than the Kaiser?

The peace treaty (if there is one) after the end of the present war will be written by men who may have seen their families blown to pieces in air raids. And this will also be true of the leaders of the inevitable movements for social and economic change which will come in the wake of the war. Is it reasonable to expect that the peace treaties of the future will contain more elements of justice, mercy, and enlightened self-interest than that of Versailles or that the new social patterns will be more humane than those of communism and Fascism?

It is a pity that every responsible European statesman could not have been required to read and reread Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War. For here, in a narrative at once spirited and admirably objective, one has the picture of the long and terrible battle in which there were no victors and in which the end was the breakdown of Greek civilization. There are amazing parallels between the Greek world, divided into its little city states, in the fifth century, B.C., and the European continent today.

There was the rivalry between the great sea power, Athens, and the great land power, Sparta. There was the same game of power politics, the same series of intrigues and hostile alliances. One can find in Thucydides the same arguments for and against going to the aid of another state that interventionists and isolationists use in America today. And the long war between the groups of Greek states, which was characterized by frequent betrayals and changes of front among the participants, was aggravated and complicated by savage civil conflicts within the belligerent states. It displayed all the familiar features of modern imperialism and ideological fanaticism.

In the end, Greek civilization proved unable to survive the strain of the struggle. Politically and culturally, Greece entered a period of decadence. She could not resist the pressure first of Macedon, later of Rome.

What a fateful and prophetic warning for Europe today. There are several prospective beneficiaries, waiting like vultures around carrion to take advantage of Europe's war to an end that will certainly be bitter for all concerned. The most obvious of these beneficiaries

are Japan and the half-Asiatic and wholly barbarous Soviet Union.

Perhaps the most disastrous and permanent result of the war will prove to be the westward expansion of the territorial possessions and influence of the Soviet Union, that implacable enemy of everything individualistic and humanistic in the European cultural tradition. Within a few weeks after the outbreak of the war, some thirteen million unfortunate human beings — Poles, White Russians, and Ukrainians — had been brought under Stalin's rule, while the freedom of several little peasant democracies in the Baltic had been destroyed or gravely threatened.

### THE FATEFUL ERROR

**T**HE RESPONSIBILITY before history of the European statesmen who bid against each other for Soviet support is very heavy; it is like that of the Byzantine Greeks who brought the Turks into Europe in the course of their internal brawls. Hitler, of course, is primarily responsible for this ominous penetration of the Soviet legions into the heart of central Europe. But he shares this responsibility with France, the first large country to conclude with the Soviet Union an alliance which the latter violated at the first opportunity. And the Hitler-Stalin mutual-aggression pact of August 24, the subsequent agreement for the partition of Poland, and the other German-Soviet understandings might never have been concluded if it had not been for the ill-advised British and French overtures to Moscow in the spring and summer of 1939.

What a tragic failure of democratic statesmanship that it was left to Stalin to recognize an axiomatic truth which Chamberlain and Daladier missed. This was that the countries who remained aloof from the war or remained on its outer fringes, conserving their military and economic resources, during the first phases, stood the best chance of being the ultimate victors. Coolly, cunningly, foresightedly, Stalin focused his whole tortuous policy on a single objective: the promotion of war between the leading European powers. And, to the lasting misfortune of Europe's civilization, he succeeded. The timing of his pact with Hitler was perfect, from this standpoint.

Why could not Chamberlain and Daladier have realized that the sole hopeful chance of

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preserving a democratic and individualistic order was to keep war out of the civilized part of Europe, to give Hitler every opportunity, even every encouragement, to attack the Soviet Union? Why did they not possess as much elementary statecraft as the Roman and Byzantine emperors, who were always careful to keep the barbarians fighting amongst each other? Instead of this, by throwing themselves on the modern Goths — the Nazis — Great Britain and France simply played the game of the modern Sarmatians, the Soviet communists, who will loom up as a fresh enemy if and when the Goths are disposed of.

It may be objected that there is no assurance that a policy of reckoning on a German-Soviet clash, which would have necessitated that France and Great Britain disinterest themselves in eastern Europe, would have succeeded. But, in retrospect, it would certainly seem to have been worth trying. The Anglo-French guarantee to Poland was of no visible benefit either to the French and British or to the unfortunate Poles. The time to stop Hitler was in 1935 or, at the latest, in 1936. Once the Rhineland had been refortified, France and Great Britain were quite helpless directly to affect the course of events in eastern Europe. It is certainly quite probable that Germany and the Soviet Union would have come into conflict over the Baltic states or even Poland herself if Hitler had not been forced by his preoccupations in the west to yield to Stalin's demands. And, even if the Nazi and Soviet dictators had come to an understanding, the position of Great Britain and France would have been no worse than it is now. The chances are that Great Britain and France are strong enough to defend themselves. The chances are that they are *not* strong enough to oppose a redrawing of the map in eastern Europe on which the two largest continental powers, Germany and the Soviet Union, are agreed.

### DARK DAYS AHEAD

**U**NQUESTIONABLY, the strongest factor that is sustaining the morale of the French and British peoples at the front and behind the lines is the belief that they are fighting for permanent peace. I know this from personal experience in France, from talks with soldiers at the front and with women and old men in Paris. No doubt it is equally true in England.

The majority of Americans certainly would like to share this faith in a relatively simple and easy way out of Europe's tragic impasse, would like to believe that the overthrow of Hitler would mark the beginning of a period of permanent peace and civilized living. But the probabilities, I am afraid, point overwhelmingly in a contrary direction. After all, the world does not consist of Great Britain, France, and Germany. There are other powers whose action may well be decisive.

What is the prospect that the western allies will face if, after three years (to take the official British estimate of the probable duration of the war), they succeed in crushing Germany? Millions of men will have been killed and wounded. Thousands of ships will have been sunk. Scores of once beautiful cities and towns will have been visited by death and destruction from the air. But it will be a sword, not peace, that the war-weary peoples will find at the end of this *Via Dolorosa*.

For Stalin, whose early acquisitions offer only a slight foretaste of his ultimate ambitions, will then be able to step in with a fresh army and all the poison gas of his propaganda. Contemptibly ineffective in normal times, communist propaganda, as experience has shown, operates most powerfully on the masses when they have been driven almost to hysteria by the sufferings of war.

The original British and French war objective, the restoration of Poland, obviously cannot be realized unless the Soviet Union, as well as Germany, is beaten. It will not be merely a question of the eastern provinces of Poland, which have already been seized (to the familiar Bolshevik accompaniment of the murder of large numbers of people marked out by culture, breeding, and religious faith). As soon as Germany is seriously weakened, long before armies could march across Germany to impose a settlement on eastern Europe, Stalin will be able to take over the whole of Poland and much more in the Balkans besides.

Germany herself, to avoid another and sterner Versailles, might well go communist; Hitler has already brought her a good part of the way there. The specter which confronted the victorious powers in 1918 and 1919, when revolution and counterrevolution fought for mastery in Germany, would become a reality. Great Britain and France, strained to the uttermost,

would then find themselves confronted by a huge hostile land mass, stretching from the Rhine to the Pacific. And this time Russia would not be the broken, chaotic country of 1918 and 1919, torn by civil war and unable to act outside her own frontiers.

No, all the indications are against any simple, happy ending of the present war. Europe faces the prospect of an indefinite cycle of wars and revolutions, each perhaps more senseless than the one which preceded it, each dragging civilization to a lower level. The fatal vicious circle is already clear to anyone with eyes to see. The World War spawned communism and Fascism. Fascism and communism in their turn have brought on the Second World War.

It was perhaps the insight of the former teacher of history, Edouard Daladier, that inspired the prediction in his letter to Hitler that barbarism and destruction would be the surest results of another war. What a tragic irony that the Premier should have felt obliged to call on his countrymen to give their lives with such a gloomy final prospect in view.

### **PATHETIC ILLUSIONS**

**D**URING THE WORLD WAR there were two possibilities which afforded some hope that the lives laid down in such scenes of carnage as Verdun and the Somme might not have been lost in vain.

There was the hope, voiced by Wilson, of a community of nations which might lay the basis of a new world order, without hostile alliances and balance-of-power politics, where war could be eliminated. It was indeed a noble ideal.

But the history of the last two decades has been the record of its complete frustration. The impotence to which the League of Nations had been reduced was eloquently reflected in the fact that, when war actually broke out, no one troubled to ask what the League thought about it.

One may dispute as to the causes of this failure in international co-operation. One may blame American abstention or the character of the Versailles treaty or French unwillingness to trust Germany or German untrustworthiness or Japanese and Italian violence. The fundamental causes, I think, lie deeper. They are linked up with the general decline of European

civilization which had set in before the World War. An analysis of this decline would lie outside the sphere of this paper.

The other idea which, before the end of the World War, may have seemed to hold out some prospect of a pacific, civilized international order was that of socialism. As some people found an immediate devil, responsible for the World War, in the Kaiser, others found it in the capitalist system. By putting together some of the facts about imperialism, the struggle for markets, the profits of munitions makers, it was easy to construct a theory that capitalism, the system of production for private property, was responsible for war. Destroy capitalism, and war would cease.

It seemed as simple as this to Lenin, who may dispute with Hitler the right to be considered the greatest revolutionary of our age. Because he and his associates (honest men, with a few unimportant exceptions — the breed of Stalinist robots had not yet appeared) believed with consuming passion that the capitalist system had generated the unprecedented slaughter of the World War, the cruelties of their own anticapitalist revolution were transfigured and justified in their eyes.

But the whole record of the Soviet Union — her attempt to conquer Poland in 1920; her more successful effort to share with Hitler the spoils of that unhappy country in 1939; her bloodless conquest, in the best Hitler technique, of the lesser Baltic states; her brutal assault on Finland; her smashing of independent Georgia; her conquest of Outer Mongolia, to mention only a few instances of Soviet aggression — completely refutes the idea that a socialist economic order is any guaranty against an imperialistic foreign policy. Indeed it was just in those countries where "capitalism," or economic individualism, enjoys freest play that sentiment for peace proved strongest in the years which immediately preceded the outbreak of the Second World War.

Every attempt to realize the socialist ideal has proved a failure, measured by any rational or humane standard of values. In Russia, where the experiment went furthest, the failure has been a catastrophe. Its most conspicuous results have been two great famines, the creation of a vast system of serf labor under subhuman living conditions, the establishment of a regime of systematic terrorism unmatched



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either under Czarism or the Fascist states, and the final evolution of a revolutionary dictatorship into an irresponsible personal despotism, quite devoid of any ideological basis.

### A GREAT CIVILIZATION DYING

**T**HIS IS AN AGE of cynical nihilism, of frustration of all ideals.

The two strongest postwar ideologies were communism and Fascism. And each of these betrayed its own professed principles, in the name of which so much blood had been shed, when Berlin and Moscow concluded their deal at the expense of Poland. In the light of this pact Hitlerism and Stalinism stand exposed as completely opportunist dictatorships, animated only by lust for power and plunder and divorced from *any* social and economic ideas, even from perverted and mistaken ones. The communist and Nazi regimes now appear as devoid of any coherent, consistent body of principles as were the predatory Goths and Vandals, with whom, indeed, they possess disconcertingly many traits in common.

What a dismal series of triumphs of fanaticism, ignorance, and brutality over reason, culture, and humanity Europe has witnessed during the last two decades. What an irony this lends to the last sentence in the autobiography of Henry Adams, who lived in what seems, in retrospect, such a safe, sheltered, civilized epoch of world history:

Perhaps some day — say 1938, — their centenary\* they might be allowed to return together for a holiday, to see the mistakes of their own lives made clear in the light of the mistakes of their successors; and perhaps then, for the first time since man began his education among the carnivores, they would find a world that sensitive and timid natures could regard without a shudder.

Nineteen thirty-eight. Without a shudder. Japanese airplanes bombing from one end of China to the other. Spain in the last throes of savage civil war. Nazis overrunning two small civilized states. The endless martyrdom of German Jews and of Russians of all classes who fall under Stalin's displeasure. The Holy Land of three religions torn with the feud of Arab and Jew. And the crowning disaster of 1939 constantly coming closer.

It is high time to put aside any hopeful illusions. The civilization of modern Europe,

\* Adams was imagining the return to earth of himself and two old friends, who had also been born in 1838.

like many great civilizations before it, is in an unmistakable process of deterioration and decay, symbolized in an ever growing cult of violence in international and internal disputes, a violence that becomes increasingly unmotivated. Far from arresting this trend, the present war can only greatly accelerate it. Nothing brings a democratic country to dictatorial conditions so swiftly as a state of war. Censorship, suspension of normal freedom of discussion, installation of industrial and financial controls very similar to those of the totalitarian states — these things are much easier to introduce and to perfect than they are to withdraw.

If one takes the long view, the only correct perspective from which to survey major historical developments, one is struck by the similarities between contemporary Europe and the Greece of Thucydides. And the judgment which history has passed on Greece will also probably hold good for Europe. No one now cares about the blue books, white books, yellow books, and other apologia which Athens and Sparta may have issued to prove themselves in the right. No one worries overmuch as to who was the aggressor at Potidaea or whether the commons or the nobles at Corcyra had the better case. What is important is that a great civilization tore itself to pieces in a long agony of war and revolution. It is in such an agony, with only short deceptive respites, that Europe has been since 1914. And during that period of twenty-five years there has been no creative saving idea in thought, in politics, in economics. The great changes have all been for the worse.

One cannot expect peoples in the belligerent countries to regard the war without some anodyne of illusion. But it is important, I think, that Americans should recognize clearly what they will be letting themselves in for if they should ever change the present popular determination not to become involved in the European conflict. Here is no simple struggle of forces of light against forces of darkness, with a new American overseas crusade promising a happy ending for all concerned. In committing itself to active intervention in European affairs America would be entering an infernal cycle of war and revolution, the duration of which is uncertain, the future scope and forms of which are unpredictable.

# Inside the 'Christian Front'

by THEODORE IRWIN

**F**ORTY-EIGHT HOURS after bombs exploded in two of London's largest railway stations one day last summer, police picked up a "Liam Walsh" for questioning. A Dublin terrorist, he was identified as the mysterious "man with a slouch" present at the scene of one of the explosions. Strangely enough, Liam Walsh's name reached Scotland Yard in a cable from the British consulate in New York. The consul, in turn, had received his information from a little group of men digging for the roots of the savage anti-Semitic movement in New York known as the Christian Front. The reference to Walsh was first picked up by undercover agents in a message to Christian Front headquarters in New York from the Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin.

Five months later, the Federal Bureau of Investigation pounced on seventeen members of a Christian Front "inner circle" and uncovered a fantastic little *Putsch*. Using Irish Republican Army techniques (down to similar methods of manufacturing explosives) this little group was accused of planning to bomb selected buildings, seize public utilities, blast bridges, terrorize Jews, appropriate Federal Reserve gold, assassinate fourteen Congressmen, and set up a dictatorship. These "Fronters," almost half of whom were active or former members of the National Guard or other branches of the armed forces, were about to undergo a practice course in bombing. Among them were several natives of Ireland and Germany, a Nazi propagandist, and the national leader of the Christian Front.

Berlin — Dublin — New York. Considerably more than these symptoms point to international seats of infection for a festering boil on the neck of the nation — the most widely ramified hate movement since the ugliest days of the Ku Klux Klan. In New York, where it reached the most advanced stage, the new anti-Semitism has been a domestic storm-troop

mob running amuck, spewing racial hatred, fomenting violence, staging street scenes never before witnessed in the city's history. Composed chiefly of admirers of Charles E. Coughlin and sundry hoodlums, crackpots, misguided patriots, and Bundsters, the Christian Front and its shenanigans have taken on startling resemblances to early Naziism.

At its fountainhead, New Yorkers for more than a year have been subjected each week to an average of forty or fifty turbulent and vituperative Christian Front street meetings, at which crowds have been exhorted to liquidate the Jews in America. Bands of rowdies have roamed subways and streets insulting and assaulting Semitic-appearing men and women; abusive stickers have been slapped on windows of Jewish shops; a "Christian Index" has been compiled for an organized boycott; and brawls have ended in close to 250 arrests and 120 convictions. Men were recruited for a private army. Unfriendly radio stations and sponsoring Jewish merchants were raucously picketed. Affection for Hitler and his policies was outspoken. Christian Front propaganda penetrated even the public schools, and several Jewish children were severely beaten by small-fry Streichers.

While outside New York what is known as the Christian Front is wholly a membership setup, perhaps affiliated with or screened by State Social Justice clubs and superpatriotic bodies, at headquarters it also serves the more ominous function of a loosely knit coalition acting for a score or more groups openly Fascist in sympathies. Circuit rabble rousers, as well as *Social Justice* — the Coughlin organ — boasted that by the end of 1940 Christian Front membership would reach five million. New York alone, it is estimated, now has some 12,000 rabid followers of the faith. Whatever its actual strength, the Front manifestly developed as the spearhead of the most un-