

# THE PLAN FOR A NEW WAR

BY G. K. CHESTERTON

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THE proposal for another European war, to follow after a reasonable interval upon the conclusion of this one, is one which can evidently claim many influential adherents, and which can doubtless also claim many persuasive arguments. It is apparently suggested that if the present conflict could be concluded by an equalizing peace, without annexations or indemnities, without decisive victory or defeat, the European war which would naturally follow would be a more inspiring or satisfactory decision than anything which we can hope to make of the present one. There would be an interval for the recuperation of forces, the reconsideration of military problems, and the general recovery of nerve and tone; after which the combat could hardly fail to be renewed with a brighter inventiveness and a bolder spirit of adventure, which would make it a more attractive topic to the jaded journalist, as well as a more mature masterpiece for the contemplation of the imaginative historian. It is the experience of every sport, from chess to cricket, that the happiest and most original effects can hardly be expected towards the end of a hard day or a busy season; and a scientific and sternly realistic modern study of war has revealed the truth that three years of it are a little wearing. It is therefore proposed, in the best and highest interests of the war itself, that a truce of some years should now intervene, before our present experiences are repeated. It may be said that this is mere weakness, and an excuse for abandoning a task; but the very history of the proposal will be enough to reassure us in this respect. That this scheme is prompted by no unmanly indifference to the military art, but rather by the hope of raising that art to great heights in the future,

is sufficiently established by a single fact. It is the fact that the prime movers in this proposal for a temporary peace are actually the very men who have always been, by their own claim as well as by their neighbors' experience, the only pure militarists in Europe. Those who propose this truce are the Prussians themselves.

The mere name of Prussia is sufficient guarantee that we shall not be tricked by a truce that is afterwards turned into a peace. It is at least an advantage of the specialist that he is not likely wholly to neglect his specialty; Berlin from its beginnings may justly claim to have cared for nothing in comparison with the perfecting of a military machine, for a certain type of military successes; and it would be very perverse and cantankerous to doubt that the machine, and all its original objects, are safe in the hands of their inventor. The truth is that it is the very artistry and ardor for their craft of these military artists of North Germany which make them call the halt which their petty depreciators are mistaking for a retreat. A study of their military masterpieces in the past will show that they have always known exactly when a pause was necessary for the very perpetuation of their effort. Frederick the Great, when he had taken Silesia from the Austrians and Poland from the Poles, made himself the special guardian of a truce so long and systematic as to lead many to imagine that a comparatively peaceful power had just entered the world. Yet this, as Bismarck pointed out when urging his hesitating sovereign to attack Denmark, did not prevent each of the princes of Potsdam, in turn, from adding to their responsibilities by the care of new provinces previously belonging to other people. After Jena, when Napoleon swept Prussia, the Prussians treated him with a judicious and thoughtful moderation which might be mistaken at first sight for extreme fear. Yet this was no obstacle to their afterwards watching their own interests as conquerors; and not only gaining advantages at the expense of their enemies, but advancing a well-considered proposal for gaining them at the expense of their friends.

After this again there was a lull long enough to discourage their less faithful and understanding subjects; and again they were gladdened and rewarded with deeds of chivalry against Denmark and France. And yet again in the present controversy the Germans do not disguise, but rather candidly proclaim and emphasize, that they have re-

frained from assaults on their neighbors for fully forty years. And yet with what zest and freshness they flung themselves into their suspended enterprise only three years ago! What signs were there of bloodless lassitude or lifeless humanitarianism either in the plan or the process of the invasion of Belgium? By this analogy alone we may be reassured that these skilled disciplinarians are the best judges of their own need of a holiday; and that their discipline is never even relaxed, except with an object ultimately and legitimately military. An armistice proposed by the rulers of Germany will be an armistice in the genuine and loyal sense of the term; that is, an interlude in the use of arms: and will not, as is maliciously suggested, be a mere excuse for a relapse into the stagnation of pacifism.

But those who doubt the feasibility, or even the desirability, of a fresh start for the war (to follow on such a recreative interval) have another and more insidious expedient to belittle it. They prudently abandon the attempt to depreciate the permanent power of the North German for adventure and attack, and allege rather a weariness in the weaker races, a general reluctance in mankind, to repeat the present experiment in a better and bolder form. It is suggested that the average man of the average nation will, after all, find peace such a luxury that he will cling to it to the loss of the larger vision of a later Armageddon. This particular argument against the scheme for another war is at least not difficult to refute. To begin with, there is an obvious fallacy in it, founded on the very nature of war itself. It is, as a matter of experience, by no means easy for one man to remain permanently at peace with others who have a fine and inexhaustible enthusiasm for being at war with him. It is apt to appear as a somewhat one-sided peace, which might almost earn the description of a one-sided war. And the more active partner in such a social relation would certainly be stimulated to fresher activities, if the world had been accustomed to the conception of a peace without restitution or punishment; that is, the possibility of yet another settlement in which the assailant, if he fails to fare better, cannot possibly fare worse.

But even apart from this, there is a deeper refutation of such scepticism about the war of the future. Europe, even apart from Germany, can whole-heartedly be trusted to take up the work of war, after the necessary interval; so long as

we are careful to conclude the present round, in the manner suggested by Germany, without any pretence of victory or vindication. For let the light and hasty condemners of the possibility of postponement consider this vital matter: the actual condition in which Europe will be left by the truce at present proposed. A peace without annexations or indemnities, in the sense of any changes of frontier or reparations through taxation, will be a peace leaving every one of the most perilous problems of Europe unsolved. It is a peace that is naturally proposed, and could only conceivably be proposed, by those who wish to leave the problems unsolved—for the present. Such a refusal to touch a single disputed topic would be imbecile as part of the comment upon a war that was really concluded. But it is obviously a highly honorable and chivalrous silence in the case of a quarrel that is merely deferred. It is but the barest justice to the many distinguished intellects that have suggested a peace of the *status quo* to assume that they cannot have meant it to be final.

That it cannot be final is, of course, proved by the plainest logic and analogy. It is obviously a case of something which exists in all civilized law, but which in English law is called an interim injunction. It is the only meaning of an interim injunction that it applies solely during the interim. To say that certain disputed things are to stay exactly as they are, means, and can only mean, that they ought not to be modified until the dispute can be more fully examined and settled. A man who has half built a house on land to which his title is disputed is told not to put on another brick until the courts have settled the dispute. But the whole and sole object of saying that the house shall remain as it is for a time lies in the fact that it cannot remain as it is forever. A halt is only called because it must be followed either by advance or retreat. Nobody who is not a lunatic can reasonably be accused of wanting the *status quo* to remain for ever, with one man having got half his house or the other man having lost all his land. Nobody who is not a lunatic can reasonably be accused of proposing a peace of the European *status quo* with any intention of it lasting for ever, or lasting at all, except until the time of the real trial and sentence; when the half-built house of the German hegemony of Europe will be either logically completed and made habitable, or logically condemned and pulled down. Until the decision it will, of

course, be what a half-built house always is—merely a premature ruin. But the objections which exist against such a permanent “interim injunction” do not apply to the much more reasonable proposal now in view: that of an adjournment of the case until a time when it can more vehemently be debated.

Nor need we notify to any informed person the obvious fact that the concrete cases of continental politics are every bit as clear. The one example of Poland, for instance, is as plain a picture as that of the half-built house. It would be mere madness to suppose that the Poles, who have ceaselessly demanded their national unity while it seemed impossible, will suddenly cease even to desire it when they have been deliberately stirred and stimulated with new possibilities. It would be simply insane to think that a patriotism which remained proud when it was prostrate under three empires in alliance will lose all ambition to repossess its territory when it has actually seen the same three empires almost prostrate before it in supplication. If anybody has found a new reason for feeling himself important it is the Pole; and the very smallest measure of importance he can be expected to claim is the restoration of all his own territory, and not a third of it. Unless you give him Posen, you simply do not give him Poland. If you give him Posen, you take away what the Prussians would call a part of Prussia. Without some annexation of that sort you cannot possibly even modify the worst results of the worst annexation of all. You simply cannot strengthen Poland enough to satisfy any Pole unless you weaken Prussia enough to prevent any Prussian repeating his experiments of conquest and colonization. If you do anything less, you obviously leave the Polish patriot as patriotic as he was before, as unsatisfied as he was before, only much more sanguine and self-confident than he could possibly be before. Considering that he has launched three revolutions which were reckless in the sense that they were really hopeless, we can hardly doubt that with greatly improved chances he will at least show himself fearless. Therefore, even if the new provocation did not come from the Prussian it might very probably come from the Pole. In short, the problem is not solved; and is not really meant to be solved. I have taken this case because it is perhaps the most compact and conspicuous; but all Europe is a mosaic of similar cases. The whole European disease, which the war

was once expected to cure, consisted in the fact that the lines of military and imperial occupation cut across and contradicted the lines of living tradition and human history. It cannot be meant seriously, as a piece of magnanimity or humanitarianism, to leave these artificial lines at the end of this European war precisely as they happened to be at the end of the last European war. It can only be meant, and no doubt it is meant, as a preliminary expedient with an eye to the next European war. And in the light of this more far-sighted calculation, as we have said, the whole proposal falls into rational proportions and is capable of rational defence. The phrases of Leninites and friends of immediate peace take their own dignified place. Mysterious utterances are illuminated with a logical significance; seemingly suicidal movements are seen to be directed to a definite end; and we begin to trace the trend towards a more universal and exhaustive trial of the nations in what would otherwise seem but a hash of half-witted sentimentalism and servile panic.

Thus again, to take another among the innumerable examples, it would be absurd to suppose that any competent student of the problem expects the Roumanians who people Transylvania to forget that their own flag has appeared among them and their own brethren promised, by their bodily presence, the ultimate rescue from the oppressor. No international theorist can be quite such a fool as to suppose that they will settle down for ever under the Magyar oligarchy after the intoxicating hope of such an irruption. But it is more generous to suppose that the international theorist, not being a fool, sees clearly that such an invasion must be remembered, and may be repeated; but wishes to wait till it can be repeated in a less random and imperfect manner, with more hope of definite success or of equally definite failure. He sees that the Roumanian attack was a fiasco and even the Germanic counter-attack ultimately a failure; and he hopes that all these gallant men may perhaps do themselves more justice in the great war which we are preparing for our grandchildren.

I trust that this truth may do something to check the superficial and over-obvious sneers that are directed at the "anti-annexation" party, and the language which misrepresents them as mere peace-mongers and unpatriotic poltroons. It is plain to demonstration that they must really



be aiming at a solution which is not only military but perhaps even excessively militaristic. The truth is that our own rather prosaic and jog-trot patriotism, made mechanical by the tedium and repetition of three years' war, seems to fail us when we have to follow the far-off visions of victory and vengeance which must now be exalting the prophetic spirits of M. Lenin and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. Theirs, we need not deny, is the more daring and devastating plan of battle, theirs the deeper and more enduring thirst for glory and for just revenge; and all they say and do is undoubtedly directed, with a finer consistency than we can claim, to the precise achievement of these ideals. Just as we are familiar in modern discussions with the idea of a mind which liberates itself from some small doctrinal religion in the search for a larger and truer religion, so men like Mr. La Follette in America or Mr. Snowden in England are only abandoning the present limited war in order to find liberty and peace in the broad bosom of a larger, truer, more universal war to be sought, like all good things, in the future. It is foolish indeed to accuse such men of any failure in courage. From the colossal dimensions of the carnage which they prepare even a Pacifist might almost shrink. Nor is their wisdom less worthily proved than their valour; for if the ideal to be pursued is that of a sure and certain hope of the resurrection of war in Europe, it would be impossible to find a better, among a million expedients, than the precise expedient they have chosen. It would be impossible so perfectly to combine all possible precautions against peace, as by this one method of letting all the nations accumulate more and more aggravated motives for conquering Germany; and then to cease firing suddenly, so as to convince Germany that she cannot be conquered.

And yet the proposal for a new war leaves me unsatisfied. Perhaps I lay myself open to the charge of a maudlin and materialistic pity; but I confess I cannot rise to the robust romanticism of Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Snowden. I admit that if the joy of battle be their only concern, the joy has largely departed from this battle; and might reappear in fresher colors in that future conflict in which a new generation of soldiers may be equally stubborn and less stale. I admit that the emotions with which that great Pacifist, Maximillian Harden, hailed the actual outbreak of hostilities, the joyful pæan in which he proclaimed that the

stronger power need care nothing for right and wrong, but towers like the tree over lesser vegetation—I admit that if we value Germany for these genial expansions, Germany is now rather too depressed to provide us with them; and I admit that Germany, after a few years' rest, would almost certainly be ready to cheer us with them once more. I know that her soldiers are already suffering from low spirits and lassitude, so that they have no longer the heart for the lighter side of militarism, and can now only with a conscious effort execute the most insignificant priest or efface the least famous historical monument; I know that the gusto has gone from some of these things, and I know that it has gone only for a time. I know that nothing is needed but a holiday, a little change and rest, to give us back once more the German soldier we have known and loved. But after all, the fact of his depression cuts both ways. It is at least a proof that he is at the end of his powers, and that a few more blows will relieve us of the burden of this unsatisfactory war without the necessity of planning a more satisfactory one for the future. If the Allies persist, it is certain that they can forcibly destroy the Prussian power; and reconstitute Poland or the Balkans or Bohemia or Alsace-Lorraine upon what principle they please. It is certain that we can really end the Germanic peril by really ending the present war. And if, in doing so, we must bid farewell to the hope of another and more glorious war in the immediate future, we must remember that all good is gained by sacrifice, and be content.

For though I know that the new Pacifists will laugh at my sentimentality, I cannot for the life of me overcome a weakness of repugnance at the thought of these horrors being so soon and so systematically repeated. There seems something almost shocking, if I may be allowed the term, in the composure with which these philosophers have sat down to plan a new war in the last agony of this one. And there seems almost, if I may dare to hint at such a thing, something a little mean in passing our own last days in a recuperative rest camp, when we have already loaded the huge weapons and set up the horrible war-engines which are to torture and dismember the children now playing in the nurseries and the lanes.

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# WAR-TIME REFLECTIONS ON THE SHERMAN ANTI-TRUST LAW

BY GEORGE KENNAN

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SINCE the United States Supreme Court decided, in 1897 and 1898, that the Sherman Anti-Trust law was applicable to railroads as well as to other business corporations, the provisions of that law and the interpretations given to them by the courts have been the subjects of almost incessant criticism and controversy. Railway managers have never ceased to contend that unrestricted competition is not only wasteful but positively injurious to everybody concerned, while combination and consolidation tend to promote efficiency as well as economy and are, therefore, advantageous both to shippers and to the holders of railroad securities. The Government and the courts, on the other hand, have quite as persistently maintained that unrestricted competition is essentially beneficial and desirable; that centralization of railway control is objectionable for the reason that it eliminates such competition, and that railroad combinations of all sorts—especially those which create great systems by uniting separate and competing units—have a tendency to establish monopolies and are, therefore, “a menace to the public welfare.”

More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since the Sherman Anti-Trust bill became law; but the questions raised by it never have been finally settled, and the Government never has relaxed its efforts to break up and dissolve railroad combinations. Now, in 1917, when our country is engaged in war, and when the railroads of the United States, regardless of the Sherman law, have virtually combined into one great national system under unified control, it seems a fitting time to review again the dealings of the Government with railroad combinations and to determine, if possible, who has been right and who wrong in this long continued controversy.