

THE



TIMES

Monday July 1 1940

## THE NEW EUROPE

The anniversary of the signature of the Versailles Treaty passed at the week-end unhonoured and almost unnoticed. Twenty years of disillusionment and crisis have quenched the facile idealism and no less facile optimism which marked the end of the last War, and have encouraged the cynic to see in the present war nothing more than a clash of rival imperialisms struggling for the mastery. This view is not, however, shared by the great masses of people in this country or by their friends abroad. Inexorable events have thrust into the background the discussions about war aims which were so popular in the first months of the war. That is necessary and right. The PRIME MINISTER expressed the mood of the nation when he declared that our only present war aim is victory. Nevertheless the British will to victory is still bound up with the conviction that our war aims stand on a different plane from those of the enemy, and that victory for our arms will point the way to a new social and international order in Europe. The comparative lull which has followed the French defeat is unlikely to last for more than a brief space. But it will serve only to strengthen our resolution if we seize such a moment to reflect a little on the issues for which we fight.

This need not mean an excursion into some airy Utopia. "We must build our "Utopia," as LORD HALIFAX said a few months ago, "on foundations which themselves will be well laid and solid." We must digest the hard lessons of the war as it goes on; and these lessons have not all been military. One of the hardest, yet most certain, of them has been the bankruptcy of the principle of neutrality as practised by weak and relatively unarmed European States. This country abates, and will

abate, nothing of its traditional support of the right of small nations to pursue and cherish, in security and independence, their own way of life. But the conception of the small national unit, not strong enough for an active role in international politics, but enjoying all the prerogatives and responsibilities of sovereignty, has been rendered obsolete by modern armaments and the scope of modern warfare. The freedom and self-government of national communities in Europe will need other defences and a broader foundation in the future. Economics reinforce the same lesson. Europe can no longer afford a multiplicity of economic units, each maintaining its independent economic system behind a barbed wire entanglement of tariffs, quotas, exchange restrictions, and barter agreements. Probably the gravest error of the last peace settlement was that it encouraged disintegration at a time when integration was already the crying need. The new order in Europe must seek to create new ties, not to dissolve old ones; to build, not to break up.

This is the truth which lies behind projects like the United States of Europe or Federal Union. The utility of these particular slogans may well be open to question. "The United States of Europe" suggests a transatlantic analogy which has little or no application to modern Europe. Federation is a complicated constitutional form of proved value in certain conditions. But those who live under federal Constitutions are as keenly conscious of the shortcomings as of the blessings of federation; and these shortcomings tend to become more, not less, apparent in the contemporary world. There is a danger that exponents of a new European order may bring discredit on what is fundamentally sound by investing it in a wholly

unreal atmosphere of constitution-mongering. In its generous last-minute offer to France the British Government cut the Gordian knot by proposing a complete Anglo-French union, whose form would be left for consequent elaboration. There is much to be gained by considering the fundamental issues of European order, but little profit in the discussion of legal forms. The problem of the new European order is, after all, the problem of every political organization: how to combine individual liberty with the authority necessary for social cohesion. In the new Europe nobody wishes to iron out the diversity of peoples into a standard pattern of disciplined uniformity. But the anarchic tendencies of *laissez-faire* are as obsolete internationally as they are in domestic politics. Some measure of pooled resources and centralized control is necessary for the survival of European civilization.

This concentration cannot be achieved by power alone, but only by the creation of common loyalties and by a sense of common values. It is here that our war aims are sharply distinguished from those of the dictators, here that the struggle takes the form of a basic moral issue. Nazism and Fascism, being particularist doctrines, are sterile. They cannot create common values. The nearest approach in "Mein Kampf" to a philosophy, other than the right of the stronger, is the theory of Nordic man; and even this is jettisoned in a war which ranges Germany with Italy against Britain, Norway, and Holland. There remains only the doctrine of the German *Herrenvolk*. All that Nazism can offer as the moral foundation of a European order is submission to the authority of the German superman. The notorious SEYSS-INQUART has been endeavouring to ingratiate himself at The Hague by assuring the Dutch of their Germanic origin. This is indeed, on Nazi premises, the best that can be done. Englishmen will find less difficulty in contemplating a European society in which Great Britain and Holland can play their respective roles without requiring Dutchmen to regard themselves as slightly degenerate Anglo-Saxons.

Over the greater part of Western Europe the common values for which

we stand are known and prized. We must indeed beware of defining these values in purely nineteenth-century terms. If we speak of democracy, we do not mean a democracy which maintains the right to vote but forgets the right to work and the right to live. If we speak of freedom, we do not mean a rugged individualism which excludes social organization and economic planning. If we speak of equality, we do not mean a political equality nullified by social and economic privilege. If we speak of economic reconstruction, we think less of maximum production (though this too will be required) than of equitable distribution. The attacks of the dictators on "pluto-democracy" are an effort partly to exploit the impoverishment they have created and partly to conceal its causes. The plea is grotesque enough, especially in the conclusions which the dictators seek to draw from it. But the persistence of these attacks and the purpose which they are intended to serve abroad may remind us that the problem of the new order is social as well as international. The European house cannot be put in order unless we put our own house in order first. The new order cannot be based on the preservation of privilege, whether the privilege be that of a country, of a class, or of an individual.

One further point. No post-war settlement can ignore the role of the United States of America. Disillusionment with the sequel of 1918 has helped on both sides of the Atlantic to place this question in a false perspective. Last time the United States, though a belligerent, took the lead in breaking down the machinery of inter-Allied economic collaboration created during the War, and withdrew from the settlement they had helped to make. This time the position may well be reversed. In the last decade American opinion has moved rapidly away from the stern economic individualism of the 1920's. New links, vital to both, have been forged between the economic life of the New World and the Old. Both American inspiration and American resources will be an essential factor in the moral and economic reconstruction of a stricken and exhausted Europe.