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THE SPANISH COCKPIT



THE TOTALITARIAN ENEMY

by

F. BORKENAU

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PREFACE

cals, and Paul Sering's articles on the political structure of the Nazi régime, published in 1936 in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialismus*. Nobody will fail to realize how much I have drawn upon the opinions of Hermann Rauschning and of F. A. Voigt in my general characterization of the Nazi faith and mentality.

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Sylvia Anthony for revision of the manuscript.

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AN IDEOLOGICAL WAR

This European war is an 'ideological war'. It is a fight of the liberal powers of Europe against the biggest 'totalitarian' power, Germany. And Germany, in this war, is cooperating, though in an ambiguous manner, with Russia, the other big totalitarian power of the world. Sooner or later some smaller countries may decide upon a policy irrespective of the character of their political régime. But in the main the division could not be more clear-cut; liberal powers here, totalitarian powers there.

This struggle, in which two régimes of an entirely antagonistic character confront each other, is tremendously grim and serious. Yet a glance backwards upon what we thought about ideological war before it happened brings out the usual humorous paradox about the relation between prevision and the actual event. It is less than a year since Britain and France feared nothing so much as ideological war. The clash of antagonistic fanaticisms was not only supposed to add the most horrid ferocity to the waging of war, but it was feared that an ideological war would tear asunder the democratic countries, splitting them from top to bottom along ideological lines.

As a matter of fact, the ideological war which we thought

of then was very different from the one which has come now. We then thought of a war that Britain and France, in alliance with Russia, would wage against Germany and her Fascist allies. It was feared, and not without reason, that the Russian alliance would stultify the war aims of the democratic countries, and that the fight for liberty could not be carried on consistently with Stalin's support. It was feared, too, that a large Conservative section of public opinion in both Britain and France would loathe the idea of a fight side by side with Russia and her OGPU; and that therefore in such a fight the Western Powers would be paralysed by internal dissension, while Germany could strike with all her forces concentrated, and acting in unison, with the ostensible aim of 'destroying Bolshevism'.

Now, as I just said, this war, as it has actually turned out, is very different from the war we expected. It is different in every respect. But plainly the root of all the other differences lies in the new and unexpected grouping of the Powers. Russia, far from espousing the cause of democracy as she boasted of doing for so long, has concluded a pact with Germany. This at first sight seemed a major disaster for Britain and France. But almost immediately it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It has given the Western Powers a consistency of aim and purpose without which this war could not have been waged with any hope of success. It has divested Nazi Germany of her spurious claim to fight Bolshevism. It has brought out the divergence of the aims of Germany and Russia on the one hand, and of Japan and Italy on the other. And, last but not least, it has left the democratic Powers and their public opinion more strongly united than could have been the case under any other circumstances.

We feared that ideological war would set the Right and the Left, the Conservatives and the Socialists, against one another in the democratic countries. We had witnessed in the two years preceding the war the strange emergence of pacifist Conservatives and violently bellicose Socialists. We feared it would be still worse when war came. In fact, owing to the 'reversal of alliances', it has been better than anything that could have been expected.

The German-Russian pact has brought to the world at large an insight which before was very far from general. It has brought out the essential similarity between the German and the Russian systems. It has convinced many of those who were reluctant to believe it that Russia and Germany, in the main, do not represent two antagonistic types of social régime, but one and the same type. It is no longer heresy to describe the Nazi régime as 'Brown Bolshevism', and Stalin's régime as 'Red Fascism'. And once this discovery was made it automatically brought Socialists and Conservatives, Progressives and Reactionaries, nearer to one another in the fight against one and the same common enemy, the totalitarian State, which suppresses with equal ruthlessness the Liberal bourgeoisie and the individual capitalist, the trade-union worker and the Socialist movement, the true Christian and the true Freethinker, and stamps underfoot every liberty there is.

When the two seemingly hostile totalitarian powers, Germany and Russia, publicly joined hands on the 23rd of August 1939 they seemed to sound the death-knell of liberal democracy. In fact, the unexpected Red-Brown co-operation has helped the democracies to find themselves again. Belief in liberty seemed to have been rapidly withering away. It has got a new meaning now. It is clearly seen to

be the link which, deep in the foundations of Western civilization, holds together social and political forces otherwise widely divided and even sometimes harshly antagonistic.

Doubtless it is this constellation which gives more than passing importance to certain declarations of the British and French governments. *Il faut en finir* with Hitler, not with Germany. No other war aim could have thus united the democracies and given them the solid backing of all classes of the population. An ideological war of the Popular Front type advocated by the Communists would have set the Conservative section against the war. A war of conquest would have been unacceptable to Socialists and Progressives. But this war is neither. It is essentially a defensive war, on the part of Britain and France, waged to avert the impending peril of being drowned in the flood of totalitarianism.

This aim is so simple that it could be left standing as it is, without any further comment. Indeed, nothing would have to be added, if it were only a question of telling people what they are fighting for. Yet, in reality, the position is not quite so simple. For it is not only a question of the rightfulness of the cause of Britain and France, nor of the morale of their people. The general principle of the defence of liberty and of the fight against totalitarianism must be put into practice in a highly complex world, full of the most baffling political problems. Liberty must be defended while we are grappling simultaneously with a hundred diverse problems, if it is to be a reality, and not a mere word. The cause of liberty, exalted as it is, is challenged to-day on every side.

It is the main contention of the totalitarian Powers that liberty is no longer compatible with the social and econo-

mic needs of our time. We shall have to meet that challenge, if we are to succeed in the defence of liberty. And we cannot meet it simply by proclaiming an exalted ideal. We shall have to apply the coolest analysis, in order to get control of the problems which face us, both in theory and in practice.

As I have just said, this war on the part of the Western Powers, is purely defensive. Such a statement in itself contains bigger problems than may appear at first sight. During the last century wars on all sides have usually been fought for conquest and expansion. The last great war was fought, in addition, for the creation of a new world order, which in the end failed to come about. That failure has made us suspicious of high-flown ideals; it has made us appreciate the wisdom of moderation. Moreover, moderation alone corresponds to the maxim that ends must be adapted to the available means. The Western Powers are strong enough to ward off the threat of totalitarianism. They would not be strong enough to embark upon a programme of large-scale conquest, nor, to be sure, could they impose their political will upon mankind. As far as the Western Powers are concerned, there can be no talk, this time, about any 'imperialistic aims' behind their actions.

The same could not be said about Germany. The Nazis are quite openly and admittedly out for expansion. And their real imperialistic aims are without any doubt much wider than any they admit at the present stage. From the German point of view this is a war of conquest, in the first place of Poland, and then of other possessions, as far as they may come within her reach. In the case of Germany it would therefore be legitimate to speak of an imperialistic war. Yet it is a strange sort of imperialism. We used to

associate bellicose imperialism with the business interests of large-scale capitalists of the J. P. Morgan and Cecil Rhodes type. And if one thing is certain about the remnants of the German bourgeoisie, it is that they view Hitler's ventures with the gravest suspicion. Nazi Germany is a ferociously aggressive power, but not necessarily therefore an 'imperialistic' power in the sense which was attached to the word in the era of Joseph Chamberlain, and in that of Lenin. In analysing Nazi aggression we must not be satisfied with labelling new facts with terms that are outworn.

It was one of the big surprises of this war to witness Russia, 'the fatherland of all the toilers', in the role of a military conqueror. Yet Russian expansion, flagrantly conflicting with the avowed principles of the Russian Government as it is, is obviously not on a level with German expansion. It is not expansion under a wild, almost psychopathological impulse of aggression and conquest, but expansion for the sake of limited and discernible political aims. These aims on the whole are of a nationalistic and strategical, not of an economic, character. Again, it will not do to be satisfied with simply speaking of Russian 'imperialism'. We shall have to analyse the motive-power behind Russian expansion.

In a word, if we want to understand this war we cannot be content with simply proclaiming as its aim the defence of liberty. We must understand the roots of the aggression of the totalitarian Powers, in order to understand the context in which this war is waged. And to achieve such understanding, we shall have to use some sort of scientific analysis.

Now, there is one big drawback about the application of

science to political problems. Science tends to demonstrate a chain of causation, or in other words, the inevitability of the things that happen. What is proved to have deep roots in a complex context is to a certain extent justified. We cannot probe deeply into the complexity of these questions without seeing our adversaries' point of view. Dr. Goebbels would regard it as very bad propaganda. In totalitarian countries they know very well why they suppress all scientific research of social life.

The difficulty is the greater because we cannot limit ourselves to one single aspect of totalitarianism: its lust of conquest. Territorial conquest, as a matter of fact, is only a subsidiary aspect of German expansion. Its real, central aim is to spread the Nazi revolution all over the world. It is in the first place not as a conquering empire, but as a force of world revolution, that Nazism and Communist Russia confront Western civilization. This world revolution threatens all the values which have been handed down from Athens and Jerusalem, through the Rome of the Emperors and the Rome of the Popes, to the Reformation, the age of enlightenment, and the present age. Yet, horrible as the threat to all the values of individuality, personality, and liberty must seem to every civilized man, it is no use denying that revolutions invariably have their roots, and a measure of justification, in the evils of the society against which they are directed. This is far from tantamount to an acceptance of the revolutionaries' principles. Yet if we want to understand our enemy in order to counter his attacks, we shall have to investigate the roots of the totalitarian revolution very closely.

Only by doing so shall we be able to clothe with flesh and blood the bare formula of the defence of liberty. Liberty can

only win by overcoming the challenge of totalitarianism. And in order to overcome it, we must thoroughly understand its nature.

Such cool and detached investigation of the problems which confront us will not damp our determination, but add to it the precision that results from aims well thought out and clearly understood. To base action not on a racial or supernatural myth, but on cool, underlying facts, is in itself a challenge to Fascism. Every word which is said in Britain in these days in a scientific spirit is implicitly a rejection of the totalitarian mode of life. If we succeed in showing that reason is able to grapple with the problems of our day we have already defeated totalitarianism in the sphere of ideas. In this sense the most detached analysis is at the same time the best propaganda for the cause of liberty. In contrast to the Nazis, we need no propaganda, as opposed to the search for truth.

But to come back to our more immediate subject matter. If it is not the territorial questions of this war which matter most, from our point of view, that is not only because for Britain and France this is a defensive war, but because the real underlying problem of this war is the Nazi revolution and the fight against it. It is not for the re-drafting of the map of Europe that we went to war, nor are our aims as wide as 'a war to end war'. We have paid a heavy penalty for that sort of exaggeration during the last war. We have paid for it by disbelief in the possibility of war being any use at all, just because it is not precisely the best means of transforming our defective planet into a paradise. That must not happen again this time.

But we must grapple with the problems raised by the totalitarian revolution. We must oppose to their destruc-

tive solution, a constructive one. Fully recognizing the inherent limits of war as a means of social transformation, and the contingent limits of our strength, we must yet evolve some positive programme. We must work out our solutions for the evils, both in the international sphere and in the individual countries, which have brought about totalitarian revolution. We must not do it by opposing high-flown but insubstantial ideals to the present state of things. Our aims must be based on a correct understanding of those over-reaching, powerful trends of social development which no individual and no country can resist.

The totalitarians take pride in being a strong arm of historical necessity. They look upon themselves as the young and vigorous forces fighting against an old, decaying order of things. That claim they have to prove, and cannot prove. Yet we must meet them on their own ground, and have our own solutions for their problems. It will not be too easy a task. But if we succeed, then liberty will turn out to be ever young, and the destruction which is at the root of all totalitarianism will turn against totalitarianism itself.