

SOVEREIGNTY AND PEACE.

I.

LIONEL CURTIS has now collected in one volume four of the pamphlets he wrote during the war⁽¹⁾. We are greatly indebted to him for this collection which certainly deserves careful reading by all who are devoted to the cause of peace and who take the shaping of the future seriously. For the essence of his case, here powerfully stated, is that sovereignty excludes the rule of law and leads to anarchy and to a fragmentation of human society in which the will of the stronger ultimately prevails. Such a world is doomed to war unless the national States surrender their sovereignty and merge it into one international sovereign State.

In fact, it cannot be disputed that international law has failed to maintain peace between the States and that this is mainly due to the fact that the national States have not relinquished their sovereignty. For sovereignty is uncontrolled, irresponsible and unlimited power. It embodies in collective entities the evil spirit of selfishness which knows no restraints and no standards of judgment other than its own. It entitles the State to maintain its political existence in the international sphere, even against justice and law. This state of affairs explains why, in the age of the national state, every international question of political weight has become overlaid by considerations of force and power, and why any State, for the sake of its honour, its political existence or its vital national interests can declare war on another State and thereby annul the existing international relations between the States. Writers on international law have even developed the doctrine of the lawfulness of war, although the effect of war is always to exclude the operation of law. Briefly, sovereignty legitimizes licence and arbitrariness and makes an effective institutional world organisation impossible. It perpetuates chaos in international relationships and cannot lead to a pacification of the world.

This also explains the failure of the League of Nations. The League failed because it was not backed by a common authority, but was based on the principle of the national sovereignty of its members. Any alliance or "international co-operation", or "collective security" based on sovereignty, will meet the same fate and will not make the world safe for peace. This is also why an international organisation based on "the doctrine of sovereign equality of all peace-loving nations" (as was laid down in the declarations of Moscow and Teheran and has been recognised in the Conferences of Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco) is not likely to save the

(1) *World War: Its Cause and Cure*; by Lionel Curtis (Oxford University Press; 7s. 6d.) includes *Decision*; *Action*; *Faith and Works*; *The Way to Peace*.

world from a new and bigger disaster. True, the new Security Council is not based on this doctrine. But the principle of sovereignty itself has not been abandoned. For the Security Council is simply an alliance of the sovereign permanent members who dominate the Council and, in practice, will control the other nations of the world. Such an alliance, however, is only "a weak reed to support the peace of the world" (Mr. Grenville Clark). For it can only hold as long as the unity between the Great Powers can be maintained and none of them exercises its right of veto, the substance of which has not been affected in San Francisco by the amendment of the Yalta formula of voting⁽²⁾. Apart from this it favours the formation of a new nucleus of political power by all States which feel themselves threatened by this alliance of the Great Powers.

II.

On the other hand—and this point has been stressed again and again by political writers, international lawyers, statesmen—no State seems to be willing to relinquish a jot of its sovereignty and to merge it in a common government. Is it not waste of time, it may be argued, to deal with a project which is so far from being able to be put into practice?

The answer to this question depends on the strength nationalism has to-day. For nationalism and sovereignty are closely knit together because nationalism finds its most distinct expression in sovereignty. If national consciousness is stronger to-day than, e.g., in the last century, or has not even reached its climax as some writers say, then indeed the hope that one day the nations will surrender their national sovereignty will prove vain. But, in spite of all signs which seem to point to the contrary, the days of unbridled nationalism are counted and we are witnessing to-day the decline of nationalism. The distrust of nation for nation and the widely spread national hatred, as the result of the second world war, must not blind us to the fact that this conflict was less national than the wars in the last hundred years. In no country, not even in Germany, was there any enthusiasm on the outbreak of this European war; "Quislings" in considerable numbers collaborated with the Nazis in many countries. A big army of tens of thousands of non-Germans, including Russians, Poles, Croats, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Czechs, had rallied to the National Socialist flag, both in the West and in the East. Political warfare which can only work if rifts in

(2) Here the principle of the unanimity of the permanent members of the Security Council in all decisions for the application of force and for the peaceful settlement of disputes has been preserved. The amendment covers only the point that a Great Power cannot prevent by its veto disputes being brought before the Council for consideration.

national solidarity can be found, contributed to the rise and fall of National Socialism. Especially, however, the fact that hundreds of thousands, even millions, suffered and died in the Central European countries for the same cause for which the Allies fought this war shows the break up of nationalism at the present time. It is true that at the closing stage of this conflict the war was waged on a national basis. But this tragedy cannot put the clock of history back—particularly as there are other even more important indications which also point in the direction of a retrogression from nationalism⁽³⁾.

Among these signs, the fact that the world has already become interdependent is of special weight. Time and space have been conquered. Science, mechanisation and economics have done their part in uniting the world and in making the families of all nations one society. To-day, therefore, the dilemma is that on the one hand the world is already a unity, but on the other the national states are not prepared to accept this verdict of history. The result is that the world has to pay a terrible price in suffering and blood for not adapting its political system to the unifying forces which are operative in the world. To accept the advice of the realist and to put up with the fact that on the present situation it is not possible to persuade the nations to abandon sovereignty is to invoke God's judgment upon the nations once again. In this case a disintegrating pluralistic nationalism will have its way and again drench Europe and the world in tears and blood until the nations will be ultimately *compelled* to respect the unifying forces operative in history and to relinquish the idea of being self-contained sovereign entities.

The statesman must face this alternative. True, there is a growing tendency in many quarters to consider Politics as a natural force which to control is beyond human capacity. These realists forget that Politics is the work of man and of his creative abilities. This is why a political leader must not limit himself to giving effect to public opinion which in modern mass-democracy is frequently influenced by anonymous social and economic forces. No, a political leader should shape public opinion. He has to exercise his wisdom and insight in enlightening the people on the political issues and trends of the time. In the connexion before us, this means that he has to teach them that the fate of the world depends upon the growth of a common sentiment and spirit and on the subordination of the interests and sovereignty of individual nations to the common interest of the whole. Even Mr. Stettinius, the Chairman of the San Francisco Conference, was compelled to admit this when he stated in his broadcast of May 28, 1945, that "we must realize that we live

(3) Cf. E. H. Carr, *Nationalism and After*, 1945, p.36.

in a world where the sovereignty of a nation, not even the most powerful, is absolute.”

III.

Mr. Curtis is not for an all-out federation at once. The planned international union is to grow little by little. Great Britain and the Dominions are to make a start, uniting first for the purpose of defence and foreign policy. Then, as others have already suggested, the democratic countries, such as France, Belgium, Holland and the Scandinavian countries shall have the right to enter the new union of the British Commonwealth on the same terms as should be established between Great Britain and the Dominions. But not until all democratic countries (including especially the United States of America) have begun to merge their national sovereignties for the common defence of democracy, according to Mr. Curtis will the peace of the world be permanently secured.

If, for the sake of argument, we assume that, earlier than we venture to hope today, the Western democratic countries should form the international union suggested, would such a union really make the world safe for peace? Would not such a union automatically lead to a division of the world into two groups, one led by Russia, the other led by the Anglo-Saxon countries? True, according to Mr. Curtis's plan, all states which have acquired the qualities and experiences for self-government should be admitted to the Western union at a later stage. But is there any chance of Russia accepting the political pattern of the West? Will not the Central and East European countries which stand between West and East give preference to that style of life and government which opens to them a greater chance of survival and existence? The exclusion of these countries from the Western sphere may well make it easier for them to find their way towards the East. This, however, would probably not leave the Western democracies unaffected. For their tradition is weakened as a result of this war and we do not know whether they will be able to bear the impact of a whole Continent tending to the East. In spite of Europe's blood-stained history and its old rivalries and animosities, there is among the European nations an underlying consciousness which—if Europe ultimately heads to the East—may easily lead to a unification of the Continent under Russian influence, independently of what the Anglo-Saxon countries are thinking or doing.

Such a development, however, would touch the vital nerve-centre of Great Britain. Although she is part of a world-wide Empire and of the Anglo-Saxon world and is in her tradition dissimilar from that of Europe in many respects, her fate is closely bound to that of Europe. Today the question is no longer whether she should

co-operate with Europe, but rather how best to do so. Britain's security requires collaboration with Europe even more urgently than revision of the Statute of Westminster and the creation of a new central government of the British Commonwealth as a whole.

This does not mean that we are in favour of the setting up of an inorganic international union. It is impossible to combine such entirely different types of government as the Western multiple party-system and the dictatorial party system, because all the essential features of the latter are fundamentally opposed to those of the former. But the point in question is to define in greater detail the organic foundation of the new world organisation. In this connexion Mr. Curtis frequently refers to the Atlantic Charter which has been accepted by all United Nations. Its aim is to secure a better life for all in accordance with the principles on which Western democracy is based. But does not agreement exist among the United Nations that these principles are not to be applied to Germany and possibly to other Central-European nations? When Hitler started his criminal career with the persecution of the Jews and with the setting up of concentration camps in 1933, people both inside and outside Germany were only too easily inclined to gloss over these crimes and to put up with National Socialism as a new but normal political phenomenon. As late as January 1942, Mr Eden stated that "the trouble with Hitler was that he would not stay at home." But today the domestic character of a country cannot be separated from its international behaviour. Similarly, it is impossible not to apply the principles of the Atlantic Charter in a special case and at the same time to maintain that they could be used as a basis for a new international order everywhere. Such an international order could only legitimize a *status quo* based on power and force but not on justice. It could not last and would not make war impossible.

In the last resort, the basis of the new world organisation must not be political (or economic). It must be founded on the spiritual realities of a common culture and civilisation, which respects a common morality issuing from the common nature of man. This means that all the countries which have accepted the Christian heritage and civilisation belong together.⁽⁴⁾ Seen from a specifically European angle, this means that not only the Latin peoples or Western democracies, but also the Teutonic peoples and the Eastern and South-Eastern countries such as Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans, must be united in an integral unity, from which Great Britain can no longer dissociate herself.

(4) Cf. Christopher Dawson's books: for instance, *The Judgment of the Nations*, 1943. Further see BLACKFRIARS, vol. XXV, p. 442 seq. (Editorial) and my article, *ibid.*, p. 435.

In other words, the new order must, from its very beginning, be a European order, i.e. founded on the common spiritual European values. If this attempt should fail the federation of Europe and the world which must come if the world is not to disintegrate will end in the disappearance of the liberties and of Western civilisation.

IV.

Mr. Curtis's plan also differs from that of the Federal Unionists inasmuch as he does not demand a sweeping surrender of all the rights which are inherent in sovereignty. Although the new super-national body envisaged by him, must draw its authority direct from the people themselves and shall be answerable to, and elected by, the citizens of the countries concerned, it shall only have sovereign power in defence matters and those which are quite inseparable from them (i.e. foreign affairs). But domestic and internal (including social) questions shall be reserved to existing national governments.

This suggestion has the advantage on the one hand of securing some real unity in all vital matters and on the other of leaving enough room for the individual characteristics and cultural differences, obviating any unnecessary bureaucratic centralisation and uniformity. It would particularly avoid a rude levelling of the European nations. They would still remain at liberty in all traditionally domestic affairs and would be able to carry on their own cultural life. In point of fact, if a future international organisation must tend to include all European countries, the new organisation could not for a long time take on the character of a true Super-State as advocated by some Federalists. The case is different here from that of the British Empire. For this has grown organically and has emerged from the ground of a common race, language, culture and tradition, and could, therefore, more easily form a full international union in which all the Dominions merge their sovereignty than the European Countries. For in the European system of states there is no evidence of such a homogeneity and of the characteristics which are essential to the British Empire. The differences among the European nations, conditioned by race, language, culture, history and tradition are too great.

This difference in the structure of Europe from that of the British Commonwealth also explains why the provisional formation of small federations between related nations should be encouraged. Unions between the lesser states of Europe e.g. between Holland and Belgium, or Norway, Sweden and Denmark (and perhaps Finland), or Spain and Portugal, or the Balkan countries could well be imagined. They might well prepare the way for more comprehensive federations and in the end of that international union which includes all nations bound together by a common spiritual tradition.

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