

TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE PROGRESS OF WAR: THE QUEBEC ELECTION: WAR AIMS:
THE PARADOX OF WAR.

THE PROGRESS OF THE WAR is chiefly notable for its apparent lack of progress. After three and a half months, the imponderable elements in the campaign still puzzle the commentator. Few of our expectations have been realized, and many occasions of surprise have arisen. The main military forces eye each other, immobilized behind fortress lines. The terrific power of the air, which we feared so greatly, has hardly been let loose. The war of nerves, which Hitler and Stalin carry on so skilfully, continues wherever diplomatic pressure can be applied. Naval warfare has proved to be a surprisingly important factor. So far as the allied effort is concerned, all we can say is that we are still at the stage of vigilance and preparation in a war that has hardly yet begun.

At the moment of writing,* Russia occupies the field of interest. The Soviet power stands revealed before the world in its true colour, which is a sinister black, rather than a glorious red. Germany and its Führer we knew. With *Mein Kampf* open before us, there could be no doubt about the nature and policy of our enemy. Russia had made a very different profession of faith. Communist doctrine had taught there that all war was the result of Capitalism, and that the world had nothing to fear from imperialist ambitions in a classless State. Russia had proposed universal disarmament, and had announced to all the world that its great army existed only for purposes of self-protection. Now, we know that all these altruistic and humanitarian professions were only a façade to conceal an ability and ambition to play the game of power politics as ruthlessly as any other.

By the time these lines appear in print, we shall know just exactly what we have to fear from Russia. Poland was no match for the swift onslaught of the Germans, and the ruins of Warsaw cry to Heaven against the brutality of the invader. For that wanton act of sheer aggression alone, there can be no peace on earth until the might of Hitler is brought low. And yet, Stalin has presented himself in an even more despicable rôle. The German may be a bully, but he is not a sneak. The Communist has displayed the same character in international affairs as he

* Mid-December.

has shown in social situations everywhere. He is an adept at fishing in troubled waters. On the university campus, in the Trades Union, in Leagues for this and Congresses for that, he conceals his true character and poses as the friend of humanitarian causes. He is a stealthy creature, a lover of the underground, vehemently protesting against exploitation, but an adept at using other people for his own ends. Now, he hurls himself upon a prostrate Poland, with a hypocritical gesture of liberation for the oppressed. Immediately, he summons the small Baltic nations and offers them the kind of terms at whose nature we can only guess. When Finland resists, the situation is stated in such a ridiculous fashion that one would expect all history to record the imperishable story of the glorious defence made by a great and gallant Russia against the envious aggression of her neighbour. Russia has torn off the mask from her face. Now, we shall learn how far her capacity is a match for her ambition.

War is the proverbial creator of strange bed-fellows, but it seems difficult to believe that Stalin and Hitler can maintain a permanent alliance. There is a mutual feeling of contempt between the Teuton and the Slav. At present, Europe is large enough to give each ample room to play his game in agreement with a general plan, but the day will come when their interests must clash. Presumably, you cannot have two dictators in the same alliance. Meanwhile, we have every reason to believe that they are acting in concert, and their united activities confront the Allies with a difficult, but not an overwhelming, opposition.

Finland's appeal to the League of Nations was a splendid move in the right direction. The only question one wants to ask is why it was not thought worth while to do this earlier. It is true that previous experiences of the Genevan capacity to help have hardly been inspiring. But, now, with all the cards on the table, why cannot the Allies unreservedly make the present war a League of Nations battle? A great opportunity was lost at the December meeting of the League to run a rather tattered flag to the mast-head, around which civilization could still rally itself in a perishing world-order. Nevertheless, the very summoning of the League and its capacity to speak is an encouragement to believe that there is still hope for the attainment of an international authority.

The deadlock on the old western front may suggest that the very scale of modern war-like preparations contains a self-defeating element. Vast fortress walls, with their mechanically

operated weapons, have made war of any decisive character impossible. War in the air has not yet been tried on the grand scale, but the same kind of factor may also operate there. The sending of a great flight of attacking airplanes by any one side would meet with swift and terrible reprisals from the other. The casualties in men and machines would be enormous. Perhaps we may see all that, but, for the present, it seems obvious that a sense of dread holds the hands of those who have the authority to wage this type of war. And yet, such a stalemate is essentially a condition of uneasy tension. Some day, one side or the other (it is most likely to be the German side) will let loose the full fury of modern war, and then we may look for dreadful and shattering events, to pass through which we shall require brave hearts and steadfast purpose.

THE QUEBEC ELECTION had a significance that reached far beyond the province concerned. The event was one of national importance, and happening when and as it did, it may quite easily have international effects. The motives that led M. Duplessis to make an appeal to the electorate almost immediately after Canada's declaration of war are a subject for legitimate speculation, but they are probably best known to himself. Presumably, he was convinced that he had a duty to his people in safeguarding their special interests at a time of grave national crisis. In particular, it is to be surmised that he was sincerely opposed to the manner in which French-Canadian opinion had been represented in the House of Commons by M. Lapointe and other federal members. He took the most direct method of attempting to register his dissent by the constitutional course of asking a mandate from the province for his continuance in office. He made his appeal, and he received his reply. His government has been overturned, and the Canadian people feel that they have been saved from a situation in which they would have hung their heads in shame before the world.

M. Duplessis has been a good deal blamed for his precipitate action in forcing an election on the Quebec people when he did. It has been thought that it was his purpose to exploit the peculiar prejudices of the French-speaking people for his own political advantage. If such were his intentions, he has been foiled, and he has met the treatment that he deserved. But a nobler and more satisfactory interpretation can be put on the premier's action. If he was persuaded that he could not approve of Canada's war policy, it was his moral duty to resign his office. A

condition of intolerable strain would have been created by his leadership of the Quebec government in policies completely divergent from those of the government of Canada. The Dominion cannot go to war with one of her provinces maintaining a virtual neutrality. The only comparable relation would be the strange attitude of Eiré to Great Britain; but, even there, the island people with the exception of the Ulster counties have claimed and exercise an independence that remains steadfastly outside any federal constitution. That situation is bad enough in war-time, when an enemy submarine can actually put in at an Irish harbour. But to have a non-co-operative province, with a great sea-port and waterway through which Canadian men and supplies must go out to the world, would be unthinkable. For these reasons, M. Duplessis rendered Canada a very great service in resigning as promptly as he did, and the people of Quebec were even more to be commended for dismissing him by the emphatic decision of their votes.

The Quebec election is most reassuring to all who value Canadian unity and who believe in our national destiny. Canada would not be herself without the French-speaking people. But they are a minority, speaking a different language and inheriting a different tradition. Aided by the powerful ties of religious loyalty, they exhibit even more than usually the characteristic tenacity and sensitiveness of minority groups. Moreover, they have ancient rights of possession in the land, and a most proper pride in their claim to be the original *Canadiens*. They have had their grievances and, at times, notably during certain periods of the last war, they have been over-ridden, without much consideration for their feelings. On the whole, however, they have had a very fair deal, and their constitutional liberties and rights have been more than preserved. Moreover, there is a growing awareness among the Canadian people generally that the French population are not simply to be tolerated, but they have something to give that, some day, ought to unite with other contributions to make us a nation of peculiar strength. M. Duplessis has not helped the process of integration, but those of us who did not believe he was a representative of the noblest strain in French-Canada have been confirmed in our faith. M. Lapointe has emerged as the real speaker for Quebec, and his character and appearance are such as can truly rejoice every good Canadian heart. His own people can be as proud of him as Canada herself. A new day may well have dawned for our Dominion with such leadership.

For Canada's war effort, the result of the Quebec election was of vital importance. The domestic problem of a province in opposition would have projected a crisis into our Dominion life, the gravity of which can hardly be imagined. Moreover, the effect abroad, in the Empire, among neutrals, and in the counsels of our enemies, would have been at least as demoralizing. Mr. MacKenzie King might have had to face the same kind of question that Abraham Lincoln dealt with in the American Civil War, only under difficulties immensely greater. Religious antagonism and racial hatred would have been injected into an unsavoury quarrel. Quebec would not have done herself justice, and in the impetuous act of a rash hour centuries of history could easily have been overturned. We have been spared all that, and we have to thank M. Lapointe and his friends for the boon to our Canadian life, especially at such a time as this.

Apart altogether from the grave questions that were decided at the election, most people who believe that Canada is destined to be a fair land of liberty are glad to see M. Duplessis disappear from the political scene. He introduced elements into provincial legislation that are not in harmony with the Canadian spirit. His administration put the infamous *Padlock Law* on the statute-book. We are prepared to go a long way in observing the right of French Canada to develop her own distinctive institutions, but we have good reason to fear for the future when power of arrest is made coincident with the right to administer what passes for justice. The attorney-general and the police must not be confused with the judge and the jury. We some time ago heard from a French-Canadian that, in any declared struggle between Democracy and Fascism, Quebec would elect to stand with the latter form of government. The best of denials has been given to that kind of subversive talk. We have declared war on a tyrannical government, and M. Duplessis has invited his people to follow him not exactly in supporting the enemy, but in a declaration that they have no interest in the quarrel. The electors of Quebec have refused the invitation, and have rid Canada of a thoroughly dangerous form of government.

WAR AIMS have become the subject of much discussion, particularly by people not immediately responsible for the direction of hostilities. The British and French governments are entreated to declare what they are fighting for, and especially the terms on which they will be prepared to consider

peace. An outline of the post-war world is asked, with some precision as to the settlement of long-standing grievances. The demand is made for a variety of reasons. Principally, it is contended, the formulation of war aims will create a battle-standard around which the moral courage of the people can rally. If we have nothing of which we need be ashamed, let us run our colours to the mast-head for all the world to see. The effect of such a frank disclosure will be felt not only among neutral nations, but, presumably, also by our enemies. Especially, we should disavow any selfish motives in the fight, so that the accusation of self-interest may be removed once and for all. Moreover, mere general and negative ends, such as the destruction of Hitlerism, are not considered sufficient. Many who press for the definition of objectives in the war, while they believe that a fight is necessary, deplore the conditions that made it possible. They do not want another Versailles, and unless the mistakes of the past can be avoided, the end of the war may find us in a worse condition than ever. Thus the hope of a permanently peaceful world still arises in the hearts of men.

The discussion of war-aims has gone beyond a mere demand for their expression. All kinds of proposals have been advanced, from the partition of Germany to the federation of Europe. There is general agreement that there must be some way found to end the intolerable tension that has kept European life in a condition of unrest for twenty years. It looks as if the balance of power, as a diplomatic device for keeping the peace, no longer proves attractive. There are voices arising, especially in France, which suggest that there was no oppressive severity about the *Treaty of Versailles*, and that our gravest mistake lay in a failure to enforce its terms. Germany has been revealed for the third time in less than seventy years as an unrepentant aggressor. She has earned the unlovely reputation of being an habitual criminal, and no false humanitarianism should blind us to the stark realities that have already spilt too much good European blood. These voices find echoes on the Canadian side of the Atlantic, where we have been advised that distinctions between the German people and the Hitler régime are false and confusing. Nothing less than a thorough-going defeat for German arms, followed by a policy so severe that it will be an effectual preventive of future bad behaviour, can meet the case.

Over against these grim realists we find the international idealists moving forward into more constructive proposals. They tell us that the only security for peace lies in law as an

expression of justice. Power politics must give way to a new ideal of cooperative or federal internationalism. Imperialistic designs must be foresworn, and a new economic deal instituted. The place of small peoples and the rights of minorities within the large nations must be preserved. We should announce immediately our proposals for the future of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Austria. Do we aim at a settlement that is pre-Munich or pre-Anschluss, or are we moving forward to a new and constructive settlement that will let out the bad blood from the festering sores of Europe? On the one hand, let us raise no false hopes: on the other, let us not plunge on, in a blind expediency, without plan or policy.

These demands for war-aims have a special interest on our side of the Atlantic. The European scene surveyed at a distance has not been an engaging spectacle. Most enlightened people, with some understanding of history, realize how much we owe to western civilization in the lands of its origin. The roots of our own culture still run back there. But the question has to be raised very seriously as to whether we are to be summoned perpetually to enter into ancient quarrels that seem to reach no nearer to a state of reconciliation. Here we have our own life to live, our own future to make. From the present war the United States remains steadily aloof, not because there is any lack of appreciation concerning the moral issues at stake. Rather the attitude is adopted, and we must endeavour to appreciate its strength, that there is no assurance of any better settlement being reached now than was made in 1918. Retorts about the United States abandonment of the League of Nations, in the proposal of which her own President took such a leading share, are certainly in order, but counter-retorts are almost equally easy and obvious, about shameful retreat in the affairs of Manchuria and Abyssinia, and the virtual tearing-up of the Briand-Kellogg pact. An exchange of recriminations will not carry us far. We have all sinned and come short of the glorious venture that summoned us. What we have to realise is that there is a profound revulsion in the United States of America from engagement in future European hostilities, and nothing less than the definite emergence of a new spirit of constructive cooperation, expressed in new ideals of European life, will mitigate the sense of distrust and suspicion. Here in Canada we have rallied to the Imperial cause, largely because of our loyalty to the British Empire. Within that system of political life, we have found the way to self-development and freedom. Our national liberty is bound up with the maintenance of the Com-

monwealth, and a victory for Germany would mean a radical readjustment of our future existence. But we too have domestic problems of national unity and economic expansion. As a great exporting nation, we need a settled world for the development of our trade and the growth of our Canadian life. We have a very profound interest in seeing a settled Europe emerge from the conflict.

So far the British and French governments have not been very responsive to the war-aims demand. Certainly they have not made any detailed statement of their objectives. One is reminded of the famous recipe for hare-soup—"First, catch your hare." For the allied statesmen, the immediate aims of the war are very clear—an effective resistance to German aggression, and a reduction of the German mind to some kind of repentance. They know very well that, under present conditions, we appear to be a long way from sessions at a conference table. The time for talk is past. That way has been tried and has failed. All discussion of a federated Europe and the establishment of the rule of law in international affairs is hypothetical and unreal while the Nazi régime is in power. Before the bandit is rounded up, there will be many changes in European life. We are coming to realize that before we can think of a real peace, Russia must be encountered in some way or other. Tremendous problems lie ahead, in the solution of which political wisdom as well as resolute courage will be required. In any case, it must be borne in mind that it was Germany and not the Allies who commenced the war. The demand for war-aims is more properly addressed to our enemies than to ourselves. We have every reason to suspect their nature, and, in the meantime, our paramount objective is to secure that they are not realized.

Nevertheless, there is everything to be gained among ourselves by a persistent process of thought and discussion on the future of the international order. Not even the immediate necessity of winning the war must deflect us from a consideration of how to maintain the peace. We, who have lived through the last twenty years, know very well that the most complete victory can in itself bring us no permanent settlement. It is a necessary prelude, but not more. While statesmen in office are much pre-occupied with the strategy of conducting the war and the attendant problems of administration, there is a work for official and unofficial oppositions to undertake in the direction of continuous pressure of opinion towards the equally important, if less immediate, necessity of planning for a beneficent result in a world of ordered peace.

THE PARADOX OF WAR consists in the disturbing fact that the very waging of hostilities tends to destroy the things it is intended to defend and preserve. To withstand the menace of totalitarianism, the State must develop a virtually totalitarian form of government. To maintain the sacred rights of the individual, the area of personal liberty must be severely curtailed. To uphold freedom of utterance and of publication in the press, a national censorship must be established. Presumably, a war of liberty is carried on to conserve a heritage for youth, and yet the noblest of our youth must give their lives in the conflict. Such is the dilemma of a nation at war.

Conscription is regarded by many as almost a corollary of democracy. In a time of war, it is the duty of every man to fight for his country. Such a measure reduces all to a common level of sacrifice, at least in principle, and prevents the shirker from sheltering behind the devotion and courage of the volunteer. And yet, the act of conscription involves the final and complete extinction of personal liberty. The State makes the most absolute of all demands on the citizen, to the point of commandeering life itself. A man is taken away from home and from daily occupation: he is allowed no personal liberty in the manner of his dress or the conduct of his life. He is compelled to enter a form of service in which obedience is the first and almost the last of virtues. He is ordered to undertake hazardous tasks and, if need be, to yield up his personal existence in the most violent manner. If he criticizes, he is mutinous. If he writes to the papers, he commits a military crime. If he packs up and goes home, he is a deserter. What price democracy?

Freedom of the press is much prized as the guardian of popular liberty. The publication of obscenity and slander has long been regarded as the only limit that can be placed on the right to promulgate views and express opinions by means of the printed page. Similarly with freedom of speech; the right to call and address assemblies, to initiate movements and inform the public mind is a fundamental principle of democratic life. And yet, the waging of war immediately introduced censorship. Even when restriction of what the press can print is described as self-censorship, it simply means that newspapers must voluntarily abstain from expressing opinions that are contrary to what is regarded as the public interest. Failure to do so involves suppression. A group of clergymen met in Toronto and announced their opposition to the war-policies of Canada. Immediately a chorus of disapproval sounded across the Domin-

ion, culminating in an official notice of their action by the Attorney-General's Department. No prosecution was undertaken, but there was no concealment of the disfavour with which the publication of their anti-war views was regarded.

In Canada, vigorous action has been taken by the police in carrying out the rather absolute powers assumed by the Government for the repression of activities likely "to cause disaffection to His Majesty." Papers have been compelled to cease publication and, across the Dominion, distributors of anti-war pamphlets have been arrested and severely punished. In the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, several members of opposition groups who were specially outspoken in criticism of the Federal Government and the British Imperial policy were threatened with report to the authorities. In Winnipeg, the City Council was the scene of a heated debate on a denunciation of Russian aggression, and the Communist members came in for severe castigation. Toronto moved for the expulsion of its sole Communist city father. A prominent Canadian politician has been advocating the severance of relations with the U.S.S.R., on the ground that it will then be possible to deal with the Communist party within the Dominion. In England, where there is a tradition of greater indulgence for free speech, considerably more latitude has been allowed. It is generally admitted that the special tribunals that have been set up to hear the objections of those whose consciences will not permit them to engage in military service have been characterized by a spirit of fairness and justice. Opposition groups have been allowed to express themselves with a degree of freedom that would certainly not be tolerated on this side of the Atlantic.

This paradox of war brings into clearer relief the perpetual compromise that is involved in political life. Absolute freedom can be maintained only under conditions of complete anarchy. In normal conditions, any tension between individual rights and social control practically disappears. The law-abiding citizen, when he brings the subject into reflective consideration, realizes that his personal privileges are extended rather than curtailed by the rule of law. The ideal condition is reached when individual well-being and political arrangements are coincident, and the function of government is to preserve and extend that conjunction of interests through democratic processes. For practical purposes this means an attempt to reach through debate, legal enactment and administration of justice a political condition in which the general will prevails. But the rights of

government cannot become absolute, any more than the claims of the individual. In general, the rule must be applied that where the proper exercise of individual liberty does not impinge upon the liberties of others to their material hurt or detriment, repressive laws and regulations should not be introduced. Thus all kinds of religious views and practices must be tolerated. Similarly there must be the right to hold and teach views of a political nature that may be unacceptable to the majority. There must be freedom to criticize, and to advocate change.

In a state of war, presumably the State is in a condition of danger. There is an external enemy that must be defeated, and, if war has been declared, as it has been in Canada, by the properly expressed will of the people through the voice of a government responsible to parliament, then the waging of the war has become coincident with the general interest of the nation. That interest stands paramount, and no activity of any kind that tends to defeat it has any rights at all. The privilege and duty of criticism directed against the government and its arrangements must fall within that same sphere of dominant interest. A strong opposition party in parliament can serve the country's cause by a vigilant attitude towards the activities of the government, and a swift exposure of incompetence or mistake. Similar rights and duties belong to the people generally, and since the radio is largely government-controlled, the press must take up this function. Even the sincere opponent of the country's entrance into war must be allowed to express his mind. Nobody, for example, who is a lover of liberty, wants to shut up a man like Mr. Woodsworth. It would have been the grossest folly to prosecute the ministerial protesters who met with so much popular disfavour. The real test for war-time toleration is sincerity of motive, and that can be judged only on the merit of individual cases. Where the claim to opposition becomes a thinly disguised cloak for a treacherous alliance with the enemies of the state, there must be swift and ruthless suppression. The same principle applies where there is reason to believe that opposition is advanced to promote selfish interests or to create disaffection. Inevitably war involved abnormal restrictions on the freedom of the individual, but there is probably need for a particular vigilance, that such restrictions be not imposed blindly or harshly, or on grounds of mere prejudice or popular disfavour.

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