

Dennis Routh & J.H. Oldham - 'The Future of Europe' (Third draft) - 1943

Peace Aims Group - Third Draft

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

With the invasion of Europe the war has reached its climax. The Continent which has been the home of western civilisation must be rent still further by the ravages and disintegrating effects of total war. We cannot assume that the defeat of tyranny will in itself suffice to establish peace, well-being and liberty. Every advance of the liberating armies makes more insistent the question what can be done to restore vitality and health to Europe.

We must recognise that the primary responsibility for this task will fall jointly upon the British Commonwealth, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., who alone will at the moment of victory have the necessary resources and power. That power will place upon them an imperative obligation to work out a lasting settlement in Europe, and to establish and maintain that spirit of harmony amongst themselves and good neighbourliness towards the other peoples of Europe which alone can give permanence to their work.

Success in so vast an undertaking demands an attitude of mind which is both steeped in the lessons of the past and in the values that have been tested and proved in human experience, and is at the same time fully open to the present reality of revolutionary change.

The European Heritage

From the past, Europe has inherited the twin conceptions of law and liberty. These are the proved foundations of Europe's greatness. It is on them that the future structure must be reared. But we must recognise that they were already crumbling before the war, and total war has accelerated their decline. We see on every hand the submergence of values, the repudiation of all standards, the spread of the belief that the interest of the stronger is the only law.

The first condition of a stable social and international order is the reassertion of the rule of law. This is one of the two chief strands in the European heritage. From it are derived such vital principles of social and political health as that power must be exercised responsibly and in accordance with law, that justice is an end in itself and not merely an instrument of policy, and that the welfare of persons is more important than material wealth and power.

The other chief strand of which the history of Europe has been woven is the vindication of freedom. It cannot be too strongly insisted that the ultimate source of personal freedom is man's relation to God. Only as responsible to a Being greater than the nation has the individual a standing independent of the community and rights which the State may not override.

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Such freedom can only grow where there is a right understanding of the relation between the State and society. Freedom, and the sense of responsibility which is its counterpart, find their most effective exercise in small groups; and the freedom to form and participate in these is perhaps the most essential of all liberties. The family comes first, and after it all the associations which men form to further the common interest of their members, whether religious, artistic, scientific, commercial or of any other kind. In these lies the strength of a free people, and the State should foster them as well as regulate the relations between them.

The Axis Powers have ruthlessly destroyed over large parts of the Continent all autonomous life outside the State. A primary

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task of those who would rebuild Europe will be to aid in restoring and revitalising, in every country of Europe, this multiplicity of groups, associations and institutions in which the energies of a healthy society may once more find spontaneous expression.

The Tide of Change

While blindness to the proved wisdom of the past must lead to disaster, it would be no less fatal to ignore the fact that we live in a period of fundamental change. The enduring values of Europe's moral and spiritual tradition will only regain their authority and influence if they are reintegrated in social and cultural patterns that may be widely different from those of former generations.

Here we believe that Christians can give a lead by confronting the hidden future without fear, and preparing to meet revolutionary change, when it comes, with courage and hope. Those who believe in God and know that life is fulfilled in doing His will, can find opportunities of serving Him in forms of social life very different from those which they have known and loved in former days.

Even before the war many far-seeing minds perceived that a long period of history is coming to a catastrophic end and giving place to something entirely new. Hitler's policy has accentuated the process and destroyed in Europe many foundations that cannot be restored. Large changes in economic and social conditions are necessary to make life tolerable for the great majority. The prevalence of poverty, insecurity and mass unemployment make freedom meaningless outside the circles of the privileged.

Advances in science and technology have made possible the elimination of poverty and insecurity, and corresponding changes in social and economic organisation are essential to make the fullest use of the new techniques in the interests of social welfare. This will entail a firm determination not to allow sectional interests, whether of private groups or of nations, to stand in the way of whatever policies may be needed to secure full employment and the best utilisation of the earth's natural resources.

Some Practical Conclusions

Principles such as these have already received endorsement in broad outline in the Atlantic Charter; and we welcome their re-assertion at Teheran by the British Commonwealth, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., who there declared their determination to secure the 'co-operation of all nations, large and small, whose peoples in heart and mind are dedicated to the elimination of tyranny, slavery, oppression and intolerance'. We believe that what is now urgently needed is that these aspirations should be defined in terms of immediate and practical objectives, relevant to the special conditions of Europe. In the forefront of these must be:

(1) Immediate relief measures on the largest scale to feed starving populations, fight disease, promote health and restore national self-support in the necessities of life. These should be so designed and executed as to further the growth of a spirit and habit of co-operation within the framework of an ordered plan.

(2) Measures designed not merely to prevent chaos but to restore the rule of law, both national and international, and to reconstitute responsible national authorities able and wishing to uphold it.

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(3) Common action to restore and revitalise the associations and institutions of every kind, local, national and international, in which the cultural and social tradition of Europe is specially embodied. The restoration of the churches and religious associations will naturally be uppermost in the minds of Christians in this connection.

(4) The explicit and effective recognition by the Governments of Europe of the basic human liberties which are the heritage of the European tradition - freedom of conscience and worship, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association and freedom from arbitrary arrest; and the renunciation of all policies of discrimination against minorities on grounds of race, language or creed.

(5) The framing, through the appropriate agencies, of far-reaching economic and social policies to secure for the peoples of Europe full employment and social security and the fullest use of available resources in achieving higher standards of life and well-being.

(6) The creation and development of common institutions and agencies, in the social and economic as well as the political sphere, to give effect to these common purposes and to embody the growing sense of European unity.

(7) The maintenance, within the framework of whatever system of world security may be devised, of a system of European security which will allow the peoples of Europe to develop their national life free from the fear of recurring aggression and war.

(8) The treatment of Germany presents for Christians a moral issue of exceptional difficulty. It must be such as to remove once and for all the menace of German aggression and secure full

once and for all the menace of German aggression and secure full atonement for the appalling sufferings inflicted by Nazi Germany upon the peoples of Europe. Yet we must not lend ourselves, in a mood of vengefulness, to breaches of basic human rights or to punitive measures against the entire German people which will be repudiated as unjust by later generations, or will permanently frustrate the hopes of peace and unity in Europe. The future public safety and well-being of Europe must be the first aim of the peace in Europe; and no settlement will achieve that aim which does not set out as one of its goals the eventual reintegration of the German people into the European family of nations.

Britain's Part

In the common effort to restore and rebuild Europe a special responsibility will rest upon the people of this country. We are bound to Europe by ties of history, culture, geography and economic interdependence, which the common effort and suffering of war have rendered closer than ever before. Fortunate in having been spared the full horrors of Nazi invasion and left free to build up our strength and resources, we have an inescapable obligation to turn those resources to the succour of war-stricken Europe; and we must be ready to devote the same effort and the same willingness to forego the good things of life to the task of restoring Europe as we have given to the defeat of Europe's common enemy.

Nor must we forget our responsibilities in a less material sphere. The influence of this country amongst the peoples of Europe is largely bound up with the belief and hope that alike by its past history and present interest it is the champion of freedom and the rule of law. The principle of toleration, the recognition of certain basic human rights, the conviction that

force is no argument and that truth can never be the sole possession of a single group or party, have struck deep roots in the thought and practice of the British Commonwealth. Never was it more urgent that these principles should be reasserted as the fundamental conditions of social health. By recovering our belief in them by using them to test afresh the foundations of our own national and imperial life and to guide the conduct of our own affairs both at home and abroad, we might render the largest service in our history to the well-being of mankind.

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