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The End of this War

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P.E.N. BOOKS

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THE END
OF THIS
WAR

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WOKING

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The End of This War

To the Editor of The Times

Sir,—After hearing the broadcast news on the night before he returned to school a boy of fourteen remarked, quietly and dispassionately, that at least he had three more years before he would probably be killed in battle. He is in every way a healthy, normal boy, in no way given to self-dramatization. To his parents, one of whom had spent the best of his youth in a War to end war, this comment upon the world into which they had brought their son brought at once humiliation and desperate unhappiness. Nor dare they suppose that theirs is the only home upon which this shadow has fallen during the last weeks. . . . Such a state of mind in which we find our children invites neither comment nor criticism from their elders. But it demands that we who are responsible for future generations strive each in our own way to lift this shadow of death and unhappiness from a distracted world. It may be by prayer, by real change of heart, by the denial of useless luxuries and surfeit of foods while others starve, if the supplying of these demands leads to commercial greed and international cupidity. Whatever methods we use or whatever sacrifices we may be called upon to make, we must avert this return to dark barbarism, now so close upon us that we can see its shadow in the mirror of our children's minds. Civilization is far from realization if even our children have ceased to dream of it. . . .

I NOTICED this in *The Times* of September 21, 1938. The boy it was written about will not have been killed in action yet. Others have. In his turn, if the war lasts, he will take his chance. He may ask why he is fighting, and be told that it is for the life of his country. "Wasn't there any help for it?" he may say. If anyone thinks the answer is easy he is not fit to give it. But the boy ought to be answered.

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After the slaughter of the last war I, like many better and wiser people, felt enough horror to write, "war is not worth the cost, nor is victory worth the cost." The boy could bring me my own words and say: "I want your answer; if you've changed your mind you ought to tell me." It would be much easier to say nothing.

I once thought that a war in which part of the enemy's job was to kill civilians would be more bearable than the custom of killing men between certain ages out of civilian sight. In a sense it is. It is better for all to be in danger. In another sense it is worse; in the sense that the men who knowing what they are doing, often seeing what they are doing, put to death helpless people, brutalize themselves as an honest soldier does not. And then the agony of a child has its particular horror. We ought to remember the nature of war, not hide it in phrases. We must not talk about the sword when we mean the bombing 'plane. "Peace can only triumph with a sword in its hand" means the child torn by hot steel or crushed in the ruins of his home, the human entrails in the entrails of the missing aeroplane. If I believe that in September 1939 war could not be averted, and that despair is disgraceful, I shall have to say that victory is worth this cost, not some imagined cost. Let the agony of my conscience remind me that in 1939 they were still finding and bringing English dead of the last war into the cemeteries in France; that the mothers whose sons were killed in that war are not all dead—a pity we couldn't wait until then; that men have to be ordered to make war, and these patient obedient men make it; the great men direct, they exhaust themselves, they even suffer, but they don't make war: "*le privilège des grands, c'est de voir les catastrophes d'une terrasse.*"

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But I do not know how, in September 1939, war could have been avoided.

Neither do I know whether we should have prevented the cancerous growth of Prussian nationalism in the European body if we had listened in 1920 to J. M. Keynes, and started Europe out on a different path at Versailles. I was the most obscure of those who believed in the possibility of friendship with the Weimar Republic and did what an obscure Englishman could to deserve it. I believe we could have made use of the Weimar Republic, weak as its founders and supporters in Germany turned out to be, to foster civilization in Central Europe: I know the extreme complexity and intractability of the problems involved, but surely we could have done better? But for that we ourselves needed to be strong, single-minded, wise. Too many buts. We had just finished an exhausting war, and neither we nor our Government were equal to the need. I am not confident enough to be dogmatic. Perhaps generosity would have been as useless as half-hearted sanctions. I don't know. In fact, for our sins, for what we did and what we left undone, we got the Nazis. We got Germans of ill-will, enemies of the spirit, Christian and Graeco-Roman, of our civilization. All talk about what we might have done before 1933 (or 1923) is futile and an escape from the effort of humbling or uncomfortable thought.

After 1933 we postponed war by the simplest means. We accepted, now with displeasure, now without, each move Hitler made to improve his strategic, economic, and political position in Europe. As he became stronger, our acceptance took on the colour of submission. Even—in the matter of loans and stocks of essential war materials—of active help, when certain interests hoped he would oblige us by turning East.

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During these years of acquiescence, was there a time when it would have been possible to negotiate with Hitler on a common basis of interest in saving European civilization from disruption? I no longer believe there was. For a time I did. I think I was wrong. Statesmen, it is true, are not directly concerned with the preservation of civilization, but in preserving interests, which they usually call rights. It is an accident—of singular importance—that the future of western civilization is involved with the divergent interests of England (with America) and Greater Germany. So that we have the right to speak of this war as a struggle between two types of civilization. Could we have acted in such a way that it was in Hitler's interest to keep peace with us? You may argue that—since any government is more likely to keep the treaties it makes if it is not in its interest to break them—that we could have negotiated with Germany had we been single-minded in re-arming. Hitler would have hesitated to attack an Empire as strong or stronger than his own State. It is possible. But none the less the argument rests on an illusion—the illusion that a democracy can in peacetime be turned over to a war economy. And it ignores the element of the pathological in Hitler's ambitions. He is not Bismarck, he is not moved only by interest.

I believe that negotiation—which supposes that both sides mean the same things by the words they use and are faithfully anxious for agreement—was never possible with Nazi Germany. From horror of war, as well as from goodwill, and from fear or greed, many deceived themselves. We could not have negotiated; we could have acquiesced, we could have submitted. Would it have been better to submit? I have under my hand a letter from a well-known pacifist which says:

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"I admit that not to fight Hitler would have meant great difficulties and many compromises of the Munich type for which we should have been bitterly criticized. But these compromises were slow affairs. Each one would have taken *time*, and even Hitler is not immortal. As long as he lived his influence would have grown, but he would only have taken one little bit of a country here (e.g. the Danzig corridor from Poland) and another little bit there. There would have been large areas of democracy left and the European civilization that we have known and loved would have been continued, especially in France."

The image this starts up is of a prisoner quaking and hoping that Giant Despair will die or be sated before his turn comes. Why not? We have all been there at some time, praying and quaking. Look at it and see whether it is a sensible forecast.

I am bound to say that the closer I look, the more it seems wishful thinking of the blindest and most childish. There is no evidence, in their words or deeds, that the leaders of Nazi Germany would have used their power and drawn in their ambitions in such a way that pockets of democracy and civilization could exist in Europe, like monasteries the barbarians have forgotten to sack. Or like a feudal manor keeping its own economy and social traditions intact in a modern state. No, this won't do. It is an evasion. There is only one foothold for the honest pacifist. That is to say simply: "Rather than kill people, we will submit to whatever the Nazi masters of Europe can do to us."

There is unwilling dishonesty even in the boldness of another pacifist, who says we should stop the war and begin to disarm:

"if the Germans come to England they will find our doors open and a friendly reception—but also making it clear that we will not take orders from them or their masters."

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To refuse to take orders would mean—who, knowing what happened in Poland *after* defeat, can doubt it?—that thousands of men and women and even children would be tortured and executed. If I were sure this pacifist knew what he was saying in his brisk way, I might shudder at what he could contemplate in resigning us to a German mercy, but I should not, as I do, doubt his mental honesty. I too once thought there is nothing so horrible as war. I will respect a pacifist who sticks to that, but only if I am sure he is not blind to the horror—moral, killing the spirit in the body—of the Nazi contempt for the individual soul. I will not respect him if with well-preserved faith he refuses to look at the nature of the dark age, a Dark Age without benefit of monasteries, that opens before a Europe delivered to the Nazis. By no submission, and not by “a friendly reception” could we escape it with our children.

We need not use our imagination; darkness has come down over large areas of Europe. We have only to question the witnesses to decide whether it is just—by our Roman-Christian justice—to think of the Nazis as the new Spartans, black Spartans. Have you, I’ll ask the writers quoted, counted honestly the cost of opening the door and refusing to take orders—not the cost to yourselves, I’m sure you discount that—to the English generations who will have to go into the dark? “Love your enemies”—yes, do, if you can; a few men have the right to choose to be crucified. Or, without knowing it about yourself, do you hope that the butchery in Poland has satisfied the men who ordered and the men who did it? I cannot. It’s not only bodily life. It’s not only submission.

The barbarians who overran Roman Europe destroyed without understanding, and perhaps with a pleasure in destruction. But although, as any soldier who followed retreating Germans

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in the last war can say, they often destroy wantonly, the Nazis have a technique of destruction. It is not wanton, it serves a policy. The Czechs were "taken under German protection" in March 1939. I knew Czechoslovakia: it was the happiest country in Europe; its people were consciously proud of it and its living culture, young and fed by the centuries; they worked hard, they built admirable schools, they were prospering, they were—let me go on saying it—happy.

This once free and healthy State is now administered by German officials, with the help of an enormous number of the Gestapo and regular and special troops. Because we know what the Germans have made of the Reich, with their concentration camps and their habit of torturing prisoners, it scarcely seems necessary to say that Czech scholars, politicians, professors, students, with thousands of humble and unknown men, are now in the concentration camps; that men and women were worked over at the Gestapo headquarters until they died. Leave their friends to think about that. The country was looted, and its careful economic, financial, administrative life disordered—naturally. Any barbarians could have done as much. But the leaders of Nazi Germany have a coherent theory, and it requires them to attack especially the intellectual life of a conquered country; there must be no minds left able to think against the German idea of the master-race. Better if the others had no minds. God help their alien subjects on the day a German scientist discovers how to remove the brain and leave the body living and able to work. The best (the worst) the Germans can do now is to destroy the culture of the country they intend to use. Czech schools have been closed; schoolbooks revised to suit the Nazi doctrine; a rigid censorship of the Press, literature, music, set up; the magnifi-

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cent Czech universities in Prague and other cities were closed after they had been looted, the equipment of the laboratories smashed, books and valuable manuscripts used as fuel, the results of years of research destroyed; no Czech may study to be a doctor, judge, lawyer, professor, engineer, research worker, civil servant or secondary school teacher. In all this nothing merely violent is at work; it is the planned murder of the spiritual life of another nation.

In Czechoslovakia, because of the myth of protection, the Germans have not killed freely—a few thousands mutilated or dead, many more thousands in the concentration camps, more robbed of their livelihood. But Poland. No one will ever write the whole story, and if it could be written it would be almost useless. So much human agony cannot be realized. The merciless bombing of hundreds of open towns and villages has its own shape of horror, the quick obliteration of the undefended villages, scarcely a mark left on the earth, the charred rubbish of towns and bodies left lying for the snow to cover; the tram-lines in Warsaw full of clotted blood, as one witness reports; the children and peasants machine-gunned in the fields, the refugees machine-gunned on the roads, the houses set alight and the people trapped or running out of them, to be shot down, until the town, the village, is a human slaughter-house. This is total war, a country overrun by Germans.

But what is it when, after the end of the war, executions go on in the yards and market-squares of towns the Germans enter; three hundred and fifty are shot here, two hundred and fifty in the next village, in the next schoolboys are taken out and shot; the total runs to tens of thousands: the people chosen are almost always—allowing for haste and carelessness

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—from the educated classes, schoolmasters, priests, professors, scientists, doctors, women as well as men, children as well as women? What is it when a defeated nation is told that from now on its people are drudges: they can be plundered, deported, punished brutally, shot, driven outside their towns—unnumbered thousands died of disease, hunger, and the icy cold of the winter of 1939-40—as it happens to suit their masters? German war? Not at all. It is a civil policy, the methodical destruction of all the elements in Poland that might conceivably keep alive some sort of intellectual life. You will have to turn back many centuries of European history to come on such treatment of the conquered.

The policy is the same practised in Czechoslovakia. Add the usual looting and destruction of libraries, university equipment, manuscripts. In future only primary and lower-grade technical schools are open to Poles. In both countries the intellectual and spiritual life of the mutilated nation is struck at deliberately, not as an accident of conquest, as earlier barbarians destroyed the library in a Roman villa when they killed its owner and stabled their animals in his rooms, because they knew no use for the books and no other way of living. The spiritual heritage of Europe is being destroyed less by the material energy of war than by the choice of Germany's present rulers. The child put to death is the work of brutes: what is being done to kill the minds of the Polish and Czech nations is the work of thinking brutes. "Forgive them, for they know what they do"? "Our doors open and a friendly reception"? No, I can't.

We ought not to forgive the Germans for what they have done in Poland. Such forgiveness is not in our right to give. No one is fit to forgive that butchers' work. Do not dream

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of it; it is self-indulgence. Pity them? Yes, if you can: to pity the wicked is, if they feel it, the last contempt. A Dutch journalist, speaking to Germany from London near the end of the invasion of Holland, said: "I can no longer even hate you. I feel compassion on you, Germans." Among the soldiers who had invaded his country, the young men who pounded Rotterdam from the air, killing thirty thousand people, were the German children the Dutch took into their homes after the last war: they came to Holland in relays, tens of thousands, were made much of and fed on the best, and learned to know the country. In 1940 they came back, to kill. It's true they have hurt themselves worse than an enemy could hurt them. What country will take in German children after this war?

We should have known what to expect. The New Order in Germany created its new men under our eyes. If total war requires that refugees should be machine-gunned on the roads of Poland and France, if it requires that fishermen whose trawlers have been sunk should be killed as they take to the boats or in the water (this, since by birth and tradition I belong to a community of fishermen and sailors, always shocks me: a decent enemy would not take sides with the sea against other men), no exigency of war required the cruelties of Dachau. Nazi Germany has sickened us with her cruelties for years. Concentration camps and the use of torture on political prisoners have become part of the civil administration in Germany.

Cruelty is one of our human lusts. One mark of a civilized State is that it tries to impose the will of society on the individual without cruelty, and is ashamed of its failures: violence and cruelty are not methodically used and respected. Speaking to me about the concentration camps, an intelligent and

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educated German said: "Yes, I've heard that the prisoners are treated badly, but you must understand that these people are outcasts, they don't think or act as Germans, the harshest treatment is good enough for them." "Well, would you," I asked, "take the hand of an S.S. man who had tortured prisoners?" "Certainly. Why not? As a practical man he must have had reasons for it." (We must hope as practical men to be spared the German reasons as the Czechs would pray to be relieved of German protection and the Dutch and Norwegians of German gratitude.) This reasoning, this principle of State, which gives the brute in us authority and honour, is the German sin, the German treachery—call it what you like. In the end and to the end it is the enemy of civilized men in every country (including Germany)—that is, of men who are still always brutes, but in their hopes, prayers, reasons, are men.

We could have submitted without war. Yes. When our time came to be gathered into the Nazi New Order we should perhaps have been treated no worse than Czechoslovakia. We could submit now. Yes. We should have no right to hope for better treatment than defeated Poland; to do so is as childish as to talk of refusing orders without adding "and look your last". But the worst part of that job would be completed in a matter of weeks or months; and almost anybody can endure almost anything. What would be done to our children's minds is the lasting thing. No one has a right to accept it for them. It would have been better for the German children who grew up and became the technicians of total war and went back to murder their hosts if they had not been kept alive. Ours might be taught how to show gratitude in the German way. We shouldn't be able to save them. It would be better if they

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became serfs like the Poles than were brought up to respect the Nazi idea and the Nazi god.

Had we been able in 1919 to cope boldly, and in spite of the defection of the United States, with the chaos of problems involved in any genuine reconstruction of Europe, we might not be faced by the aggressive Nazi Reich. This does not excuse us from realizing that what faces us is not an entirely new Germany. The doctrine of Pan-Germanism is not only deeply settled in German tradition, not only lent respectability by the names of Arndt, Fichte, Hegel, but accepted by millions of intelligent Germans. What we are facing is a Teutonic Revival, almost a revivalist religion.

As a religion it demands the unreserved submission of the individual to the State. It takes the lowest view of man. By denying him the use of his will, mind and conscience, it makes him irresponsible, it frees him from the moral qualms he might feel in obeying the order to decimate a defeated nation. It teaches him that charity and tolerance are vices of the dying age of Reason. It plucks out his conscience, his reason, his respect for other men, and prepares him to obey the State, that is to say, the men who are powerful in the State, Hitler and his civil and military staffs: this includes the Gestapo. The Divine Right of the Nazi State over its members is vested in these men, it is theirs. The individual submits himself to them and receives the right to think of himself as a cell of the Great Body. He will prefer to think of himself as "the new man". "The old type of men will have only a stunted existence," says Hitler: "all creative energy will be concentrated in the new man—I might call these two varieties the god-man and the mass-animal." For the mass-animal hunger, the execution yard, bodily and mental degradation. For the

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greater number of the god-men obedience and a subtler degradation.

It would be the greatest possible comfort to be able to make that simple distinction between the good and the Nazi German which allows its authors to ride briskly away from the real problem set us by Germany. But unless we can solve it, all we have understood by European civilization—an order in which certain words, law, truth, humanity, have a known significance which has been pressed into them by generations of patient effort—will become another Poland.

The first step towards solving it is to admit that National Socialism was not forced on the Germans; it was accepted by them. It was a genuine revivalist movement, widely supported. There was no other movement of comparable strength in the country. If we have a quarrel with the German people it is that there was no opinion in the country strong enough to check the spread of violence before it became a torrent. To say this is not to overlook the social and economic disorders from which the Germans (not the Germans alone) suffered after the last war. It is not to say that the Germans are savages. It is to say something much more serious—that they enjoy being told what to do so well that they cannot help admiring a brutal sergeant-major. Four years before Hitler came to power, an intelligent educated man, a Liberal, could say to me, "We can't fight against the Nazis, they're too strong."

A half-conscious admiration coloured his hatred of their brutality and lack of scruple. The vast German labour movement collapsed in 1933 like a mummy exposed to the air. It was not tricked or sandbagged, it gave itself up, having neither the faith nor the force to oppose the National Socialist

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revolution. It is even a mistake to think of this collapse as a sign of weakness; it was that, but it was more than that. National Socialism answered a demand made from deep in the German character. A demand for what? For the rights which, in good as well as in bad faith, the German believes, or wishes to believe, that he ought to have in the world. National Socialism promised him these rights, and his profound hope that they were justly his undermined subtly the strength of many a reasonable German's revulsion against the violence and destructiveness of the Nazi movement. There was an Ossietsky and a Hans Litten. There were many thousands of anonymous Ossietskys and Littens. But they did not sufficiently leaven the lump. There need be no doubt that many Germans who are not exiles dislike the Calvinistic intolerance of the regime; they were helpless to prevent it. For one faithful and superbly brave Litten—faithful under unspeakable suffering—there were ten thousand who accepted. Let us put it at its gentlest. Who did not reject the doctrine that (over and above the right to be free of "Versailles") the German nation is called on to reign in Europe, perhaps in the world.* These are the

* "The vague and undefined schemes of Teutonic expansion are but the expression of the deeply-rooted feeling that Germany has, by the strength and purity of her national purpose, the fervour of her patriotism, the high standard of competency and the perspicuous honesty of her administration, the successful pursuit of every branch of public and scientific activity and the elevated character of her philosophy, arts and ethics, established for herself the right to assert the primacy of German national ideals. And as it is an axiom of her political faith that right, in order that it may prevail, must be backed by force, the transition is easy to the belief that the 'good German sword' . . . is there to solve any difficulties that may be in the way of establishing the reign of those ideals in a Germanized world." (*Sir Eyre Crowe's memorandum of January 1, 1907.*)

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roots knotted and ravelled like bindweed in the German soil, not in one place but everywhere, and must be dealt with. Anyone who thinks it can be done by separating Germans into good and bad is no use.

Like any other nation, the Germans have the defects of their virtues. It is Europe's misfortune that their virtues of discipline should have been turned into admiration of a poor bloody-minded tyrant, and their virtue of energy into an impulse to possess the world.

The principles on which Nazi practice is founded have an insane logic. The professors who assumed for their race a natural right to rule, assumed—without knowing it—the Nazi party. No recalcitrant class inside the nation, and no unwilling and inferior race outside the nation could be allowed to interfere with the operation of a natural law. The idea of a German right was born. Right is what Germany is able to enforce. Justice is shaped by German needs; a murder is just if it is needed. A statement has no general validity: truth is what serves German needs at the given moment; it is a mode of the German mind, without objective existence. Nazi justice may show itself as robbery, enslavement, violence. Nazi truth may be a lie.

Let me say at once that no nation fails, at one turn or the next in its life, to discover that justice will be done if it takes what it wants. But an all-important check is removed, and repentance is made void, if, as in Nazi Germany, the practice of expediency is openly said to be a principle of justice. Concepts become meaningless; our moral and intellectual world is reduced to chaos.

The New Order in Europe has a purely Nazi content. The words are meant to evoke the image of an economic,

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social, and political reorganization of smaller national groups into an integrated whole. They are accepted in this sense by some naive people in this country, anxious to avoid hurting their minds on the uglier truth. But what is the real nature of an order which closes universities, destroys books, forbids freedom of thought, and for millions of human beings takes the shape of concentration camps, famine, deportations, forced labour, execution squads, despair?

These are not accidents, the bloody caul of birth. We are not watching a birth. We are watching an attempt, made with a great equipment of machines and science, to destroy an order, materially imperfect, productive by its imperfections of injustice and misery, but constantly being called to book both by our reason and our consciences, and constantly compared with values and standards we did not forget even when we were denying them. We believed in the value of the individual soul, in the "wavering grace of humble men", even when we were violating it. Our conscience spoke through the free speech of liberal men. The creator of the New Order in Europe tells us, "we must distrust the intelligence and the conscience." And that "the dogma according to which the individual personality has a right to its liberty and dignity can bring nothing but destruction." The young men of his New Order are to be men "before which the earth will shrink back. A violently active, dominating, fearless, brutal youth—that is what I want."

The New Order is not, as naive souls believe, a corrective of the injustices, social and economic, of our society. The leaders of Nazi Germany are not interested in doing justice to the oppressed; they repudiate that liberal and humanitarian faith. The justice they demand is not meant to apply to other

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and inferior peoples: it is the triumph in a Germanized world of their right to mastery. They feel an irrational faith in their mission. To achieve it they are prepared not only to do what is evil—that is in human nature—but to call it good, and that is Evil itself.

Let me say quickly that in talking of the Nazi racial doctrine as Evil I am in the grip of inescapable prejudices formed by my religious upbringing. My mind readily translates a biological fact—the regressive nature of the social form Germany is trying to fix on her own and her alien subjects—into a moral symbol. Yet it remains true that if the Nazi idea of the place of man in the State and of non-Germans in the world were to prove stronger than the still imperfect, the still embryonic democratic idea, humanity would be forced back into a more primitive and more nearly brutal form of society. Call it what you like. I call it Evil.

A pacifist who says, "Come, let us reason together" is guilty of a deep refusal of honesty. The way of reasoning together is not open to us. What is open to us is submission, the concentration camp, the death of our humblest with our best, the forcing of our children's minds into an evil mould. If he says, "I would choose this rather than war", he is using the right accorded him by our civilization to make a moral choice. But he must choose, not evade the implications of his choice by refusing to believe—a refusal natural to a reasoning intelligent man—that what he is looking at is unreason and Evil. When my reason forced me to see the choice in these terms I was unhappy. But I could not choose submission.

The honest pacifist who, knowing what he is choosing, chooses submission, has a faith to support him. "Yes, I know," he says, "that if we grounded our planes, destroyed our guns,

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and offered peace, England might—it's not impossible—become a second Poland. But it would only be for a time. The idea of freedom and justice is a natural human idea, it would spring up even among our persecutors, tyranny would fail, our charity would call out its like, and by dying for a time we should have regenerated the world."

I cannot any longer share his faith. I do not believe that men are by their nature decent. By their nurture they are. The ideas of freedom, justice, tolerance, precariously nurtured in man through ages of effort, failure, renewed effort, could be destroyed if a "violently active, dominating, fearless, brutal" generation, despising intelligence and conscience, were able to realize its wicked dream of a dominant race served by the others. What would be burned out of man in this fire are his finer qualities, his gold not his dross.

We know what bitterness, despair, and extreme horror war brings. We know it is the blind enemy of our minds, hopes, ideals. But not their far-sighted deliberate enemy. It is a long time since a western nation has taken as its enemy the basis itself of our civilization: has invaded, pillaged, massacred, with the conscious and visionary purpose of setting up a New Order based on hatred of the reasoning intellect, rejection of charity and tolerance, denial of the liberty and dignity of the individual. Poland is one face of the New Order: the debasing of words and perversion of their accepted meaning is the other. In the end this attack on the spiritual means of communication would more surely ruin us.

Think again that this second Dark Age would close in on us with the pressure of aeroplanes and wireless sets. There would be no escape, no hill that would fall on us to hide us, no corner where our children could be free from the hard

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moulding pressure of the new doctrine. Not an age but ages of slavery, with none free, neither the Germans nor their slaves. The meek would not be able to hope, the resentful would be wiped out. The German nation itself would be dependent, on its slaves. An age of pride and despair—until the parasitism of the dominant race foundered in ghastly rebellions and repression. On what, on whom could we count—on another coming of Christ?—to build in this rottenness a faith that would gather up the remnant of our hope of freedom and memory of justice and charity, and carry them through the night to the first light? Why should God give us another chance?

The answer to the boy is hard, and bitter with the death of a hope. The danger is not simply to the gross body of our civilization, its homes, cathedrals, its human bodies not immune to steel and fear: the attack is directed on its spiritual body, its intimations of freedom, justice, charity. We see these most easily in their English form, in a wave of shame and anger against official mishandling of refugees—(and just as in this country there are people who like to applaud a vulgar inhumanity, so in Germany there must have been people who wanted to protect the wretches they saw being baited by Nazi youths: you can say that in resisting Hitler's New Order we are doing what these Germans wished they could have done, we are acting for them). In any moment when we refuse an injustice, perhaps done only to a man of no importance in the State, we are defending in the present the whole of our English past; taking up the words of a citizen of London called Bushel, foreman of the jury which refused to condemn William Penn in September 1670 for preaching. "You are Englishmen," Penn tells him, "mind your privilege, give

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not away your right." "Nor will we ever do it," answers Bushel.

Because we must defend these things against the new Sparta, because somehow we must reinforce a line against the Evil which sees Good in the negation of these things, because we must save the meaning of life, the seed of moral responsibility in it, we ask the boy for his life.

But say this to all young men and young women, and to children who will be killed to-day in an air raid. Those of us who are older have had twenty years since the last war. Why should we want to save a remnant of life? We hope it will be saved by chance, but knowing as we know that England is and Greece was a salient in the blackness spreading from Germany to obliterate decency and meekness in the same moment with the energy of free minds, we are able to be quiet—as well as thankful that chance this and last year did not find us in any safer place. If we are to take the trouble, and it is hardly worth it, to criticize the intellectuals who stay in America, Auden, Isherwood, Bates (Ralph), and the rest, it must be on this ground. They may be guilty of spiritual arrogance, but who cares?—it is only their business. The other notion that they seem to be discrediting us by turning their backs is only foolish. Nothing can justly be said about them except that they are not worth saving. If they were, they would not have saved themselves, they would have stayed and taken their chance. It's true that the brain-bone is very thin and a steel fragment will spill all it holds, but danger and despair will do the mind less harm than a deliberate avoidance. I don't condemn them: I have enough to do judging myself. I will only add one thing. They are not our contemporaries.

So we have reached the place again where we ask young men,

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our ghosts, to fight, although none of the hopes we kept alive with difficulty in 1914-18 came to anything? And ask civilians, some of them, to endure horribly? It would be easier to say Yes if it were not for the children.

National Socialism must be discredited and broken. But those people—some of them alas, Ministers of State—who talk about “total victory” are as frivolous as those who talk of revenge. Except by a sudden and speedy miracle, the action of one of those imponderables people talk of, total victory is not possible. Defeat is possible, but we do not expect defeat. Government and people alike realize now that this war is not simply an attack on an old empire by a new one. It is also a revolution in the sense of a deliberate attempt to destroy one way of living and set up another, to replace one form of social integration, faulty, full of injustices, but capable of growth and variety, by another as fixed and rigidly organized as an ant-heap.

A compromise peace is possible, arranged by America between two opponents who recognize each other as unconquerable. It is not possible with Hitler, about whom all democratic statesmen have come to feel as Queen Victoria felt about the Russians (“Oh, if the Queen were a man, she would like to go and give those Russians, whose word one cannot believe, such a beating!”). It would require this country to remain strong and to show more wisdom than it did at any time between 1919 and 1939, and Germany to become reasonable, recognizing that total ambition is not—in view of our strength and conditional goodwill—compatible with her interests.

A defeat of Germany is possible. It will cost us so much that it will be misleading to talk of it as victory, though

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doubtless we shall. It will be the end of the war, it will be the avoidance of defeat. It will be the condition in which—after further effort and by the greatest self-restraint and steadiness—ultimate victory is possible.

The grim effort to ruin the formidable military power of Germany is only half the effort needed. There remains the desperate problem of Germany itself, of the deeply-rooted Prussian tradition of aggression, of the perverting of two generations by Nazi education. It seems an irony to discuss it with German bombs dropping on us and all Europe in German power. At the end of the war it will be too late. And in fact the discussions are on: the squad which wants to keep Germany perpetually disarmed quarrels with the squad which wants, less simply, "a better world". The possible lies somewhere between them. The only thing not in dispute is that the problem of Germany cannot be torn out of its European context. The future of Europe and its coming generations depends on what policy England, with the support of America, is strong enough, cool enough, and—not least—free enough to maintain at the end of the war.

Only a professional optimist can think towards it without an impulse of dismay. Exhaustion, an industrial machine geared to war, famine, hatred, the hatreds of this two-edged war with its Laval and Quislings, difficulties of communication in half-ruined countries—every shape of material and moral confusion. If it were possible to restore England without looking at Europe we might keep our energies for that, but no more than Germany can England be torn out of its context: the temptation and bitter need to rest will have to be refused. No armistice can end this war, it can only begin the struggle to create conditions in which a Peace can be talked of.

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We are not fighting to restore pre-war Europe, not even pre-Hitler Europe. Pre-Hitler Europe was a thousand times better at its worst than Hitler Europe, but its deep contradictions produced Hitler Europe and this war. In any event we cannot restore it: we can only neglect our duty to begin creating a unified Europe, and so come to a bad end. Somehow the nations of Central and Eastern Europe must be set down at the start of the road to co-operation—they can't be driven along it. Somehow half-destroyed countries must be fed, rebuilt, saved from civil violence and plague, restored. Somehow Germany must be convinced that Pan-Germanism is a poison, not a diet. In this war they have some evidence of this under their eyes. In the last war most of the evidence was buried in the soil of other countries. It is stupid to be sentimental about the Germans; we need have no illusions about them; they have admirable qualities and they have been a murderous nuisance.

To talk about keeping them permanently disarmed while allowing them to become—as by their numbers and energy they must—a leading industrial nation, is merely exalted silliness. It is also dangerous, since sooner or later we should tire of watching them. The German nation can and must be educated to take its place in Europe. In a Europe reorganized on a dual principle. (a) That no nation is able to concentrate sufficient military power to overrun the rest of Europe. This involves the transformation of competing national forces into a super-national authority. If this cannot be managed, war cannot be stopped, and we should as quickly as possible adjust our minds and lives to that condition. If we cannot cure war, let us get used to it and go underground: but if it can be stopped, this is the only way. (b) That no nation is tempted

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to assault Europe by the economic instability of the greater number of its countries.

While it is childish to pretend that the Germans are savages, it is equally childish not to realize that they are politically backward, and to draw the necessary conclusions. Our hope lies in being able to re-educate them, in being able to make good Europeans of them. Europe was once a cultural entity, and at a time when national cultures were diverse and lively. To live, it must become an economic entity, with whatever diversity of political needs. Security with freedom. Can we offer this to Europe? Nothing less is worth the cost we are paying for the chance. Nothing less offers any hope of peace.

The German has not a different human and animal nature from ourselves. He has had a different nurture, and the nurture is the man. Talk of punishment is frivolous—and natural in men who have seen what they love taken, crushed out of knowing, from the ruins of a house. But, if we wanted to, we could not make the Germans suffer as Poland has suffered. The simple reason is that no nation can do such things and not be disgraced and fouled. We shall not want to embrace the Germans. Why should we? We need to be able to respect each other. It is enough. Let friendship come of itself. Those who wish to punish Germany must realize that they cannot punish it without punishing Europe of which it is an integral part. Either blot it out, if that were possible, either kill every German woman, either follow one crime against Europe by a greater, or try to create, in Germany as elsewhere, the conditions in which the decent humble ambitions of common men—when they are not cankered by propaganda playing on their worst instincts—have root-room. Try to bring to life and health a Germany we can live with. It is a more

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reasonable task than trying to forgive a Germany we cannot live with.

Since we are willing to endure much for the defeat of Germany, it is wiser not to waste mental energy in thinking about the other two possible endings to this war. Better think, more coolly than we often do, of what will face us when we have forced the Germans to admit they are defeated.

The mechanized armies we and the Americans are creating should be prepared to occupy Germany for several years—not to humiliate or punish, but as part of the work of relief and administration, and to support Economic Commissions doing their best to reconstruct not only Germany but Europe. (If children have suffered from the blockade, everything must be done, and done quickly, to help them, as if they were our own—as indeed they are. European children belong to Europe.) Defeat will not have destroyed the German people's powers of discipline and endurance: it is very possible that the scene of violent and bitter revolution after the war will not be Germany but France. But it would be foolish to expect that an alternative government—acceptable to the Allies—will be waiting to assume responsibility in Germany after a Nazi collapse, and we should distrust the credentials and staying-power of any leaders pushed forward by the defeated German army. Help and respect must be given to such Germans as seem willing and able to create a responsible democratic administration inside their country. As in Europe as a whole, economic reconstruction must precede and accompany full political reconstruction. It will be more important to restore German economic life than to write another Weimar Constitution. The new Constitution should be allowed to evolve, not be written down the day after defeat. Weimar ink doesn't last.

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All this can only be done—if it can be done—by an England which is free herself, as well as powerful. It comes to it that social and economic reconstruction in Germany is only possible if it is offered by a free, hopeful England. It is not possible on any other terms. Those who imagine that a merely patched-up England of doles and insecurity will have the will or energy to deal with the problem of Germany and Europe delude themselves. The issue is a plain one: without a better England than the England of *l'entre deux guerres* no better Germany and no tolerable future for Europe.

Plain it may be, but it is not simple. Yet it can and must be tried. The idea of a free life as individuals must be set working in Germans against their deathly wish to lose themselves in the State. The courage with which they can devote themselves to the service of an idea turned to the idea of co-operation. Their quality of patient self-respect honoured, not allowed to turn sour in them until it issues in the maniacal pride of Pan-Germanism. It cannot be a sudden process. I doubt it can be achieved at all without a common educational system for Central and Western Europe somewhat on the lines suggested by Professor Denis Saurat in *The Times*:

“The safety of the world makes it necessary that the children of Germany should be educated in a normal way, and not in a Nazi way. How can that be done unless some fundamental teachings, in elementary history and practical ethics are given in common to all children of Central and Western Europe . . . a great and difficult undertaking, but it must be accomplished, or else all our efforts will be in vain. Of course, the whole of education must not be uniform everywhere; on the contrary, concurrently with the centralization of certain subjects like history and ethics, local culture, individual talents, must be developed to the utmost in other domains.”

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The defeat of Germany will bring about the collapse of the National Socialist revolution in Nazi-occupied Europe: there will be least danger of political and social dissolution in those countries where passive resistance to occupation has been best maintained and has had the support of the most stable elements in the nation. And while the end of the war will turn up great and perhaps unmanageable problems, it will also offer chances for bold schemes of European reconstruction. On the quality of this reconstruction, on its wisdom and boldness, depends the peace of Europe and the world, and on nothing else. This chance lost or ill-taken, all is lost, England is lost, Europe is lost, the future is lost. If anyone still thinks that after this war England can live in peace on the edge of a disunited and economically insecure Europe he is a fool and an enemy of his country. There will never be peace in Europe so long as parts of it are living on a much lower level of civilization than others.

The problem is inconceivably complex. It won't be solved by altering the names on the signposts and scribbling democracy and federation over the old letters. It cannot be solved by a Peace Conference of politicians working hurriedly in the best hotels in an atmosphere of intrigue and sour disillusion. Heaven spare us another Peace Conference. The European Economic Commissions will have more urgent work, and it will take them a decade at least to be sure they have begun it. A country in dissolution wants, first, security. Social change, of the most far-reaching sort, is involved in the creation of security in place of the insecurity that breeds war. But it is in the name of economic security that the European nations will be induced to set a foot on the road of co-operation. And it will depend on us, on the strength

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failure is being met now. When we tell the boy to cut short his life so that the human values we live by cannot be trodden into the sand, and so that the English way of living can be saved and restored, we are taking on ourselves the guilt of his death. To redeem it, it is no use pointing to the other face of the war, to the magnificence. That means nothing either to the dead soldier or to the casualties of an air-raid. Redemption if it comes must come by a different way.

We cannot be absolved of our guilt by the dead boy, but only by the others, by the living.

"The trend towards war," said the Archbishop of York the other day, "is inherent in the internal economy of the modern nation." He meant, surely, that the machines which deliver astonishing wealth deliver at the same time a hell of poverty and despair. He meant that the motive of private gain which creates disorder at home issues abroad in an unholy struggle for place and power between nations. If he meant that there is always an economic motive behind war he was right. He was wrong if he meant that it is the only motive. It is not likely that he forgot the spiritual lust for power. "Humility is endless": but it cannot tire out lust by kneeling. The best we can do is to call up all our national energy to alter an economic system which is founded on cruelty and injustice. If we cannot do that, we deserve Nazi justice.

War is not impossible in a well-ordered planet: it is less likely. Each stage in the development of international agencies in industry, agriculture, finance, communications, brings us nearer a world in which resources are shared instead of being dangerously scrambled for. If we assume that man is going not simply to survive but to develop as a species, we can only assume that he will make this effort to avoid wars of extermina-

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tion, involving half or more of all human life on the planet. Total war is not only another destructive war. It is an organizing of human resources for self-murder. Neither morally nor materially can we stand these rackings.

Poor humanity. To be faced by the question: Will you go under the Nazi harrow, and have the variety of spirit and the sensitive enquiring mind bred out of you, or will you go under the harrow of total war and risk at best a crushing impoverishment, and at worst, the end of organized human life? Time knows whether we gave the right answer.

Drawing the blue prints of a new world order is a popular exercise. They are indispensable for the job. But only a naive mind thinks they guarantee our "inalienable right" to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Economic security is the condition in which common men can be free and happy—if it was planned with that end in view. But the hopes and fears of common men are infinitely remote from the upper room of world planning. The plans of internationally-minded experts might involve the most appalling tyranny. In fact they will, if they are inspired by the theory that man is first an economic creature, and not first a responsible human being. Whether men live as free moral agents or as obedient cog-wheels inside the economic system is not for a World Council to imagine. It depends on nothing more, or nothing less, than a re-discovery of man himself, a re-discovery by man of his inheritance. Do not give us economic security (relative, in any case) because we are needed to work the machines—the Nazis can do as much. Nor because we are needed as drugged buyers of new wireless sets—any banker could do as much if he had a mind to it. Give it us because we are responsible human

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beings, the vehicles of a mind, a spirit, a seed. Otherwise we had better go into the dark.

The only social change worth working and hoping for involves the death of what R. H. Tawney named the Acquisitive Society. It involves accepting that economic security is not an end in itself, but the means to a good life; that the State exists to secure these means, and only to secure them. Regarded as an end, the end of living, economic security will fail us long before we come to die. There are more ways of killing a race than by choking it with butter, but butter will do.

National Socialism offered men economic security—at the cost of submission to leaders who were planning a war of conquest. Most of them took it thankfully—a safe job for the needs of the body; for the rest, a faith which has carried them over Europe. Don't we know yet that butter is less necessary than faith? Don't we believe yet that the despair men felt when they heard of food being burned while they starved is a disease of a kind that is fatal to empires? To hear that coffee and wheat had to be thrown away because of an economic "law"—it was a profound and dangerous shock to men's faith in themselves. What am I worth if I am not worth keeping alive? The faith of a half-starved mediaeval peasant was sustained by his priests who told him, and he believed, that he was a child of God as well as a sinner. The leaders of the mercantile and industrial revolutions told him he was a machine-hand, and an Established Church ever more conscious of its position failed to convince him that before God he was the equal of a Bishop. Wesley told him he had the light in himself and could talk to God without benefit of clergy; but the mind of the ordinary man could not long sustain this

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belief in his importance when he saw how insignificant he was beside the awful machine of mass-production.

In post-war defeated Germany, National Socialism gave men a faith in their importance as parts of the great Nazi State, they were Hitler's eyes or his terrible right hand. Do we still imagine that the Germans are fighting only with tanks? As for us, the English, we shall defeat them because we are the stubbornest race that was ever mishandled, starved in distressed areas, mocked by talk of "natural economic laws". And because we are fighting for our all. But no one, no comfortably placed politician, should deceive himself into thinking that we are fighting to restore the England of doles, distressed areas, slums. The people of this country have suffered agony as never before, they have endured as never before. If at the end they find they have been enduring in order to restore its profits to privilege, the heart of the English will be broken, as Hitler could not break it. It will break and we shall decay. As for having the strength to rebuild Europe, what a hope!

It is curious how many people think of the profit system as sacred. Yet it is a system, imperfect, not a way of living. It has been imposed on the real values of civilization. It has heaped up great riches and great rottenness. It made magnificent technical advances and used them to dehumanize whole classes. It was never able to save millions of people from self-contempt, insecurity, hunger. It vomited slums over the whole country, and broke down in the tumours called modern cities. By regarding millions of men and women as "hands" or as "human scrap", it has been slowly taking the heart out of us—and might by now have finished the job but that we have good hearts. It was ruining us simply by being itself—a system which could only exist by persuading people to buy, and

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elaborating irrational pleasures to smother the irrational despair we felt in our puny helplessness, our lives insecure, at the mercy of economic "laws", religion no comfort to us, the symbol of self-respect a larger car, afraid to have children because it is all we can do to hang on to our standard of living without them.

A society which worshipped the material successes of science is destroying itself by science, more suddenly than by race suicide. We ought to be able to hope that a totally different form of society will emerge from its collapse, a form in which the emphasis is laid on man as a human being with needs and duties, not on man as an economic animal to be used. In our coming poverty and mourning we ought to begin to realize that we did ourselves no good by heaping up superfluous possessions and submitting to the pseudo-law which says that the chief end of production is a money-increase and not a sufficient ration for all.

We ought. But the other day an industrialist who is also a financier and an adviser to the Government said in my hearing: "We're not promising them homes for heroes this time, because we shan't be able to afford them." He meant that a society in which he could still hope to make profits could not afford them. He meant that doles and slums are an incurable disease of our system.

It is not good enough. When he said it, I heard a sick groan from the mothers of dead sons, from the children to be born in starved wombs, from all the dead of this war. It is not poverty we should mind. Poor? I should rejoice to be poor for the rest of my life if by going short I was working to build a civilization. Because people are enduring now, it doesn't mean they are hopeful. Even the young are not all of them

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hopeful. People are stubborn, but that is another matter. Don't the ministers of State and their advisers know this? Don't they know that people are afraid—not of the air-raids, not of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do—but afraid of being tumbled back at the end of the war into a death-in-life of uncertainty, of not being used, of being despised and despising themselves, of no future?

What do people want? Food and a faith. The two are not even separate. They want justice, freedom, happiness. Justice is that every child born is given its equal share of the best things a child needs. Freedom is the widest possible social and economic opportunity. Happiness? It is an illusion to think that more comfort means more happiness. Happiness comes of the capacity to feel deeply, to enjoy simply, to think freely, to risk life, to be needed. Men have found it in the trenches.* In daily life, there must be a level of decency and security for life to show its meaning, but the meaning itself comes from elsewhere, from the knowledge that the end of our hard work, our risks, our inevitable griefs and disappointments, is nothing so worthless as the present profit system, nothing so deeply unsatisfying as more and more wireless sets.

It can be nothing less than the making and defending of a

* "With death close, deprived of comfort and hope, there springs up among fighting soldiers a marvellous feeling of common brotherhood and of that natural equality which is not an abstraction, but a humbler concrete communion in the mystery of humanity. Social hatreds vanish, a wavering beginning of the gospel life is born in the mud and vermin of the trenches. Must this treasure of hidden love, this spiritual potential, disappear at once in civil life, and the cares of peace? It would be foolish to hope to keep them alive only by an effort of will, when the whole spirit of civilization denies them." (Jacques Maritain, *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, November 1, 1939.)

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way of life that lets a woman be glad she has children. We can do and do well with less variety of foods, clothes, mechanical amusements. We must have decent houses and splendid schools. We can afford to reward special talents when all are being decently used. We can afford higher education for the few when it is genuinely open to merit.

I have been forced to realize that the idea itself of a real equality (that is, equality of opportunity) rouses in some people a sense of repugnance, they shudder at it as they shudder at the smells in the slums. I have never been able to understand this. I don't know whether it is due only to the fear that they and their children will be diminished in a society where only biological inequality is admitted. Whatever it is, fear, sloth, or vanity, these poor sinners are enemies of their country. National Socialism threatens us with a sudden Dark Age, but they threaten us with a slow death under a yoke that places the need for profits above the human liberties and rights which, and which alone, make a man want to live and bring children into the world. Even the stubborn English need a faith to live for. England was becoming a land without faith. We can't pay for this war in doles.

The danger and difficulties of moving towards a more human form of society are uncertain. Not to move—not to try to solve the problem of a planned society with freedom, the revival of the provinces with a strong central authority, economic security with spiritual growth—is certain decay. There is no safety in going back. There is no standing on the dole line. There is only the choice between slow decline and the risks of a future in which human values are admitted; it is admitted that the economic system is made for man, not man for the system.

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Not that this means perpetual safety. The barbarians will always come back so long as any class or nation feels that it is being oppressed and ought to assert itself violently. And it is not only dispossessed nations or classes who hate and rebel against the others, but the nature of man is the enemy of men. The lust of power will not wither. It is not possible, on any terms, by any forethought, to create a static society. There must be trial and error. As in the cells of the body, there can only be stress, breakdown, and repair in society. We have no right to expect safety; hope lies in expecting danger and change. In knowing that human brotherhood, like the impulses to justice and freedom, come by prayer and watching. Even saints—perhaps especially saints—need watching to see that they don't do irreparable damage. In the end perhaps we had better think that evil is necessary—to keep decency up to the mark.

We are not resisting Hitler for the sake of any social or political system. We are fighting for England, bad mother as she has been to many of us. But let her treat us better when it is over.

I don't despair. We shall look at our broken cities when this is over, we shall think of the many broken bodies lying under our soil, and, as was said on another occasion, say: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job"—of making a society fit to live in. We shall do it without wasting more blood, because when all is said and done we are a sensible people.

One thing we have learned. Though people still have to be coaxed and bribed to lend their money, they do not have to be bribed to endure. Some of them hope as Christians; all act on the older faith: *We have gotten a good report, though we die*

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