

3.11.39. THE TIM

Letters to the Editor

THE CASE FOR
THE WAR

CIVILIZATION ITSELF

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—There are, it seems, strangely ignorant people who, though they know what we are fighting against, do not know what we are fighting for! They are akin to the incipient sadists who complain, bitterly and vociferously, that we are "doing nothing," by which misstatement they mean, apparently, that the number of the slain on all sides, but especially on ours, is still countable. Why are there not more dead bodies about? If these people do not yet know what we are fighting for, they must have heads made of solid bone. The implication of their inquiry, however, is less innocent than it appears to be; they suggest that if they do not know what we are fighting for, we ought not to be fighting at all. Some of them, a year ago, were grossly abusing the Prime Minister because he was then striving, as no man in the history of the world has ever striven before, to avert the war, but to-day, appalled, perhaps, by the prospect of being themselves drawn into the slaughter for which they clamoured so loudly, they crawl and creep about the country, trying to soothe like sucking doves that once were screaming like carrion crows. "What are we fighting for? We know what we are fighting against, but what are we fighting for?"

If, Sir, a demented man habitually disturbs the peace of the district in which he lives, and eventually begins to beat up and rob and even kill those who are weaker than he is, his neighbours who are able to resist his aggressions will try to put him under restraint. They certainly will not allow him to reduce them to his own level of lunacy, nor will they feel obliged to interrupt the process of restraining him to tell any person who happens to be looking on just what their plans for the future are with respect to criminal law reform or the treatment of mental defectives. That can be explained or performed after he has been locked up and they have peace and time in which to consider their plans.

I should have thought, Sir, that knowledge of what we are fighting against was a large part of the knowledge of what we are fighting for. We are fighting against the continual threat or performance of aggressive acts and the recurrence of periods of anxiety and distress. We are aware that in spite of extraordinary progress towards the establishment of the good life, we still have much uncultivated ground to till, as the facts of the evacuation have amply proved, and we are sick, sore, and tired of being diverted every four months from our attempts to cultivate it by the need to mobilize the cultivators and defend the ground already tilled. We realize beyond a doubt that until we have put this demented man under close restraint, we cannot move forward an inch, and may have to back a mile. We are fighting for the right to keep the civilization we have created, and the right to extend it and make it a better civilization. We are here highly resolved that any system of society which involves the persecution and robbery and murder of dissentients from the rules or opinions of the party in power is a wicked system and one which cannot be endured. Even if the disturber of the peace does no more than make an incessant row in his own backyard, we claim the right to restrain him on the ground that we can neither sleep nor work, nor think because of his din.

When the people of Lystra tried to make gods of Barnabas and Paul, the apostles vehemently protested against their own deification, saying: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you," and they added to this protest a remark which is, I think, the plainest and most concise statement of what we are fighting for. God, they said, had "in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." The Nazis, like their little brothers, the Communists, will not allow other nations to walk in any ways but theirs, and it is to prevent them from fulfilling their foul and felonious intent that we are fighting. We desire, and are determined to obtain, that state of existence in which "all nations" may "walk in their own ways."

Yours, &c.,

ST. JOHN ERVINE.

Honey Ditches, Seaton, Devon, Nov. 1.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir.—There is one sentence in M.

include, a regulation of colonial territories in Africa (since Africa is the crux of the question) under the aegis of that order. A new and united Europe, beginning its first essays in the building of a federal system, would then treat, and seek to administer, these territories in the same general way in which the United States has sought to treat and administer its territories. There would be no rival imperialisms: there would be a single federal imperialism, which would not be imperialism at all, because it offered the eventual status of a federal partner to its territories.

It is easy to see the difficulties in the way of such a consummation. But difficulties are not a reason for refusing to think. We can only do the day's work with a good heart if we look ahead to the future event, and, like the old Romans, invoke *hilaris atque prosperus eventus*. The event that stirs me is the order of Europe. If that is put into the foreground, there will be a good perspective, and it will be possible to see a composition in which "claims to colonial possessions" fall into their place. The order of this vexed Continent of Europe is the condition of everything else.

I hope therefore that we shall say, first and foremost (and last and uttermost) that we are fighting for an order of Europe determined by the needs, and achieved by the common consent of all its members, and next to that (and consequent on that) that we, for our part, are willing to throw into that order, and to adjust to that order, the colonial territories which we now hold in Africa.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
ERNEST BARKER.

November 1.

fulfilling their foul and felonious intent that we are fighting. We desire, and determined to obtain, that state of existence in which "all nations" may "walk in their own ways."

Yours, &c.,

ST. JOHN ERVINE

Honey Ditches, Seaton, Devon, Nov.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—There is one sentence in Molotoff's speech to the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union which I could not note particularly. "It is fear of Germany's claims to [these] possessions that is at the bottom of another sentence. It is fear of world supremacy that dictates ruling circles of Great Britain and France the policy of fomenting war with Germany."

Fas est et ab hoste doceri—should count M. Molotoff as a critic rather than as *hostis*. I have learned from him; but, try as I cannot believe, either that we have fomented war with Germany, or that claims to colonial possessions are at the bottom of the war. Germany fomented or rather provoked, the war, because she challenged the idea of any order of Europe other than an order determined by her own conception of her own needs and her own power. What lies at the bottom of the war thus fomented, or provoked, the question of what I would call "an order of Europe"—an order which most of us hope will prove eventually to be federal. The extra-European question of claims to colonial possessions is a question; but it is not the central question. *Ipse dixit*. Herr Hitler himself has said it, and again made the statement.

But this extra-European question of claims to colonial possessions remains a question which can be used to confuse the central and fundamental question. It is a recurrent red herring. Is there nothing that we can do to prevent its perpetual recurrence?

There is no royal way of dealing

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