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THE BRITISH UNION AND IMPERIAL DEFENCE

Proper Co-ordination of Services under One Minister

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NOT only in this present age but in all ages has war been both a calamity and a necessity. The one, because it clearly demonstrates a breakdown of peaceful relationships; the other, because, unless peace itself can be purged of the diseases which corrupt it, humanity must perish through internal decay. War is, therefore, the surgeon of peace; not a state to be desired in itself, but an instrument which removes its tumours. Put differently, and I am speaking generally, war is more often than not a destructive force endowed with a creative purpose.

In 1914 it was not any one nation which caused the War. Instead it was peace generally, the way of living which all nations were then treading. It was a war within civilisation, and not merely a conflict between groups of civilised peoples. Yet, strange as it may seem to us, in spite of the destruction it wrought, it did not succeed in eliminating the poisons which precipitated it. It is for this reason that to-day, twenty years after its ending, "War" is still on every lip.

NEVERTHELESS, it so shook the entire structure of Western civilisation that the great building of power and greed which the financial and industrial interests of the nineteenth century had erected was so cracked and broken that it was left beyond repair. Like a lump of saturated sugar, though it still retained its shape, its dissolution was imminent.

In 1919, had the nations been wise, they would have realised this. But they were not; for during that year that corrosive acid, which is the essence of Marxism, was poured into their bowels. Though the War opened as a clean fight, it ended in a foul class-struggle; the haves and the have-nots being represented by the victors and the vanquished.

Beyond Repair

Britain, the Party system was swept aside; the Cabinet was reduced to a small dictatorial oligarchy; an Imperial War Cabinet was formed; many of the great industries were brought under Government control; agriculture was made compulsory; and finally a military dictator—General Foch—was appointed to control the Allied Armies.

Here, obviously, I cannot examine these changes; yet to anyone who impartially examines the War, from it he can extract four great lessons which should have been learned and carried into the peace which was to follow it, and which to-day are being followed by Germany, Italy, and the other Fascist Powers. These four lessons are:

- (1) The increasing necessity for political authority in war.
- (2) The increasing necessity for national discipline in war.

corpse, there is neither life nor death, war nor peace, mere rottenness.

Further that, "In the League of Nations things are like life in barracks, everybody runs up for the soup, but clears out when there is a job to do." In this confusion the Empire is slowly settling down to sink.

Dance Round the Golden Calf

IS not it time that we abandoned this dance round the Golden Calf, for the Empire is a real Society of Nations, whilst its contorted simulacrum at Geneva most certainly is not? Further still, is not the secure and contented life of the whole infinitely to be preferred to insecurity and internal turmoil, actual or latent?—the one surrounding it and the other inhibiting its parts? "Security" to-day is a word which dominates us, because Woodrow Wilson's inverted idea of "a war without victory" logically and inevitably had led to "a peace without security"; for a war without an end is a peace without a beginning.

It is vitally important to grasp this, because, in the conditions created since the War, defence is no longer an insurance against possible loss, but the instrument of national preservation. Therefore, its power can no longer be sought only in bands of armed and disciplined men, for it includes the entire potentials of a country, that is every national energy—physical, moral, and intellectual,

taneously do so. Therefore, all we ask of the nations of the Empire is that they possess the ability, at any moment of great crisis, to form fours and obey a single word of command.

This is what they did in the days of the Imperial War Cabinet, but it took two years and eight months of disasters before it was formed; and in the next war—a war of scientific weapons—to rely on even a month to make good in is to gamble with fate. This was seen quite clearly by Lord Haldane even before the War ended, for when chairman of the "Machinery of Government Committee," he considered that a modified War Cabinet was "rendered necessary, not merely by the War itself, but by the prospects after the War," and that it "ought by no means to be limited to military and naval affairs." What he suggested was the creation of a piece of machinery which could co-ordinate the Empire and establish a co-operative league of British nations: in other words he wanted a permanent Council of Empire.

A Mine of Information

SUCH a Council would form a great Bureau of Information, a centre where all factors influencing the grand strategy of peace and war could be sorted out and issued to the various Governments. Because each nation is politically free it would be purely an advisory organ, binding the



true Imperial General Staff, I will turn to ourselves and examine what security should really mean to us, for from the point of view of defence we are still the axle-pin of Empire.

We have three separate defence forces—a Navy, an Army, and an Air Force, all of which will have intimately to co-operate in another war, yet they possess no directing brain, for the chiefs of staff sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence consists of the heads of the Services, that is of three departmental managers attempting to act as the Board of Directors of one business.

Instead, what is wanted is a Strategic Ministry of Defence: not a ministry which will absorb the three Service Ministries; but which, standing apart from them, can direct them. Every time such an instrument of co-ordination has

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