

CHAPTER ONE

THE WAR FOR THE INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

THIS war is being fought for the structure of industrial society—its basic principles, its purposes, and its institutions. It has one issue, only one: the social and political order of the entirely new physical reality which Western man has created as his habitat since James Watt invented the steam engine almost two hundred years ago.

Nothing shows this more clearly than the fact that this is the first war really to be fought as an industrial war—as a war in which industry is not an auxiliary but the main fighting force itself. Any peace following this war must be an industrial peace—a peace in which industry is not just on the periphery of the peacetime social organization but is its centre. For it is a law of political life that the peacetime and the wartime organizations of society must be based on the same principles and follow the same structural rules. At one time it may be war that creates, or at least crystallizes, the new society; at another, peace. The question which comes first is one of the oldest—and one of the most idle—speculations of political philosophy; and the practical politician may well feel that it belongs in the category of the “hen or egg” speculations. But as to the fact itself there is no doubt: war society and peace society must be of one piece. The industrial war society of today must lead to an industrial peace society of tomorrow.

During the last war it was still possible to look upon the industrial system and its social organization as mere subsidiaries. Not only were machine-guns, airplanes, tanks and automobiles handled and mishandled as auxiliaries in the traditional pattern of infantry warfare. In its basic social unit the warfare of 1914 still mirrored a feudal organization of society; for the infantry company in which there is no division of function and of skills really traces back, almost unchanged, to the times when the squire rode out

to war accompanied by his tenants and villeins on foot.

It is true that in its final stages the last war too had become an industrial-war. The great material battles of 1917 and 1918 were industrial battles. Yet the last peace was not an industrial peace. And the social organization of the Western world between the wars did not solve the problem of the industrial society; it did not even attempt the solution. To this discrepancy may properly be attributed the collapse of the Versailles world. Versailles and the years after—up to 1929 and in most countries up to 1939—determinedly, though often unconsciously, postponed and evaded a solution of the political and social questions of the industrial system. There was a tremendous and forceful attempt to restore what was basically a pre-industrial society: that of 1913. Fundamentally the people of this between-war world—so near in time yet so completely incomprehensible in spirit even to us who were of it—were only too well aware of the discrepancy. This was shown in the insistence upon permanent peace as the one way to maintain the social structure of the Versailles world.

To say that free society could not survive another war—something few would have doubted in 1928 or 1934—was simply to say that free society as we knew it was incapable of finding a social and political organization for the industrial system. Insofar as it meant anything, it was a sentence of death for free society, with a major miracle the only reprieve. For permanent peace belongs to the millennium rather than to any man-made society. As it was, the death sentence came near enough to being executed. It is not due to any reversal of the appeasement feeling in the free countries, a feeling that had its roots in the conviction that industrial war was inevitably the end of a free society, but Hitler's basic mistakes, that we can fight today for freedom.

At the next peace conference we may try again to establish permanent peace—though I think we have all come to doubt the wisdom of such an attempt. But we certainly cannot and will not shirk the solution of the basic political

and social issues of the industrial system. The reality of this war—not to mention the reality of the post-war period—will make it impossible.

Today the industrial machines of war are autonomous and the centre around which everything else is built. The infantry man has largely become a subsidiary source of power. The social power-relationship between a pilot and the crew of a bomber plane, or between the commander of a tank and his men is the same as that between a foreman and the gang on the assembly line. It is based as much upon a hierarchy of skills and functions as upon a hierarchy of command. The social difficulties in every army today, the inability to maintain the old forms of discipline, the old system of promotion and the old ranking according to seniority instead of industrial skill, are expressions of the fact that the old pre-industrial society of the army is inadequate to organize and to master the new industrial social reality. In every army today the old social forms give way to new ones—a change which has been most drastic in the Nazi Army and to which that army owes much of its fighting strength and morale. And in the society of tomorrow the old social forms of a pre-industrial age will have to give way to new forms of an industrial society.

Every historian knows that the necessity to organize their armies on the new social pattern of the French armies forced Prussia and Austria during the Napoleonic Wars to accept the basic social principles of the French Revolution. The historian of tomorrow will see that it was the need to organize our war effort on the basis of the industrial system which will have forced our generation to develop an industrial society. It is the privilege and the responsibility of our generation to decide on what principles this society is to be based.

This has nothing to do with the question whether participation in a war is good or evil. Nor do I assert that war is meaningful, creates anything, or solves anything. On the contrary, I am convinced that in itself war is

meaningless, creates nothing, and solves nothing. All I say is that war is a fact—one of the most important and undeniable facts, but still nothing but a fact. And facts in themselves are meaningless, create nothing, and solve nothing. They just exist. Whether they acquire meaning and, if so, what; whether they create or destroy; whether they solve anything and how—that depends on what we do with them.

It is certainly true that the first thing to do in a war is to win it. It is equally true, however, that we want to win in order to give our meaning to the war and the ensuing peace. With the questions: what is the issue? what is its meaning? and how can we find our solution? this book is exclusively concerned. It has but one topic: How can an industrial society be built as a free society?

Obviously I shall have little or nothing to say on post-war blueprints, on boundaries, international federations, the League of Nations or the gold standard. Not that I consider those practical problems of national and international organization to be of secondary importance. Such one-sidedness would be just as stupid as that of some of our blueprinters who think that the job is exclusively one of social mechanics. The one without the other—social mechanics without political principles and vice versa—is worse than useless; it is harmful. Sometimes concrete practical results grow immediately out of a discussion of ideas and principles. Sometimes an opportunistic, emergency invention, developed by a political plumber on the spot and without any thought of a general rule, gives birth to a new philosophy. In politics one must either be a dualist or nothing; hence the "realist" and the "idealist" exclude themselves from political effectiveness. However, this study will not try to develop concrete solutions for concrete situations, if only because this author has no idea what the concrete situations of the future will be. The only proper way to deal with concrete post-war issues today seems to me to draw up a multitude of alternative solutions

for every possible job and every possible contingency—in the manner in which a general staff draws up a multitude of war plans in order to have one that will fit. This is a task which exceeds not only what can possibly be cramped into one book, but also what one man could possibly do in one lifetime. Furthermore, I see no way of discussing post-war issues as separate from those of the wartime itself. That day in the future at which we shall be able to make our peace appears to me to be a point where we change horses rather than the point at which we begin or end our journey.

In short, my task is to think through basic problems, to understand basic issues, to prepare new approaches from our existing basis of a free society. I do not pretend to know what the industrial society of the future will look like. I hope to be able to show how we can get there.

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Perhaps the most important—and apparently the most difficult—step in the preparation of a free and functioning industrial society is the realization that our crisis is one affecting the social and political foundations of the Western world. Totalitarianism grew out of a collapse of values, beliefs, and institutions common to all Western countries. And the present war is a civil war for the future of Western society which cannot—except in a purely military sense—be won merely by beating off the aggressors from without. This means that the solutions lie within our own society: in the development of new institutions from the old and tried principles of freedom, in the emergence of new forms for the social organization of power, and altogether in the re-thinking and re-forming of the basis of our society. To understand the character and nature of the great upheaval of which this war is but the last and, I hope, the final explosion, also implies the complete repudiation of all those glib and superficial theories

which see the explanation for this war and for the threat of Nazi totalitarianism to our society, in the German (Japanese, Italian) "national character," in the trend of German history, or in specifically German beliefs or institutions.

It is not to be denied that these factors exist or that they played an important part. The Versailles peace, the German inflation, Hitler's frustrated boyhood in imperial Vienna—all these matter. But they only explain *how* certain things are being done and by whom—not *why* they are being done and to what end.

Undoubtedly Germany has been Europe's "geological fault" for these last fifty years—the spot where every disturbance results in an earthquake. But France played the same part for a hundred years before. In either case, there were profound reasons for the lack of balance, the propensity to tyranny, the lust for aggression. They had nothing to do with national character. Totalitarianism could have happened in any industrial country; had it not happened in Germany first it would have started somewhere else in Europe. That it came to power in the Germany of the Weimar Republic was undoubtedly due to certain factors unique to the Germany of the twenties. And a good many details of Hitlerism are peculiarly nineteenth or twentieth century German. But however striking and spectacular, both the uniquely German causes and the peculiarly German manifestations concern only externals. They explain the "how" and even the "when" of Hitlerism but give no answer to the question why it came, and what it is.

French totalitarianism would undoubtedly be different from the German in its slogans, its concrete institutions, and its specific manifestations. And both would be very different from a Spanish or a Czech totalitarianism. But there would be little difference in the essentials if the basic principles which they accepted were the same. The principles are neither "inevitable" nor to be found in

national character, history or institutional structure. They are chosen deliberately, and intentionally, and they are the choice of men endowed with free will?

National character undoubtedly exists. It consists, however, mostly of inclinations *how* to do things—slowly or rapidly, after long deliberation or suddenly, emotionally or with a show of reason, thoroughly or superficially. In other words, there is a national temperament. But it tells us nothing about the nature of actual decisions—just as the fact that one man is superficial and the other thorough does not tell us which one is more likely to commit murder. In addition to the temperamental inclinations of a national or racial group there are conscious or traditional decisions to regard a certain type of person, a certain profession, a certain type of conduct as socially more desirable than others. It is this choice of a social “ideal type” which we often call, mistakenly, “national character.” But nothing changes as often, as rapidly and as unpredictably as the “ideal type” of a society. What was at a premium yesterday—for instance, the Yankee banker in the United States whom all Europe long mistook for the true representative of American national character—is at a discount tomorrow. In the history of every European country the “ideal type” has changed many times. If there is one thing certain about Hitlerism, it is that the Nazi leaders represent a type which never before has been “ideal type” of German society, neither in background, nor in personal character, class antecedents, profession, conduct, or belief. But that is simply saying that Nazism is a revolution, which we know anyhow; it tells us nothing about the character of the revolution, its roots, or its meaning. Least of all does it tell us anything about the German national character except that the Germans are as capable of having a revolution as any other people.

Fundamentally those who accept the national-character explanation accept Hitler's doctrine. For there is little difference between the theorem of the inevitability and

immutability of a nation's character and the theorem of the perennial and unchangeable "race." And once this is accepted the step toward the "innate" superiority of one nation or race is short. To overcome Nazism we must take our stand on the old Christian principle that in his moral character the common man is very much alike regardless of race, nationality, or colour. This is not in itself an answer to Nazism—except in the field of purely individual ethics. It is not a basis of political action. For what matters in political and social life is not innate nature but ethical principles, objective reality, and the application of the first to the organization of the second: political institutions. Both, principles and reality, are quite independent of the innate nature of the common man—the first a decision of man's free will, the second a heteronomous condition. But both are equally independent of national or racial character.

If the national-character explanation is untenable, the national-history explanations are meaningless. If the Germans instead of Nazism had developed a German form of the Gandhi pacifism, we would now have many books showing the "inevitability" of this development in the light of the Reformation, Luther, Kant, Beethoven or F. W. Foerster; and there were a great many more devoted pacifists in the Germany of 1927 than there were devoted Nazis. If the English had developed a totalitarian philosophy, the pseudo-historians would have had a field day with Henry VIII, that great totalitarian Cromwell, Hobbes, Bentham, Carlyle, Spencer, and Bosanquet. There has been no great historical figure, no great thinker in any country whose thoughts and deeds cannot be construed as to lead "inevitably" and at the same time to two diametrically opposed conclusions. A century ago it was customary in both England and America to start every historical book with a long hymn of praise of those Teutonic qualities which in Arminius, Luther, and

Frederick the Great shook off the yoke of Latin tyranny and founded freedom; then the enemies were France and Popery. Now, with Nazism the danger, we encounter the theory that Hitler's tyranny was inevitable because the Romans never civilized Northern Germany and because Luther destroyed the Catholic civilization of the Middle Ages. How does this account for the Norwegians or for the far less Romanized and equally protestant Scotch or Dutch?

Actually, the immediate ancestors of the more striking Nazi doctrines and slogans were mostly non-Germans. The first and the most consistent modern totalitarian philosopher was the Frenchman Auguste Comte—one of the most influential writers of the nineteenth century. It is significant that Comte was the first thinker who focused on industry; and his totalitarianism, especially his hatred of free speech, free thought, and free conscience, grew out of an attempt to organize society around the industrial producer. Racial anti-Semitism also comes from France where Gobineau first pronounced it; and he in turn was the direct descendant of a long line of French political thinkers who tried to explain and to justify the social order of France as due to the racial origin of the various social strata and to the inherent superiority or inferiority of different races. They even had the same "scientific" nonsense that Nazism uses.* The two Napoleons developed most of the principles of foreign policy which Hitler employs; and both had learned from Machiavelli as well as from the shrewd power politicians of Venice and Holland. The concept of the "Chosen People" is, of course, taken directly from the Jews against whom it has been used so brutally and fiendishly. It was the American William James who first developed the ideas of non-economic hierarchies on which the Nazi party and its organizations are so largely based; it is ironical—but typical for the way in which ideas descend—

* In this field Mr. Jacques Barzun has done pioneer work; his books, especially *The French Race* and *Race*, ought to be required reading for all who want to understand the real nature of the pseudo-scientific biological theories in current political thought.

that he did so in an essay, called "The Moral Equivalent for War," which set out to establish permanent peace. It was an English admiral who laid the foundations for "Geopolitics." And it was the American War Industries Board of 1917 which first developed a modern total-war economy. To make either Gobineau, James or any of the others responsible for the use or abuse to which the Nazis have put their ideas would obviously be as ridiculous as to call the French, English, or Americans inherently and inevitably fascist because of the nationality of their various writers and statesmen. But it is just as silly to trace inevitabilities in German history. All that can be proved is the extremely close contact and the very extensive and continuous cross-fertilization of all European cultures, which make any talk of "inherent characteristics" of any one nation perfectly nonsensical.

The truth is that every nation has in its history and in its character an infinite capacity for good and for evil; that it has precedents and authorities for one line of action or for the very opposite; and that its decision is its own decision and determined neither by its nature nor by its past heritage.

The flimsiest theories of Nazism—or of any other historical phenomenon—are those which try to interpret or explain its meaning and origin as due to specific institutions, or to geographic accidents. At one time it was fondly believed that Nazism was largely the result of a long development of industrial concentration under government control. Undoubtedly the concrete details of certain Nazi institutions were formed by this development. But neighbouring Czechoslovakia had a far greater degree of industrial concentration and cartelization, and a far more complete government control. Yet the Nazism that was allegedly the inevitable outcome of such a development in Germany was conspicuously absent in Czechoslovakia. And the most paternalist economic policy of modern

Europe was that of France where eighteenth century mercantilism was never given up. Yet it would be ridiculous to make the French supervision of trade responsible for the "Men of Vichy."

Again, there is no doubt that Nazism marched east and conquered the little countries in eastern and south-eastern Europe. But Nazism is not just the *Drang nach Osten* or the German-Slav thousand years' war. Every time that Germany wanted to expand, she had to come into conflict with the Slavonic people, simply because Slavs and not Siamese live on Germany's eastern border. And for the same reason the Slavonic people always had a *Drang nach Westen*. In other words, for a thousand years Slavs and Germany have inevitably been in very close contact, fighting each other part of the time, but also living together peaceably and learning from each other. That Germany borders on Slavonic countries does not explain the Nazi urge for conquests or for world domination. Nor do past attempts to conquer Slavonic territory explain anything about the nature of the present attempt—except that the geology and geography of central Europe is still what it was five hundred years ago.

It is very important to understand clearly that Nazism cannot be explained as due to the German national character, the German history, or the German institutional and geographic conditions. Without such realization the present war becomes meaningless and, worse still, there can be no realization of the tremendous danger of Nazism. If, indeed, as has been so often and so popularly said, the Nazi system is the result of something that is inevitable in the German national character or in German history, there would be no point in English or American participation in the war. There is no discernible American interest to prevent Germany's "historical and irreducible" desire to subjugate the Slavs. There would be no hope that these desires could ever be extinguished; for can five years of war be expected to do what five hundred years have not

been able to do? On the theory of inevitability, the only conclusion would be to let the Germans have their apparently inevitable way and to be cut in on the swag. And Hitler, himself one of the leading lights of the inevitability school, apparently expected just that and based his whole policy on this argument.

Unless we realize that the essence of Nazism is the attempt to solve a universal problem of Western civilization—that of the industrial society—and that the basic principles on which the Nazis base this attempt are also in no way confined to Germany, we do not know what we fight for or what we fight against. We must know that we fight against an attempt to develop a functioning industrial society on the basis of slavery and conquest. Otherwise we would have no basis for our own attempt to develop not only a functioning but a free and peaceful industrial society. All we could hope for would be the elimination of the unimportant features of Nazism—those due either to the chances of Germany's economic position in 1933 or to the accidents of her concrete institutions. If we really imagined that we fight against the barter system of international trade or for the Rhine border, we would stake the social and political order of the Western world after this war on gambler's luck.

The very monstrosity of totalitarian tyranny is sufficient proof that the society which made possible the emergence of such a nightmare and of such a threat must have failed to discharge its elementary functions. The violent repression of freedom by the totalitarians proves that they are trying to make society function by abandoning freedom. To overcome totalitarianism we must re-create a functioning society, and one that functions at least as well as the totalitarian pseudo-society. And it must be a free society. To understand the issues, to see the task, to work out the approaches to its achievement is not only essential for the winning of the peace; it is part and parcel of the winning of the war.