

CURRENT MAGAZINES

"THE NEW ORDER": A DICTATORIAL PROGRAM

Nationalism and Europe—Dr. Reinhold Aris, in the *Contemporary*.

The New Order in East Asia—Mr. C. Samson, in the *Fortnightly*.

Faith and Catastrophe—Dr. C. J. Wright, in the *Hibbert*.

The War and the Crisis for the Spirit of Man—The Dean of St. Paul's, in the *University of Edinburgh Journal*.

ON 18th November last, Signor Mussolini addressed the Italian people in a radio speech which every British listener should have been overjoyed to hear. It was so shamelessly, hence so revealingly, direct—all the disguises at length discarded. For the same reason, I think, dismay must have been felt by those listeners in countries other than Italy who for some years have been playing the strange rôle of the Duce's advocates to their own countrymen. In a few scornful sentences he made an end of the plausible plea they so constantly put forward to excuse if not to justify his systematic outrages upon mankind. How well we know now by heart that propagandist series—"saving Italy from Bolshevism", abolition of unemployment, establishment of more efficient railroad and hotel service, cleansing Sicily of bandits, draining the Pontine marshes, building real motor highways, eliminating beggars, making Italy so much more desirable as a tourist holiday resort! These benefits, not a few publicists have in the past had the effrontery to argue, should in justice be weighed against the injuries the Duce has done—against his bad faith by which he has destroyed for a time the very foundations of international harmony, his suppression of the last trace of Italian freedom, the tortures and murders he has inflicted at home, the vast scale brutalities of his aggression abroad. President Conant, of Harvard, made fitting reply to those obtrusively judicial people who press for such consideration of how the Mussolini régime is to be estimated "on balance". If they have any doubt, he said, about the way the balance inclines, this must be because they are using scales of valuation altogether different from his.

But my point of immediate interest in Signor Mussolini's speech is that it so transformed the issue between Fascists and anti-Fascists. At the right time and place the Duce is not

averse to the enumeration of minor details about what he has done for Italy—his municipal hygiene, his public works, his re-creation of Italian self-respect. To the German Dr. Emil Ludwig, the American Mr. Washburn Child, the English Mr. Ward Price, and others who have understood how to flatter him in such matters, he will even lend gracious assistance for a complimentary volume about what he has done. At a leisurely time, as a Scripture has it, the incense of their praise rises to his nostrils as a sweet-smelling savour. But in another mood, the mood he brought to his microphone speech of 18th November, he is uninterested in that sort of tribute. Not for his roads and his sanitary contrivances, his police work, the public utilities he has improved, the economies he has effected, does he want admiration. After all, these are performances the same in kind (however superior in degree) as those which the conventional statesman of the Old Order might show. It is on an achievement incomparably greater that he has set his mind—even the extinction of the Old Order and the substitution of a New.

That is what made his speech so arresting. What is this "New Order"? Here is a term used simultaneously by the three participants in the project of the famous "Triangle". Successively we hear of it, in identical phrases, from Rome, Berlin, Tokio. What does it mean? I propose to examine it here in these three dialectical varieties.

I

In the Italian version the New Order is contrasted very sharply with the League of Nations. Many times Signor Mussolini has singled out the Geneva organisation as the object of his most intense abuse: in it, he has often told us, all that is most contemptible in the ways of the Old World finds embodiment, and on the occasion of this last speech he returned to the subject with peculiar zest. He told his audience how the present war was rendered inevitable, how the last remaining hope of keeping the peace of Europe was destroyed by the action of the League of Nations on 18th November, 1935, and how in that action the whole malignant ideology of the ancient order was brought to a focus. It is worth while to dwell upon this truly astonishing account of the attempt made by fifty-four states to induce the fifty-fifth (whose signature had been attached to the self-same covenant) to preserve the ordinary

sanctity of international good faith. Fifty-five states had entered into a solemn bargain with one another to maintain world peace. Of the fifty-five, one had flagrantly dishonored the given pledge, and the other fifty-four were adopting measures in concert to induce return to fidelity in the covenant breaker. Such perfectly plain respect for a bargain voluntarily entered into has marked the ways of what Signor Mussolini calls the Old Order; under the New Order, which he would substitute for this, no great power would observe any such commitment the moment that there was a chance to profit by its violation. Such contrast has indeed the merit of simplicity.

The Duce's speech was delivered under peculiar and suggestive circumstances. 18th November is one of the great anniversaries in the Fascist calendar: it is known as Sanctions Day, and is second—if indeed second—in significance only to the anniversary of the March on Rome. On that November day in 1935 the assembled nations at Geneva decided to invoke the sanctions clause, the famous article 16 of the Covenant of the League, that they might restrain by the infliction of such cooperative penalties the aggression of Italy upon Ethiopia. Here was the first, so far indeed it has been the only, great adventure in such method of collective restraint for the prevention of war. As Woodrow Wilson used to insist, there are only two ways of preserving peace among nations as among individuals; one is individual pugnacity, the other is collective control. The sanctions experiment was an attempt to employ the latter. It failed, and the anniversary which the Fascists keep every year on 18th November is marked by their exchange of effusive congratulation on the success with which they frustrated, under their Duce's guidance, the attempt at systematic substitution of arbitrament for war.

It is probably true, though not in the sense in which Signor Mussolini intends the statement, that the position taken by the use of sanctions in the Ethiopian affair began a sequence of which the present war was the outcome. What was then being determined in that particular example, which future settlements would no doubt copy, was whether Italy's dispute with Ethiopia should be settled by the new method of corporate negotiation or by the old method of war. If, argues the Duce, you had not obstructed me with your League machine, and if after the same manner your League machine had refrained from making itself a nuisance to Germany and Japan, the chances are that no such conflict as the present would have

resulted, at least as yet. Then Italy, Germany and Japan would have proceeded to enrich themselves by the old method of aggressive imperialism, and the states which had suffered in the process would now be in mere rueful reminiscence, like many a beaten state in the past over a decline in its fortunes. But certain powers, above all Great Britain, chose otherwise. They conceived it possible, by the machinery of the Geneva League, to thwart the ambition of those young virile countries, Italy, Germany and Japan. For this cause—so runs Fascist reasoning—what might have been a mere episodic war like many a war in the past, fought within the conditions of the traditional order, was transformed into a war to destroy that order, and for such change the great culprit is Britain.

Not with mere contentment, but with pride, Britain accepts this responsibility. It was indeed her purpose, as it was the purpose of all other genuine signatories to the Covenant of the League, that the founding of the Geneva organisation should make a difference, not merely in detail, but in principle, to the whole procedure of world re-settlement. The experiment in imposition of sanctions was indeed crucial. Not to have applied it would have meant abandoning the whole principle of the New Order to which the members of the League were committed. The reason why it failed was not that there was anything inherently defective in the machine, but that the operation of the machine was deliberately frustrated by one particular member of the League, namely France under the guidance of Pierre Laval. One's mind goes back to that memorable day when (on proposal, says the report, of the representative from Canada) the application of an embargo on oil was discussed. That the embargo on oil, if it had been adopted, would have put an end to Italy's whole enterprise, is without doubt. Among the more ludicrous memories of that time is the memory of the threat, and of the quite genuine alarm it here and there caused, that the adoption of the oil sanction would be met with a declaration of war by Italy upon Great Britain and France; there was fear lest combined French and British fleets in the Mediterranean should come to grief in conflict with Mussolini's naval strength! The extent of Mussolini's naval strength against the British Mediterranean fleet alone is now clear to all the world. His probable fate at sea if he had faced the combined British and French fleets one may readily conjecture. What a humiliating memory (in which credulity and imposture were so effectively mixed) is that memory of the Christmas Season, 1935. The

establishment of a New Order—not Mussolini's New Order, which in truth is a return to the barbarism of a remoter past, but a genuine New Order of collectively insured peace—was well within the world's grasp five years ago. But for the betrayal of the League by the same French leader who has now betrayed his own country, the first application of sanctions would have been so successful that it might well have been the last.

II

For the French version of the New Order one might turn in the first instance to that substitute slogan, "Home, Family and Fatherland" which Marshal Pétain proclaimed in contempt of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity".

The microphone speech by the aged Marshal on that memorable occasion at the end of last May, when he said "We can no longer continue this fight", was laden with suggestion of a new régime that would be higher and nobler than the old. France, Marshal Pétain declared, had broken down through moral failure: she had lost the integrity, the discipline, the spirit of self-sacrifice which had made her great in days gone by, and it was thus the work of spiritual revolutionaries that had paved the way for the national disaster. It is safe to say that a fair proportion of foreign readers and listeners felt impressed by this. Particularly those in all countries whose minds had been visited by many a doubt about the democratic management of affairs. The capricious and too often unscrupulous manoeuvring of French political groups in the ten years which preceded this war had deepened their distrust of democracy. There was many a reactionary, by no means dishonest, although somewhat credulous, who reflected "It served France right; this will surely bring her to her senses". Like Ibsen with his grim judgment "What Norway needs is a national disaster!"

But there must be few indeed, of those who reflected in such sanguine terms, to preserve now any longer their hopes for a new and better France as a result of the Armistice. Very definitely as time went on, it became clear that not Henri Pétain or even Maximilien Weygand, with his project of return to bygone French respectability, but Pierre Laval as the docile instrument of Mussolini and Hitler would have the determination of the new France. What Laval desired was not made known until the project was judged to have gone too far to be stopped. Then in a bold interview with an American newspaper representative he avowed it as his purpose to bring

France into complete military alliance with Germany, to promote the complete overthrow of the British Empire, and to stake the whole future of his country on cordial, subordinate cooperation with the Nazi and Fascist ways of life. It seems to have been at this point that Pierre Laval was arrested, and his papers were seized for inspection by order of Marshal Pétain. To the foreign observer that step appeared to have been taken not a moment too soon; but within a day or two it was announced, surely without bringing surprise to anyone, that by the intervention of the Fuehrer, Pierre Laval had been released, and that Marshal Pétain was thus being disciplined to realize how in the New Order there is no place for a self-governing France.

So this was what the change was to mean: not "Home, Family and Fatherland", with the return of the old French virtues which a free thinking radicalism had displaced, but the ways of governing symbolized by Pierre Laval—the brutality, the fraud, the cynical contempt of all that is meant by conscientious scruple, which Mussolini's French under-study, with the help of limitless bribes from the Duce's treasury for French editors, had introduced as the new programme for the French "Right"! "You have written, Signor Mussolini", said Laval in a famous oratorical outburst at a banquet in Rome, "the most beautiful page in the record of Italy". So this is what, in the French version, the New Order was to mean.

Marshal Pétain must surely, before long, have begun to feel as his German counterpart, the virtuous Hindenburg, felt at a like disillusionment. It was to escape "Bolshevism" that Hindenburg acquiesced even in the Chancellorship of "the Bavarian corporal". And how much worse than Bolshevism was what he quickly found that he had got! When the time came to discard the mask, how Laval, like Hitler, must have chuckled over the senile simplicity and dismay!

III

Upon the New Order as its program is understood in Tokio we have had abundance of light, both in explicit statement and in the still more revealing disclosures of national action. The public manifestoes lately issued by Premier Innoye and M. Matsuoka, especially those immediately following signature of the *Pact of Berlin*, avowed such a project as could not go further in rapacious bad faith. Perhaps most startlingly clear was the intimation to the United States that the Associated

Pirates would, on certain terms, admit Washington to a share in the loot! It was made plain that a scheme to reduce the Latin-American republics under United States vassalage would be countenanced by the Powers of the "Triangle", provided American indulgence were shown in time to German and Italian and Japanese pillage of other neighbors in another area. These shameful documents present formal justification of all that began in 1931 with the bursting by Japanese armies into Manchuria, and still continues in ruthless but now gloriously futile onslaught upon the forces of General Chiang Kai-Shek. One wonders how those Powers, united in the Confraternity of the Faithless, can put any trust in one another's word. The *Nine-Power Treaty*, the *Kellogg Pact*, the *Covenant of the League*, and other documents bearing Japan's dishonored signature, must surely come from time to time to the mind of Joachim von Ribbentrop as he contemplates the name of a Japanese plenipotentiary attached "with a golden pen" to the bond so lately drawn at Berlin.

But it is not to be supposed that the adhesion of Tokio leaders to the Italo-German alliance is a mere after-thought, a product of the ingenious diplomacy for an immediate crisis such as Ribbentrop achieved when he brought Molotoff into his Moscow bargain in August, 1939. The essential unity of Japanese with Nazi and with Fascist policies was made clear as far back as 1933. Almost contemporaneously with Hitler's assumption of power in Germany, the purposes of the new Japan were proclaimed in a momentous passage by General Araki himself. Here are words which the pro-Japanese apologists in Great Britain and France and the United States, from Sir John Simon down, would do well to keep in mind. My source is the *Japanese Weekly Chronicle*, of May 16, 1933:

"It is a big mistake to consider the Manchurian problem from a merely materialistic point of view, and regard it simply as a question of rights or interests or "life line" . . . We Japanese are not afraid of blood, nor do we grudge to lay down our lives for justice. It is the Imperial House that is the centre of us. Herein lies the supreme virtue of the Imperial House. His Majesty is, *ipso facto*, Japanese morality, and to assist in promoting the prosperity of the Imperial House or the spread of Japanese morality is the basic principle of our existence. . . It is a veritable measure of Providence that the Manchurian trouble has arisen; it is an alarm-bell for the awakening of the Japanese people. If the nation is enkindled with the same spirit in which the country was founded, the time will come when all the nations of the world

will be made to look up to our *Kodo*. *Kodo*, the great ideal of the Japanese nation, is of such substance that it should be spread and expanded all over the world, and every impediment to it brushed aside—even by the sword”.

The experience of seven subsequent years has left us in no doubt regarding what *Kodo* means.

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To understand the New Order is thus easy indeed. When the story of this deplorable period in human history comes to be written, it will probably appear to a happier generation that unique disgrace belongs to those speakers and publicists, still unfortunately not unknown in countries whose citizenship they are unworthy to hold, who pretend not to see how there is any “ideological” contrast, any contrast in the fundamental values, between the racial groups now at war.

The name “New Order” is indeed quite unsuitable: so far from being new, it is but a return of the unbridled rapine, the lust that acknowledged no restraint, the self-assertion so contemptuous of mutual considerateness, the cult of revenge as a glory and of cruelty as a method which gave place by slow but definite stages in centuries long gone by to the pressure of the Christian ethic. When Ludendorff told Hitler that the first step towards establishing the German Reich must be extirpation of Christianity, he was not far from the truth; the Reich such as he aimed to set up would indeed find in the resistance of the Christian conscience its most formidable obstacle. When Mussolini, ever more subtle than Hitler, decided to try in the first instance a seduction of the Church to his purposes rather than a direct assault upon it, his was by far the grosser insult.

By degree the scales seem to be falling from every eye, even from the misty vision of the aged Marshal Petain. To President Roosevelt, almost at New Year's Eve, we are indebted for the last great clarifying speech. The rage of Nazi and Fascist commentators is the measure of its penetrating truthfulness. For those who heard it, there remains no plea for any further misunderstanding of what the New Order means. And that is precisely what least suits the purpose of its originators at Berlin, at Rome, at Tokio.

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