

# OUR CASE AGAINST THE NAZIS

THE EDITOR

SINCE last issue of this REVIEW, our country has declared war. She never did so before, and there are certain questions about that act which it will take time to settle. Legal and constitutional disputes have already been raised, whose interest will be keen when we have more leisure for them. There are other questions which the act has not raised, but has rather settled: such, for example, as whether the spirit of 1914 would reappear in Canada on a like occasion; whether the Canadian "isolationist" had any such following as he so vociferously claimed. These were never real questions; such as they were, they have now been answered with an abrupt decisiveness which no one can mistake. Not for a long time will it be possible to affect even academic uncertainty about them again.

What is the appeal which has so aroused and united our country?

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It is, in the first place, an appeal to make certain that the achievement of 1914 to 1918, in which Canada bore so great a part, shall not be cancelled: that the menace to world order and justice, which millions of lives were then sacrificed to stop, shall not be given a fresh opportunity, wider than ever.

Since 1918, in that critical, self-depreciatory mood which is at least preferable to one of vainglorious assumption, Canadians have often questioned the value of what they then helped to do. They have exchanged many a satiric jest about "self-determination", "the war that will end war", or "making the world safe for democracy". But we cannot help framing such slogans, to express at least some aspect of any project on which we are engaged with earnestness. They are always inadequate; if understood literally, they are misleading; and yet they are not on that account without value or—in the deeper sense—untrue. The effort of the Entente in 1914 to 1918 did ward off, for a time, certain grave perils which have now reappeared, and each of the descriptive terms or phrases I have quoted brought out, truthfully if but approximately, some side of what was done.

Now the menace has come again, in that more intense form which makes it identifiable at a glance. In twenty-five years there had been time to become negligent in recollection and indistinct in thought about the issue at stake in the summer of 1914.

Here and there we found it argued that some re-sifting of State papers had brought out new evidence to show how we were wrong about the German responsibility for starting that World War, and even those of us who were not much impressed by the "research" in question were very tolerant of that drift of mind: to talk and write in that way, we hoped, would at least help to restore good will. But what has just happened is new evidence of a very different sort, which re-sifting of State papers will not soon explain away. A sudden re-clarification of ideas has come.

The job has to be done again. This time, one hopes and believes, it will be so done as to require in that particular aspect no further attention.

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The alternative was not merely to dishonour a pledge on which a brave people, in its desperate emergency, had relied. It was to acquiesce in a general world chaos, mixture of Pandemonium and Bedlam, where brutality, falsehood, rapine, denial of all that civilized mankind has learned to value in international relations, should have free course. As Mr. Chamberlain put it in his radio address to the German people, it had become impossible to believe a single word of the German Chancellor's "guarantees": example after example was quoted, each in itself sufficient, and in their cumulative effect overwhelming. Such was the leader of the most formidable nation on the continent of Europe, whose power was growing fast! Was mankind's cultural heritage to be abandoned to his caprice?

For example, to his yearly "war of nerves"? Its technique was obvious. Under threat of precipitating a European horror, of the sort which humane peoples would sacrifice much to prevent, but which the Nazi relish for cruelties would rather welcome, concession after concession was extracted—in true piratical form. Summer after summer the British and the French public were thus to be worked up to a pitch of alarm, so that they in turn might press their leaders to pay whatever blackmail was required, because "No price is too high for peace". That such pressure would be applied and such blackmail would be paid without limit, if German diplomacy persisted in its "frightfulness", was the advice of von Ribbentrop to his Führer. He has great repute at Berlin, has von Ribbentrop, for sagacious diagnosis of British weakness, for estimating the sloth and indecision and love of comfort that will always make "John Bull" an easy prey to those who know how to exploit him. Residence

in London, and in Ottawa, is supposed to have made the German Foreign Minister an expert on such points.

By this time, his Führer must have revised his confidence in that expert. Neither Great Britain nor France had reached the point of decadence he alleged. As Gladstone once fiercely put it, "The resources of civilization are not yet exhausted". And, as Mr. Churchill's broadcast observed, "It was for Hitler to say when war should begin, but it is not for him to say when it shall end".

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For what is it worth while to fight? It is hard to fix the exact stage at which the admitted horrors of war become a slighter evil than sacrifice of the best in life that peace may be unbroken. From St. Augustine to Mr. Henry Ford and Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, observers and critics have dealt with this problem variously. Colonel Lindbergh, a short time ago, made his own extraordinary contribution to the debate when, with his southern sensitiveness to differences of colour alone, he argued that since the present conflicting groups in Europe are alike white, no American need feel responsibility for the outcome!

Upon those who believe that no war, for whatever cause, should ever be undertaken, it is idle to press reasons justifying France and Great Britain now. But if a war is ever justifiable at all, what must be its adequate grounds if the grounds are inadequate here—when the offending Power is convicted, not on the witness of its enemies but by its own avowal, not as an occasional lapse but as a fixed policy, of complete disregard for all that is essential to the decent intercourse of States. Deeds, said Mr. J. M. Keynes recently, are being done than which none darker have been known since this planet was first tenanted by man. Is there sufficient *casus belli* in that? The enterprize of the Allied Powers will be profoundly misconceived if it is not kept always in view that their victory will be a victory for justice, for truth, for mutual consideration *everywhere*—not excluding the deeply wronged people now forced to accept the rôle of enemy to its best friends. It is a co-operative project for the overthrow of "Hitlerism" on which every resource has now to be used, and for which every other purpose has to be suspended. And when this is overthrown, such of the German people as are worthy to stand in real succession to those who have made their nation great in the past will have most reason to thank a British and a French and a Polish resoluteness which in such a cause no bribes could weaken, no deceit could mislead, no threats could affright.