

the same degree of security against invasion which enables the normal citizen, devoid of guns or treasure-chests, to pass peaceful nights in a community known to contain burglars.

On the other hand, a new and menacing element has entered into the possibilities in the artificial scale of ethics by which modern dictatorships count the lives and sufferings of individuals as of little consequence compared with the supposed advancement of the State. This assumption underlies every war, whether aggressive or defensive, but its frank and brutal avowal by dictator government obliges us to face the hypothesis, extreme as it is, of an enemy impervious to ordinary humane considerations and actuated only by cool self-interest. Very well, let us face it!

The Hypothesis of Ruthlessness

After the first skirmish with the people, the foreign general will consult his government as to the alternatives, terrorism or compromise. He has power to torture striking workers, execute disobedient citizens and deliberately starve the resisting community. Ruthlessness approaching this occurred in 1914 in Belgium—in Ethiopia and China, and is now being practiced in countries conquered by the Reich. In these cases, to be sure, ruthlessness has been an incident of actual war, where civilians of surrendered countries have been punished for previous resistance or for later attempts at sabotage or rebellion. The invaders we are dealing with have no revenge or fear to tone up their “schrecklichkeit”—no means of intoxication except what they have brought with them, no fear of sniping or betrayal to hostile forces.

In the enemy country the first hysteria has died down, for civilian war spirit, like that of the army, requires battles and heroism for its sustenance. The opposition to the ruling group, always present whether open or suppressed, begins to gather strength.

Furthermore, the nation must save its face with other powers by at least the pretense of justifiability. Since a military dictatorship is even more dependent than a normal government upon the maintenance of an emergency situation, it cannot fail to find its popular support seriously undermined. Accordingly, even if the party in control is not yet ready to recall the expedition as counted upon by Russell, self-preservation will prescribe the more moderate course, to make the most of its nominal victory rather than risk political defeat through wantonly terroristic measures.

In this case the invaders, after a number of arrests and confiscations, will advance to their next objective, leaving behind them, in addition to the usual garrison, a complete corps of technicians and workers for essential services and communications. The citizens meanwhile will have returned more or less to normal life, hampered by the presence of the garrison, suffering occasional arrests and even executions when orders conflict, and subject to seizures of property when foraging necessity demands it. Their condition will be unenviable and even pitiable, but will differ more in degree than in kind from that of civilians under martial law in territory occupied by their own military defenders.

We are deliberately facing, however, the most fantastic hypothesis which can be devised, and must force our imaginations to a third possibility—that of extreme and gratuitous ruthlessness such as has never yet appeared in history. We are to envisage an implacable commander under an unscrupulous government, supported by a political party quite reckless of world or minority opinion. Conquest at all cost is the policy chosen; as civil officials refuse obedience they are one after the other arrested and executed, and recalcitrant workers are herded into concentration camps, their posts