

CAN PEACE BE FOUND IN PARIS?

Total Victory Brings New Problems

TOTAL war has been pushed to total victory; and so far as successful force may win it the United Nations have an unprecedented opportunity to model the world to their will. When the power of Napoleon was at last rolled back in 1814 no one questioned that France was still a great power, indeed in some ways the peculiar guardian of European culture. At the Peace Congress a respected statesman spoke for the defeated country and he could appeal to ideals professed by victors and vanquished alike. Again in World War I the Allies did not drive towards unconditional surrender but towards the acceptance of a view of politics which President Wilson had summed up for liberals of all countries. The Fourteen Points make stimulating but rather sad reading. Their lack of definition opened the way for endless divergence of opinion; yet in their sum total they sounded a chord that echoed throughout the Europeanised world. In particular they appealed not only to the victors but to well-organised and active elements among the vanquished. In 1918 there was still a Germany and still a possibility of following the traditional way of peacemaking; a discussion in which the European community as a whole could be represented, and in which the view of the vanquished could at least be clearly expressed.

Opportunity was not fully taken, and in 1946 it no longer exists. It has been destroyed not so much by the juggernaut of Allied military power as by the

WRITTEN on the eve of the Peace Conference now sitting in Paris, this article for "The Listener," by Professor F. L. W. Wood, contrasts the situation to-day with conditions in 1919 and 1814, two other occasions on which the Powers met in conference to redraw the map of Europe.



success of Hitler in crushing opposition in his own country, and by the fact that those Germans who fought against him even unto death throughout his 12 years of power never reached a solid common agreement as to what they would set in his place. When he disappeared in the inferno of the ruined Chancellery, no alternative government sprang from German soil as an alternative to Kaiser Wilhelm had sprung in 1918. There is now no Germany as an organised community to balance the will of her conquerors.

Ruled by the Past

Yet victors who have crushed their enemy out of political existence may find themselves powerless for good. "It is during great wars, not after them, that peace treaties are made."

In 1946, as in 1919 and 1815, the statesmen who frame the peace must be controlled by recent history, and in particular by the attitudes of mind and the forms of organisation that have been moulded by years of total war and (among some peoples) of total suffer-

ing. It is plain that in one respect at least these years intensified a current trend which has become a dominant factor in the peace negotiations. Between the two wars there were two voices: that of the realist who claimed that where there was physical power, there should reside responsibility; and that of the idealist who spoke for the equality of men and equality among sovereign states. For the time being World War II. has pronounced decisively between these two. It has erected into a principle the supremacy of the strong and the nonentity of the weak. Technical progress has driven towards that end: never have the views of unarmed millions had less military significance. None but powerful and complex communities could produce the intricate instruments of modern war, and the atomic bomb was merely the fearful coping stone to an edifice of power already unchallengeable. It is, of course, true that in times past the great powers have formed themselves into more or less harmonious groups to order the affairs of Europe.

Yet the Big Few of 1941-46 were at once fewer and more powerful than the groups that steered the Allies to victory in 1814 and 1918 and framed the peace settlements that followed.

Peace Caught Them Unprepared

The trend of events, then, placed on the powerful few quite unparalleled responsibilities, which have inevitably carried over from war into peacemaking. But it did not provide them with an agreed basis for the exercise of power. Before the end of the great wars of 1792-1815 and 1914-1918 the allies had reached some broad agreement as to what to do with their victory: an agreement embodied either in formal treaties or in the understood conventions of the age. In 1945, so it would appear, victory caught the Big Few unprepared. They hated Hitler and they loved "democracy"; but the nature of their love and even the precise grounds of their hatred lacked definition.

Divergencies in viewpoint, which in the crisis of war seemed almost though not quite irrelevant, became vital as the power of the common enemy crumbled. They had their roots far back in the history and culture of Russia on the one hand and Western Europe on the other; and unresolved fundamental issues bedevilled honest attempts to settle detailed problems. None could seriously doubt that the common man of every country longed earnestly, indeed passionately, for an end to the threat of war. Many felt convinced that the disagreements often presumed to exist between Russia and the West rose essentially from lack of mutual knowledge, or from a legacy of deep-seated prejudice, and that they could be resolved into a mutual understanding as solid as that which had destroyed Hitler. But time was essential to constructive work; and the preliminary peace discussions left the impression of the Big Few fumbling for an agreement on fundamentals instead of applying some previously accepted basic principle to the many practical problems that cried out for solution.

A "Great Power" Peace

These facts give the background to the Peace Conference summoned on July 29, 1946. It is to be a great-power peace. The draft treaties have been prepared by the foreign ministers of the Big Four, grown to Four by the readmission of France to the place in the councils of Europe to which she is traditionally entitled. The Four are apparently far from having made up their minds about the most important question of all: that of Germany, for the drafts deal only with Italy and the lesser powers that fought at Germany's side. They are to be submitted to the delegates of 21 nations who fought against Hitler, and Italy at least among his allies is to be represented. But the function of the 21 is not to consider and amend the proposals of the four and adopt the treaties in their final form.

The conference, after debate, may suggest amendments on a two-thirds majority vote; these amendments will ultimately go to the Foreign Ministers of the Four who will incorporate such of them as they think fit in the final treaties. The treaties will then be presented to the former enemies of the United Nations and will come into force



THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA—"a rudimentary international organisation turned readily into a 'Trade Union of Kings.'" The principal figures are Metternich (standing, addressing the assembly), Hardenberg, of Prussia (seated, left), Castlereagh (seated, centre), Talleyrand (with arm on table), and (in profile at right) the Russian delegate Stackelberg