

Toward the Post-War Reconstruction of Europe

An Analysis of Obstacles That Stand in the Way of Lasting Peace on the Continent

VICTORY IS NOT ENOUGH.
The Strategy for a Lasting Peace. By Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer. 332 pp. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. \$3.

By GEORGE N. SHUSTER

THAT the United States must shoulder a heavy burden of responsibility after the present war is over seems obvious to Dr. Wertheimer, an Austrian diplomat and newspaper man now in exile and resident in this country. Less immediately self-evident, he thinks, are the ways in which this responsibility should find expression. Unlike many other observers, he does not believe that American participation would have made the old League of Nations an adequate and enduring political instrument. For was not that League almost wholly dependent upon "public opinion," and is not that "opinion" a delusion in so far as political action on the Continent is concerned? But, like many another writer, he contends that the Atlantic Charter is, unless the commentary it lacks can be speedily furnished, also quite useless either as a basis upon which Europe can be organized or as a weapon of psychological warfare.

Steps of positive and negative import alike must be taken. Some things must be prevented in the future, and some other things must be fostered. In either case knowledge of the European social climate is imperative. Dr. Wertheimer therefore discusses the psychological and political aspects of that climate, making only cursory allusions to economics. The Continent may be divided for convenience sake into Germany and the countries which surround it. With regard to the first, one must avoid applying the coats of black and white paint to which Americans are accustomed by reason of their special moral tradition. The fact is that so very many Germans are so inured to obeying the orders of their government that even the kind of obedience recently elicited probably has not greatly changed their characters. Therefore, although the really vicious Nazis are beyond social redemption, and although the demonstrably good anti-Nazis are tested democrats, the great German majority will probably appear in a quite different, more human and humdrum, light once a government committed to moral standards has been erected.

Other continental peoples should, the author contends, be evaluated by Americans in a comparable way. In his opinion, the fall of France was due in large measure to the fact that the government of the Republic came to seem ineffectual and purposeless. It could not reach decisions, because it no longer had the imagination to see what was to be decided. Elsewhere the situation was hardly different. Dr. Wertheimer believes that if a poll were taken now in occupied Europe by an American liberal, the surprising and uncomfortable truth would emerge that for the present a sizable major-

ity would be noncommittal. People simply would not be able to decide whether they wished to be rid of Hitler or not, so accustomed are they to the *status quo* and so little used to giving democratic expression to their political feelings. But once a change is made conceivable by reason of some evident military victory by Germany's foes—some successful move to invade the Continent—response in the occupied coun-

tries will be immediate and important.

All this merely proves, to Dr. Wertheimer's way of thinking, that what Anglo-Saxons term "public opinion" is an entity existing only among them. The European can be ruled solely by legal institutions which manifestly will work. I am inclined to agree that this theory is in the main correct. It may well be that the author, like all advocates

of a thesis, is prone to fit every stray piece of furniture into his house. His analogies from history are often more entertaining than convincing and his commentary on the recent past is probably as subjective as any other observer's analysis. We miss a trenchant discussion of the negative dynamic of the Hitler movement. Thus, while the pogrom of 1938 was dastardly, as Dr. Wertheimer correctly observes, one falls to

see just how it surpassed in criminality the purge of 1934. But on the whole it is clearly correct to hold that the average European peasant and workman is a pragmatist in his attitude toward the State, and that the peace settlement must stand a pragmatic test. That is not to say that it must drip with plums of material benefit. It must promise order, efficiency and honesty. It must mean what it says.

Accordingly, educational and psychological difficulties must be confronted realistically. Dr. Wertheimer, himself an economist, has elected not to consider economic problems, because he believes these have been discussed by other writers. What, then, are the major worries? First, there are powerful conservative forces in Europe which cannot be ignored. If one did consign them to the scrap heap, the only logical result to be expected would be an efficient German communism, which would once more isolate the Reich and in due time no doubt make it quite as formidable from the military point of view as was the Hitler regime. Accordingly, it is important that the conservative forces be not undermined by dividing Germany into parts, on any such supposition as that a "Catholic Bavaria" would like to go its way alone. The attempt at separatism would very quickly lead to disaster.

Secondly, the workers of Europe have no love for nazism, but to this they do owe emancipation from unemployment. One may account for the plentifulness of jobs in the "New Order" on grounds which are not complimentary to Hitler, but the fact remains that the man with a hoe has enjoyed steady work and that a future regime which keeps him on the dole will lose prestige in his eyes. How shall one meet this difficulty? Obviously by working for the unification of Europe in accordance with the federal principle, so that hampering economic and other barriers will disappear.

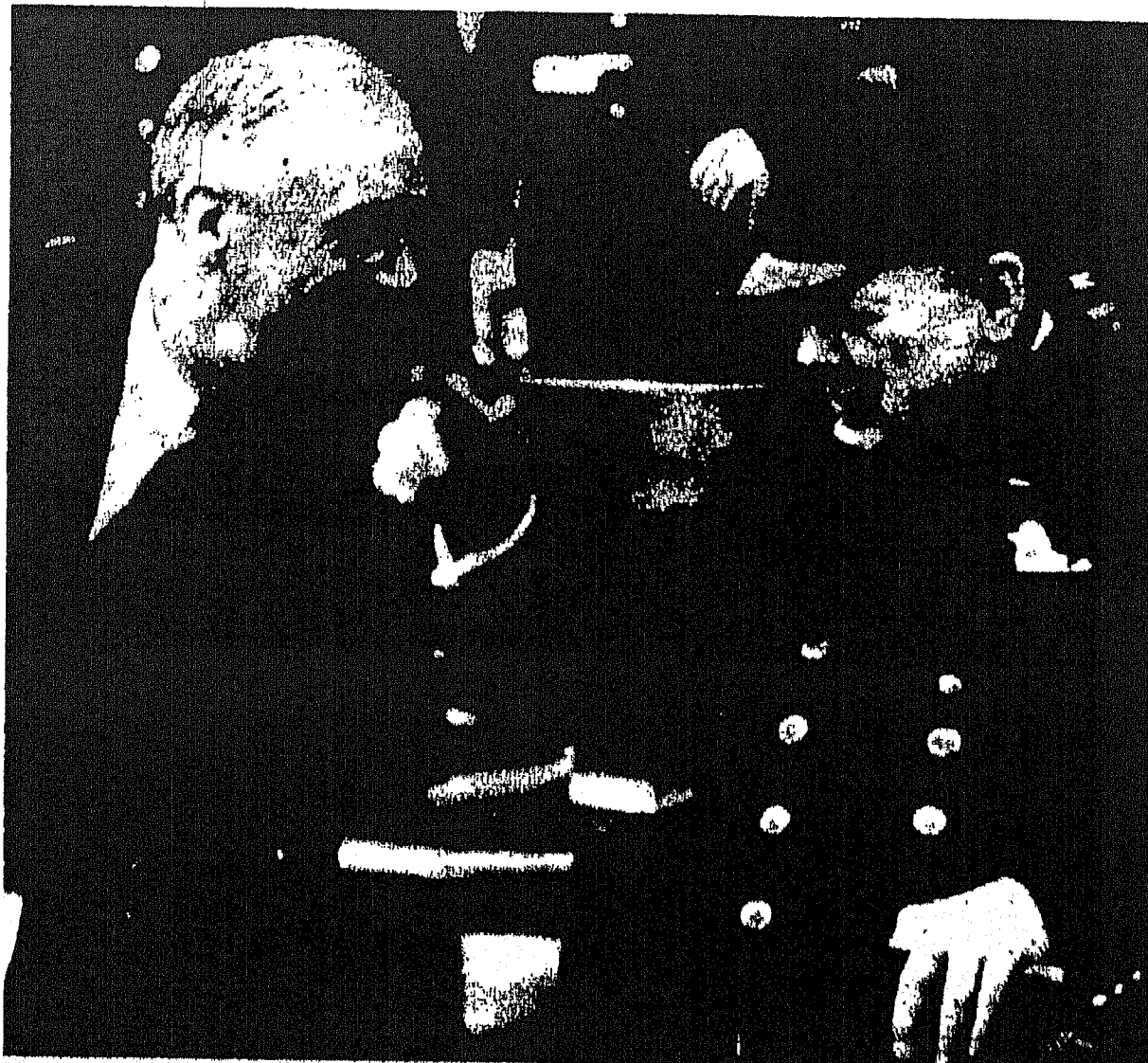
Finally, there is the huge, complex question of that unification. Dr. Wertheimer shows that the war may end in any one of a number of ways. Peace may come with startling suddenness or it may be slow to arrive. In any event, the victorious democratic nations must not rely upon their assumed ability to improvise solutions for problems which the peace will bring. There must be a master plan, and there must be readiness to put that plan into operation. Unlike some other commentators, Dr. Wertheimer believes that refugees with political experience will prove important aids in the reconstruction effort. Similarly, he envisages cooperation between the United Nations and Europeans, even those resident in Axis countries.

This book is, perhaps, open to the criticism that the author has dealt himself all the cards in the deck. Yet it is, on the whole, as realistic and satisfying a discussion of the outlines of war-torn and post-war Europe as has been offered by any writer.



Casablanca

(Associated Press)



The Atlantic Charter

(Associated Press Wire Photo)