

LIONEL CURTIS

FAITH
AND
WORKS

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FAITH & WORKS OR A WORLD SAFE FOR SMALL NATIONS

By LIONEL CURTIS

With an Introduction by
SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE

'Nearly always Governments which seek peace flag in their war efforts, and Governments which make the most vigorous war preparations take little interest in peace. The two opposite moods consort with difficulty in the human mind, yet it is only by the double and, as it might seem, contradictory exertion that a good result can usually be procured.'

Vol. IV, p. 50, *Life of Marlborough*,
by WINSTON CHURCHILL.

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INTRODUCTION¹

By SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE

THE Atlantic Charter defines the peace for whose establishment its signatories fight as a 'peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries and which will afford assurance that all men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want'.

These are noble and simple words. They have been accepted by the leaders of all the United Nations as representing the common aspirations of their peoples. There is no doubt that they do so. How can realization of these aspirations be made secure? How can these leading words of the Atlantic Charter be turned into deeds? Mr. Lionel Curtis's pamphlet on *Faith and Works*, following its predecessors entitled *Decision* and *Action*, sets out to answer this question.

Before discussing the answer, it is well to examine a little more closely what is implied in the question, that is to say, in the words of the Atlantic Charter. Those words provide for continuance of separate nations with their own Governments; they contemplate a world of nations of many sizes, large and small, all of whom are to be able to dwell in safety within their own boundaries. At the end of the last war the aim of the victors was phrased by some of them as making the world safe for democracy. But democracy is a means, not an end. The aim for the next peace can be put better: we should decide to make the world safe for small nations.

¹ These introductory pages were published as a review of the first impression of *Faith and Works* in the *Observer* on 2nd May 1943. I have to thank Sir William Beveridge and the *Observer* for their kind permission to use them as an introduction to the second impression of *Faith and Works*.

Freedom from Fear

That phrase implies all that is essential. If the world is safe for small nations, it will be safe for all nations. If the world is safe for small nations, it will be an ordered world in which the rights of each nation are determined by justice and not by relative strength, as in an ordered community the unarmed citizen is safe beneath the protection of the law. If the world is safe for small nations, it will be a world in which the human spirit can blossom in all its infinite variety of national cultures and not be beaten flat into a totalitarian mould.

How can the world be made safe for small nations? Not by their dependence on a larger neighbour, for that destroys nationhood. Not by their own arms, and not by grouping themselves with other small nations; not even the largest single nation in the world to-day can be safe by its own arms, for safety does not mean living always on the brink of war, even if one survives war. It means security—being without the fact or the constant fear of war. Security for all nations, small and great, can come only through the enthronement of impartial justice between nations and the arming of justice with decisive force for her decrees. ‘The scales of justice’, as Mr. Winston Churchill once said, ‘are vain without her sword.’ Who is to supply international justice with her sword and wield it for her?

The answer to that question is given by Mr. Curtis in two propositions. First, force adequate to maintain justice and peace and prevent wars cannot be supplied by any one nation. The British Commonwealth, on whose control of the seas in the nineteenth century the *Pax Britannica* was based, ‘has twice in this century failed of its major purpose’. Second, the force on which international justice rests must itself be international. It cannot be composed of men owing their whole personal allegiance to one particular nation. They must owe

allegiance to a Government which itself is directly responsible to the citizens of many nations. There must, in other words, be both national Governments and an international Government.

This double theme is developed by Mr. Curtis with a combination of eloquence, practicality, and historical illustration which make, between them, an argument of compelling force.

Liberty at Home

In contrast to some advocates of federation across national boundaries, Mr. Curtis does not suggest removing from the sphere of national Government any functions other than those which are essential to external security. His proposal is 'that the powers of the international Government should be limited to defence, foreign policy, colonies, civil aviation, and effective means of making the cost of these services a first charge on the nations united, leaving all internal and social affairs, including the incidence of taxation between one taxpayer and another, to the national Governments where they now rest'. Mr. Curtis keeps the sphere of national Government large; it would be the only Government of which most ordinary citizens in their daily lives would be aware. This proposal has three advantages over more ambitious schemes of federation.

First, it keeps down to the indispensable minimum the sacrifice of national powers and thus makes more likely the acceptance of this sacrifice.

Second, it gives the best practical guarantee that the armed force developed by the nations that combine will not be used for any purely national purpose. For everything except the common good of external security each nation will preserve its individuality. The international Government will not itself have any national purpose.

Third, it makes it possible to give equal opportunity to all men in all lands to live out their individual lives in freedom

from fear and want, while not leaving it free to all nations to develop armed force of their own or to take an equal share in arming international justice. When the present conflict ends in the destruction of Nazi tyranny and its satellites and apes, the hope of lasting peace will depend on the extent to which it is possible to establish and enforce the principle that armed force for use in war against other nations is not an appanage of nationhood. This principle can and no doubt will be enforced against the defeated tyrannies, by disarmament, adequate inspection, and instant action to stop rearmament. It will need to be applied also to all other nations, so far as the power of the United Nations extends. It can be applied, most convincingly and most effectively, to themselves by the United Nations or some of them.

Mr. Curtis, of course, does not assume establishment of a world-wide international Government at once, if ever. He assumes only that a sufficient number of separate nations, knowing that war between themselves is unthinkable, decide, while keeping independence for all other purposes, to pool their strength for armed conflict formally and finally, as the best means of achieving external security for themselves and as the support of international justice between all nations. A sufficient number for this purpose means more—much more—than the States of the British Commonwealth; that is the lesson of two wars and of the League of Nations. It does not mean of necessity all the United Nations; a close, permanent union of some of these nations for external security would not imply any difficulty in their co-operating in a looser bond with all others who were like-minded.

Can such a union of nations for peace arise out of the present war? The answer is 'yes', for it needs no more than the recognition of plain facts. There is infinitely less possibility of future war to-day between any of the great English-speaking nations of the world than there was between the States which came together in the American Confederation,

and later in the American Union. There is none of these nations which for all practical purposes of communication is not closer to all the rest than were those early American States.

These things shall be

Can such a union of nations for peace arise from this war? The answer is that it must. To deride as Utopian plans for international Government and abolition of war is the idlest form of bad dreaming. The shadow of total war has lain over the world long enough to let all men see what it means. The choice is no longer between Utopia and the world our fathers knew. If lasting peace be Utopian, the choice is between Utopia and Hell.

To win wars is not enough. We must prevent them. We must make the world safe for small nations, and so for all nations. We cannot do so by having no force at all in the world, for that makes it a paradise for criminals. We cannot do so by any combination of forces which owe their first allegiance to any single nation; in the words forming the title of a famous lecture by Lord Lothian, 'Pacifism is not enough, nor Patriotism either.'¹ We can do so by placing international security in the hands of an international authority, by setting the Government of each nation free for its national tasks, free to build for all its citizens, in accord with their national ways of life, an ordered opportunity for service and freedom from fear and want.

¹ Burge Memorial Lecture, 1935. Republished by Oxford University Press, 1941. 1s.

PREFACE

NUMEROUS and pertinent comments on two previous pamphlets, *Decision* and *Action*, made by reviewers and received from friends have led to the writing of a third. In this case I decided to submit the proofs for comment to friends who had criticized the two previous pamphlets. From more than sixty of them I have had comments on the proofs.

After careful study of these comments I have drastically revised the text. A comparison of the text as published with the proofs would shew how deeply I am indebted to the help of collaborators too many to thank by name; but for any views set forth in these pages the writer alone is responsible.

Some of the criticisms made on this third pamphlet could be answered by quoting some passage printed in the previous two. This fact illustrates the difficulty I have had in writing this third paper, while trying to keep it short enough for busy people to read. I had either to repeat what I had said before or else to assume that readers of *Faith and Works* had read or would read *Decision* and *Action*. I have generally followed the second alternative, so that *Faith and Works* must be read as part of a trilogy, to be understood in the light of the two previous parts.

I find that *Decision* and *Action* printed together in one pamphlet (price 1s. 6d.) can still be supplied by the Oxford University Press.

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CHAPTER I

PREVENTION OF WAR

THE South African War was on both sides fought with greater humanity than the wars which spread to the world at large in the present century. It none the less left in my mind a lasting impression of how evil a thing war always is. When it ended in 1902 I remained in the Transvaal with some friends of a like age to serve Lord Milner in the work of restoring order.

In 1906 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came into power and announced his intention of granting responsible government to the conquered republics. We officials who handled the conflicting interests of the inland and coast colonies had no doubt in our minds that, if this and no further step were taken, we should all in a few years be shooting each other again. Lord Selborne, who had now succeeded Milner, commissioned me privately to visit the governments of the three neighbouring colonies and frame a report on the situation.

I was thus brought into close personal touch with the members of all four governments. They impressed me as able, upright, and public-spirited men. On the other hand, I was shocked to find that the members of each government seriously questioned the public spirit and indeed the good faith of all the three others. There must, I felt, be something wrong with a system which had led perfectly decent men to think so meanly one of another. This youthful experience accounts for the strong convic-

tion that runs through these pages that political thinkers who attribute wars to the short-coming of statesmen, and see no remedy except to provide an unbroken succession of heaven-born rulers, are declaring their own intellectual bankruptcy. Wars can be stopped from breaking out if we see the defects in political systems and cure them in time, but not if we wait for faultless men to direct them. It is in our power to change what is wrong in a system. It is not in our power to ensure an unbroken succession of statesmen great enough to work any system however defective. Though political systems cannot be perfect, they may be fool-proof.

The report to Lord Selborne was on these lines. The way to prevent a conflict between the four colonies was to merge their governments and electorates into one. Lord Selborne agreed and published that view on his own authority. It was backed by Generals Botha and Smuts in the Transvaal, and by Francis Malan and Dr. Jameson in the Cape. By 1909 the Union of South Africa was an accomplished fact. My own conviction is that had it not been accomplished by 1914, we should have had on our hands a second South African war, which might well have turned the scale in the great struggle with Germany which began in that year.

In 1909 that coming struggle was visibly casting its shadow before it. The German Empire was demanding 'a place in the sun', and was building a fleet to challenge the sea power by which alone the widely scattered communities of the British Empire could be held together. We were thus impelled to ask ourselves what the nature

and purpose of this so-called Empire are. So in 1909 I undertook to give my whole time to the study of this question, in collaboration with friends prepared to devote what time they could spare from their ordinary duties.

Except when I had to devote some years to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms in India, and to the establishment of the Irish Free State, my life has been given to political research detached from party affiliations. After many years the results were given in a book too long for all but a few to read. I am now trying to see how conclusions reached in the course of long years apply to the present crisis in world affairs. What practical answer do they suggest to the questions raised by the Atlantic Charter? How when this second war is ended are we to prevent a third breaking out in the next generation? I will try to state my answer to this question in clear and unmistakable terms, and also in a space short enough for busy people to read.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL EXPERTS AND THEIR FUNCTION

DEMOCRACIES are, from their nature, ruled by people who have to seek re-election. They are therefore disposed to tell their electors what they like to hear and to promise them what they want to get. But the problems of life cannot in fact be solved by action based upon wishful thinking. They can only be solved in so far as those concerned are prepared to face unpleasant facts and distasteful exertion. If democracy is to work, there must be people, like Walter Lippman and Dorothy Thompson in America, who study political problems on their merits, without seeking election. Such thinkers, standing somewhat apart from political machinery, are at least as essential to its working as the politicians themselves.

In the course of long years I have come to think that political experts fall into two schools. One school, and by far the larger, refuse to waste time on 'Utopian' discussions. They are chary of projects which the politicians decline to consider. I know one distinguished professor who declines to discuss the idea of an international state, because he believes that no democracy will ever consent to relinquish its national sovereignty. He will not waste time and thought on a project which, as he believes, can never be realized. That attitude will, I suspect, appeal to most of my fellow-countrymen as the practical view, the essentially British view. I must, therefore, try to explain the attitude of that very small number of political thinkers to which I belong.

The duty of a political thinker is, as I see it, closely analogous to that of a consulting physician. Suppose that a lady calls on a specialist in Harley Street, tells him that her husband is ill and describes his symptoms, but adds 'Doctor, I must ask you not to advise a surgical operation, for my husband will not hear of it'. There are some consultants who would answer the lady as follows: 'I should guess, from what you have told me, that your husband is suffering from incipient cancer. If on examining him I think that is so, it will then be my duty to tell him that a surgical operation alone will relieve his pain and prolong his life. If you forbid me in advance to give him that opinion in clear unmistakable terms, I must then decline to see him. I must ask you to find some other consultant.'

That is my own position. After years of study I have come to the same conclusion that Lothian had reached in the Burge Lecture he gave in 1935.¹ He there propounded the view that the cause of world wars is not dictators on the one hand, nor Baldwins, Chamberlains, Simons, Hoares, or Laval on the other. The essential cause is the fragmentation of human society, now integrated by mechanization, into more than sixty sovereign states. The relation between those states is anarchy, which leads to periodic wars. That was his diagnosis, and if it is correct, as I myself believe it is, we can only remove the recurring threat of world wars if we are prepared to face a political reconstruction, which corresponds to a surgical operation. If I am then told that this view is Utopian because democracies will not consent to this operation, then I can only

¹ Oxford University Press. Price 1s.

reply that, if so, democracies can never avert the threat of war, and that freedom, the principle of their life, is doomed. The promise of a better world held out by Roosevelt and Churchill in their Atlantic Charter would, in that case, be a sheer illusion. If national sovereignty is the idol democracies worship, they are dooming their children to pass through the fires of war. They are dooming themselves. That is my own opinion, based on a lifetime of study. I can no other.

This opinion means that the promise of the Atlantic Charter cannot be realized without some constitutional change, which amounts to a surgical operation. A consultant who advises an operation must be prepared to tell his patient what, in his view, is the most limited operation that is required to save his life. No trustworthy specialist would seize the opportunity of having his patient on the operating-table to attempt such a reconstruction of his organs as might, in theory, improve his health, should he survive it. He would limit the operation to what is required to save his life. That is what I have been trying to do in the two pamphlets *Decision* and *Action*. Having said that some constitutional change is needed to stop the recurrence of world wars, I have then tried to show how that change can be confined to the narrowest possible limits.

I have now modified and developed the proposals outlined in these two pamphlets in the light of much useful comment they evoked. These comments have also convinced me that I must restate in the fewest and simplest words I can find the principles upon which these pro-

posals are based. If readers should think that the following chapters are out of place in a work on political construction, I will ask them to reflect on some words addressed by Sir Stafford Cripps on the 25th July 1942 to a Conference on Mineral Resources and the Atlantic Charter arranged by the British Association.

‘We are fighting for a moral and not merely for a material issue. Though our plans must be scientifically prepared, there must be behind them the inspiration of our most deeply religious convictions.’

So before discussing plans let me state the convictions that inspire them and say how they were reached.