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and resettlement were inextricably linked, for Hitler's war aimed at the complete racial reconstitution of Europe.75

There were no historical parallels for such a project. In Europe neither Napoleon nor the Habsburgs had aimed at such an exclusive domination, but then Hitler's upbringing as a German nationalist critic of Vienna helps explain the contrast with the methods of governance pursued by the Dual Monarchy. In its violence and racism, Nazi imperialism drew more from European precedents in Asia, Africa and — especially — the Americas. 'When we eat wheat from Canada,' remarked Hitler one evening during the war, 'we don't think about the despoiled Indians.' On another occasion he described the Ukraine as 'that new Indian Empire'. But if Europeans would have resented being ruled as the British ruled India, they were shocked at being submitted to an experience closer to that inflicted upon the native populations of the Americas.76

National Socialism started out claiming to be creating a New Order in Europe, but as racial ideology prevailed over economic rationality, the extreme violence implicit in this project became clearer. 'Gingerbread and whippings' was how Goebbels summed up their policy, but there was not enough of the former and too much of the latter. The 'Great Living Space [Grosslebensraum] of the European family of nations' promised life to the Germans, an uncertain and precarious existence to most Europeans and extermination to the Jews. 'If Europe can't exist without us,' wrote Goebbels in his pro-European phase, 'neither can we survive without Europe.' This turned out to be true. The Germans threw away their chance to dominate the continent after 1940 and their defeat led to their own catastrophe. Himmler's original vision came to pass — the Germans were henceforth concentrated inside Germany — but it is doubtful whether he would have regarded the way this came about as a triumph.77

Blueprints for the Golden Age

The foundations of twentieth-century democracy have still to be laid.

— E. H. Carr, Conditions of Peace

For a fleeting moment we have an opportunity to make an epoch — to open a Golden Age for all mankind.

— C. Streit, Union Now

The reexamination of values and the heroic effort which might have saved the democracies from war if they had been attempted in time, are taking place and will take place in the midst of the ruins.

— J. Maritain, Christianisme et démocratie

The Second World War and the confrontation with the reality of a Nazi New Order in Europe acted as a catalyst inside and outside the continent for a renewed attempt to define the place of the democratic nation-state in the modern world. This chapter attempts to describe the various axes along which the wartime debate took place, a debate whose core concerned the rethinking of another New Europe to rival the authoritarian monster created by Berlin. It goes without saying, of course, that the Nazi New Order was not merely a spur to alternatives, but the very seedbed — in certain areas — of post-war realities; the continuities between Hitler's Europe and Schuman's are visible in
economic — especially industrial — Franco-German cooperation, for instance; there are also the obvious continuities of personnel in state bureaucracies and administrations. But in the realm of political values and ideals these continuities were much less important.

Yet the Second World War did not start out — at least so far as London and Paris were concerned — as a war for a new order. The power of Nazi dreams contrasted from the outset with the ideological timidity of the British. ‘These people,’ fired off an elderly H. G. Wells, ‘by a string of almost incredible blunders, have entangled what is left of their Empire in a great war to “end Hitler”, and they have absolutely no suggestions to offer their antagonists and the world at large of what is to come after Hitler. Apparently they hope to paralyse Germany in some as yet unspecified fashion and then to go back to their golf links or the fishing stream and the doze by the fire after dinner.’

The arrival of Churchill did not allay such criticism; indeed, following Dunkirk it intensified. At the Ministry of Information, Harold Nicolson contrasted the ‘revolutionary war’ waged by the Germans with the British ‘conservative’ war effort and urged that Whitehall respond to the need to ask people to fight for a ‘new order’. Conservative Party reformers felt similarly while Attlee stressed the need not to fight ‘a conservative war’ with ‘negative objectives’. Churchill himself disliked any talk about war aims or the post-war order; but the debate — in Addison’s words — ‘flowed around him’. As talk of a Nazi New Order captivated Europe in the summer of 1940, British policy-makers came under pressure to outline a New Order of their own. The debate that ensued — in Britain and abroad — gave impetus to many of the ideas and values that would form the foundations of the post-war world.

**REVIVING DEMOCRACY**

By March 1941, one prominent British politician could write that ‘“everybody” is talking about the new order, the new kind of society, the new way of life, the new conception of man’. According to historian E. H. Carr, ‘the point at issue is not the necessity for a new order but the manner in which it shall be built’. Hitler could not win the war, in his view, but he would have performed ‘the perhaps indispensable function of sweeping away the litter of the old order’. Thus the struggle was ‘an episode in a revolution of social and political order’.

At the very heart of this revolution were the preservation and reassertion of democratic values in Europe. ‘Democracy! Perhaps no word has ever been more devalued and ridiculed,’ wrote the French resistance paper *Franc-Tireur* in March 1944. ‘Only yesterday it stood for long-winded committee speeches and parliamentary impotence.’ Aware of the deep disaffection with the Third Republic in France, General de Gaulle expressly avoided raising the subject in his early broadcasts. ‘At the moment,’ he wrote in July 1944, ‘the mass of the French people confuse the word democracy with the parliamentary regime as it operated in France before the war... That regime has been condemned by events and by public opinion.’ It was this wholesale disillusionment with democracy in inter-war Europe which had led commentators like Ambassador Joe Kennedy to predict after the fall of France that ‘democracy is finished in England’. ‘The necessity for re-stating the democratic idea,’ asserted R. W. G. MacKay, author of the best-selling *Peace Aims and the New Order*, ‘is the most fundamental question for us all just now.’

Chamberlain’s uncertain presentation of the case against Hitler typified for many critics the complacency, passivity and outmoded style of the prevailing ‘bourgeois’ democratic tradition in western Europe. What was to become the wartime consensus rested upon the belief that in order to survive in Europe, democracy would have to be reinterpreted: the old liberal focus upon the value of political rights and liberties had not been enough to win the loyalty of the masses. ‘Democracy’, wrote a central European émigré in the USA ‘... must set its values against new ideals; it must show that it is able to adapt its psychology and its methods to the new times.’ From such a perspective, the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 seemed woefully cautious and even conservative in its promises. ‘Nothing in the text suggests that we are in the middle of the greatest revolutionary war of all time... [This] has the drawback of suggesting that the democracies wish to preserve and maintain the methods of the past, while the
totalitarian powers strive for something new and imaginative.' In Britain, even the Charter itself was downplayed, according to a scathing anonymous critic of British propaganda: 'Speakers of the Ministry [of Information] lecture about the Empire, America, France, wartime cookery, the horrors of Nazi rule and Hitler's new order, but they do not talk about our new order. There is, in fact, no recognition of the war of ideas or of the social revolution through which we are living.'

Suspect as the notion may seem to revisionists today, social revolution hardly seems too strong a term to describe the dramatic changes wrought by the war both in Britain and in occupied Europe. Wartime dislocation and chaos - some sixty million changes of address were registered in Britain alone during the war - collapsed the social distances upon which the rigid pre-war class systems of Europe had rested. The impact of bombing, together with systematic evacuations and the mass panics and flight of millions of people (eight to twelve million, for example, covering hundreds of miles, during the mass panic in Belgium and France alone in the summer of 1940) brought classes and communities together which had formerly remained in ignorance of one another. Rationing demonstrated that government planning could be used for egalitarian ends and was as a result surprisingly popular. Hence the war itself, with the new roles assumed by government in managing the economy and society, demonstrated the truth of the reformers' argument: democracy was indeed compatible with an interventionist state. None was happier than Keynes, for example, to seize the chance to assert the primacy of economics over finance and the bankruptcy of laissez-faire. He too had been frustrated by the retrograde nature of the British government's initial attitude towards post-war goals. In the summer of 1940 he had turned down an invitation to broadcast a rebuttal of the economic aspects of the Nazi New Order on the grounds that he found much in them to admire. To Duff Cooper he wrote:

Your letter seems to suggest that we should do well to pose as champions of the pre-war economic status quo and outbid Funk by offering good old 1920-21 or 1930-33, i.e. gold standard or international exchange laissez-faire... Is this particularly attractive or good propaganda?... obviously I am not the man to preach the beauties and merits of the pre-war gold standard.

In my opinion about three-quarters of the passages quoted from the German broadcasts would be quite excellent if the name of Great Britain were substituted for Germany or the Axis... If Funk's plan is taken at face value, it is excellent and just what we ourselves ought to be thinking of doing. If it is to be attacked, the way to do it would be to cast doubt and suspicion on its bona fides.

At the beginning of 1941 Keynes did agree to draft a declaration of war aims in which he emphasized the need to ensure social security and to attack unemployment after the war. Never published, this memorandum marked the beginning of the British government's move towards a commitment to full-employment policies. No less important was the pioneering work he carried out with two assistants in constructing the first official national income statistics. Here were the tools which made possible the post-war Keynesian revolution in fiscal management.

The wartime transformation of British social policy was far-
reaching. Apart from Keynes's work in economic policy, pioneering reforms were laid down in education, health and town planning. War saw the introduction of free school meals and milk. It brought the 1944 government White Papers on Full Employment and a National Health Service. Above all, it brought William Beveridge, whose 1942 report on 'Social Insurance and Allied Services' laid the foundations of the post-war welfare state. Beveridge himself, converted by the war from a critic of welfare capitalism to a believer in planning for radical social change, even told Beatrice Webb in early 1940 that 'I would very much like to see Communism tried under democratic conditions'.

This, then, was the man appointed reluctantly by the coalition government to investigate what it imagined would be the rather technical matter of social insurance reform. But Beveridge resolved—with enormous success—to see this work 'as a contribution to a better new world after the war'. His subsequent investigations forced Whitehall to travel further down the road to full-employment policies after the war than it had originally intended. Common to both Beveridge and the government's own White Paper was their insistence on the need for state planning for the social good and their denunciation of the iniquities of pre-war laissez-faire. 'If the united democracies', concluded Beveridge in 1942, 'today can show strength and courage and imagination even while waging total war, they will win together two victories which in truth are indivisible.'

The reception which greeted Beveridge's reports attested not merely to his talent for self-publicity but to the very real public interest in post-war reconstruction. Like Beveridge himself, British popular opinion had shifted to the Left during the war. This could be seen in the interest aroused by a special Picture Post issue in January 1941 on 'The Britain we hope to build when the war is over'; it was also reflected in the sales of the Archbishop of Canterbury's best-selling 1942 Penguin Special on Christianity and the Social Order, and the emergence of Richard Acland's Common Wealth Party. Beveridge's proposals achieved international circulation through the BBC and underground publications, so much so that in the Third Reich his plan was regarded as 'an especially obvious proof that our enemies are taking over national-socialistic ideas'.

This of course was not entirely fair. Rather, the challenge of Nazism was forcing democrats to look again at the question of social and national solidarity. The process had started already in the 1930s, notably in Sweden where the Social Democrats had pioneered an explicit alternative to the prevailing authoritarian model of coercive population policy. The Swedish welfare state which emerged in the late 1930s was a determinedly democratic programme, combining pro-natalist measures to encourage people to have more children with an affirmation that the decision whether or not to have children was an individual one which the state should respect. Sweden did maintain sterilization of the mentally ill, but it also supported birth control clinics, provided sex education in schools, liberalized abortion laws and protected the rights of working mothers at the same time that it introduced family allowances, universal free medical and dental care and school meals.

For one of the architects of these policies, Alva Myrdal, the Swedish model presented a contrast to the Nazi conception of the relationship between state and individual. It was—she argued in Nation and Family—a necessary amplification of the scope of modern democracy. Finishing her book in August 1940, Myrdal looked forward cautiously to a time when 'the present calamity' would be over and 'freedom and progress would again have a chance in Europe'. But, she warned, in what were fast becoming familiar terms,

Such an end of this war, even more than that of the earlier one, will present a challenge to democracy, again reasserted, to fulfill its social obligation. Political freedom and formal equality will not be enough; real democracy, social and economic democracy, will be exacted . . .

Europe will be impoverished. The fiscal structures of belligerent and nonbelligerent countries alike will seem bankrupt when measured by traditional norms of financial solvency. The rich will have seen their wealth taxed away. The masses will be hungry. When the structure of war-time economy breaks down, the dislocations of normal exchange and commerce will be left as enormous maladjustments. The demobilized millions will crave employment and security. Both courage and wisdom will be required to preserve orderly freedom and to avoid social chaos. These circumstances,
however, will not prevent the undertaking of social reforms; on the contrary, they will force reforms whether we want them or not.\textsuperscript{13}

All this formed part of the more general debate about social justice and democracy that the war had provoked. By 1942, Nazi visions of a more egalitarian New Order shielding Europe from the capitalist 'plutocracies' had lost any allure they once possessed. It was its opponents who now stood for a fairer future. In France, for example, Léon Blum's impassioned defence of the Popular Front during his trial at Riom in 1942 had won him many admirers. Another indication of disaffection with Vichy was de Gaulle's call that November for a 'New Democracy' against the reactionary regime of Pétain; by April 1943, the General was talking about the need to introduce state control of economic affairs and social security.\textsuperscript{14}

Evidence abounds for the radicalization of ordinary people across Europe living under Nazi rule. 'The last thing we want is a return to the social conditions of 1939 with their economic chaos, social injustice, spiritual laxity and class prejudices,' wrote a young Dutch lawyer in an underground newsletter in 1942. In Greece, inflation and food shortages had led to 'a veritable social revolution' and 'the veering towards the Left of elements of the public who, before the war, were among the most conservative'.\textsuperscript{15}

Resistance and underground movements were naturally responsive to this leftwards shift in popular attitudes, partly because many of their leading cadres were drawn from the Left and partly because resistance itself was an exercise in communal solidarity, whose values lent themselves to an egalitarian and morally elevated vision of the post-war world. After Stalingrad, people's minds turned more and more to the future; 'in the heat of the battle, amid the terror of the Gestapo and of Vichy,' proclaimed La Revue libre in late 1943, 'essays, political theses, draft constitutions, programmes are springing up almost everywhere, circulating, being read and discussed.' The most unlikely groups now tried to expound an 'ideology'.\textsuperscript{16}

It would be a mistake to insist too strongly upon the similarities of resistance ideologies across the continent: after all, resistance groups were fragmented, localized and poorly informed of one another's existence; they were drawn from very diverse political and social elements of the population; above all, they were wartime phenomena, with all the flux, uncertainty and ideological confusion which the conditions of the war produced. In Italy, where twenty years of Fascism had made state intervention in socio-economic affairs less of a novelty than in Britain or France, anti-Fascists stressed the themes of justice and liberty above those of planning; in France, faith in dirigisme was combined with a fervent patriotism only perhaps matched in Poland. Such differences of emphasis, however, cannot obscure the remarkable convergence of resistance aspirations. Whether interpreted in terms of nationalization of major industries and banks, of state planning through price and production controls, or of vague and unspecified demands for 'social justice', the goal of a fairer and 'socialized' economy was shared by the vast majority of résistants. ‘Finance is at the service of the Economy,’ declared the plan which Émile Laffon placed before the Conseil National de la Résistance in 1943. This was the dream of Keynes and all those who had seen the prospects for economic recovery in the 1930s sacrificed before the altar of the balanced budget.\textsuperscript{17}

Slower to respond to the new mood because of their greater distance from events, the exile governments of Europe also shaped their post-war aspirations to take account of the desire for a new domestic order. Norwegian foreign minister Trygve Lie stated that the war 'has made necessary in all countries a national planned economy under the direction of the State'. The Dutch government was rather reluctant to consider what this might mean, but the Belgians, by contrast, quickly set up a Committee for the Study of Postwar Problems committed to the extensive use of 'national planning'; an 'organized national economy' would allow the state to banish mass unemployment. Beneš's government was — rightly — proud of pre-war Czechoslovakia's enlightened social policies but still envisaged the nationalization of banks, insurance companies and heavy industry and the introduction of a 'planned economy'. What best reveals the extent of the wartime acceptance of radical social and economic engineering were the very similar pronouncements of conservative and traditionally inclined politicians like Poland's General Sikorski, de Gaulle and the Greek
Liberal prime minister Tsouderos. They, too, committed themselves to sweeping reforms when the war was over. For social democrats like Beneš or Spaak the cause of economic planning and social intervention was scarcely new; but it was the winning over to such ideas of conservative Europeans — and the consequent convergence of Left and Right — which provided one of the preconditions for post-war political stability.

THE INDIVIDUAL AGAINST THE STATE

If one tendency in wartime thought was to stress the evils of pre-war economic individualism and laissez-faire and the need for greater state intervention in the interests of social harmony, another was to argue that the struggle against Hitler had revealed the importance of human and civil rights. In the legal and political sphere, in other words, the trend was to reassert the primacy of the individual vis-à-vis the state. The wartime rehabilitation and redefinition of democracy moved between these two poles.

Occupation raised the question of individual choice in the most direct and inescapable form. Experiencing the terrors of Nazi rule in Poland led the science fiction writer Stanisław Lem to a theory of chance where individual autonomy and power had vanished: it was mere contingency whether venturing out for food led to a premature death, forced labour in the Reich or a loaf of bread. In Yugoslavia, diplomat turned novelist Ivo Andrić saw the onset of civil war in terms of the power of historical forces and collective traditions over the individual. In his prophetic prizewinning novel, Bridge over the River Drina, five centuries of Bosnian history dwarfed the individual protagonists.

Yet others reached quite different conclusions: faced with the choice between collaboration and resistance, everything boiled down not to fate but to a stark individual decision. In Uomini e no, the Italian novelist Elio Vittorini insisted that both resistance and Nazi brutality were the result of human choices. 'He who falls, rises also. Insulted, oppressed, a man can make arms of the very chains on his feet. This is because he wants freedom, not revenge. This is man. And the Gestapo too? Of course! . . . Today we have Hitler. And what is he? Is he not a man?'

'To render myself passive in the world', wrote Sartre in Being and Nothingness (1943), 'is still to choose the person I am.' The experience of occupation had a powerful effect on the development of existentialist thought. Sartre denounced the fatalism of his fellow-intellectuals — men like Drieu, Brasillach or even Emmanuel Mounier — who had chosen to collaborate because they argued — history and destiny had chosen Hitler's Germany as the way of the future. Writing one of his Letters to a German Friend in July 1944, Albert Camus argued similarly: 'You never believed in the meaning of this world and therefore deduced the idea that everything was equivalent and that good and evil could be defined according to one's wishes ... I continue to believe that this world has no ultimate meaning. But I know that something in it has meaning and that is man.'

To enter into resistance was often a profoundly personal act. What Alban Vistel called the 'spiritual heritage' of the resistance emerged from the sense that Nazi values were an affront to 'the individual's sense of honour'. For many insurgents this was bound up with the passionate sense of patriotism and their desire for liberty and led them naturally to stress the importance of individual freedom. 'The ideal which motivates us', declared a founder of the French MRP, 'is an ideal of liberation.' Resistance thus demonstrated that collective action could serve to defend individual liberties.

Inside Hitler's Germany, too, the experience of Nazi rule encouraged a revaluation of the role of the individual on a smaller, more restricted and private scale. After the war, the German-Jewish philologist Victor Klemperer would try to explain to his students in the ruins of Dresden that the Third Reich had devalued the meaning of wartime heroism by turning it into part of the propaganda machine of the regime. The real hero, he went on, had been the lonely individual, isolated and apart from the adulation of the state. Heroes in the Nazi pantheon were borne aloft on a spurious tide of public acclaim; even activists in the anti-Nazi resistance had had the support of their comrades; for Klemperer the model of true heroism had been his non-Jewish wife,
who had courageously stood by him through the Third Reich, despite the misery this had brought her, alone and with no support or recognition for her courage.

To religious thinkers, this reassertion of the individual conscience was perhaps the outstanding intellectual development of the war. At the same time as the Church rediscovered its social mission – whether Anglican in Britain, Catholic or Orthodox – so it reasserted the primacy of the human spirit over totalitarian demands for total loyalty to the state. Emmanuel Mounier’s flirtation with Vichy, prompted by the desire to pass from ‘bourgeois man and the bourgeois Church’ led him and other religious reformers into a spiritual cul-de-sac. Pointing to a way out was Jacques Maritain, a fellow Catholic intellectual. Like Mounier, Maritain believed that social reform was urgently needed; but unlike him he argued that it was possible within a democratic context. In *Christianisme et Démocratie* (1943), Maritain insisted that the inter-war retreat from democracy could now be seen to have been a mistake: ‘It is not a question of finding a new name for democracy, rather of discovering its true essence and of realizing it... rather, a question of passing from bourgeois democracy... to an integrally human democracy, from abortive democracy to real democracy.’

Here in embryo was the source of post-war Christian democracy, at least in an idealized form. In his 1942 work, *Les Droits de l’homme et la loi naturelle*, Maritain developed the idea that the full spiritual development of an individual demanded contact with society. The person existed as an ‘open whole’, and found fulfillment not in isolation but in the community. ‘I have stressed... the rights of the civic person,’ wrote Maritain, ‘of the human individual as a citizen.’ This conception of social responsibility as an individual duty, and of such behaviour as a condition of political freedom, can be encountered among other religious groups as well. Greek Orthodox Archbishop Damaskinos called for less selfishness and a greater sense of solidarity in the face of the famine in Greece. William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, cited Maritain approvingly and echoed his call for a generous ‘Democracy of the Person’ as opposed to an egotistical ‘Democracy of Individuals’.

The new emphasis upon the worth of the individual reached beyond the sphere of moral philosophy and religion into that of the law. Starting with Churchill’s bold declaration on 3 September 1939 that the war was being fought ‘to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual’, Allied propaganda emphasized the sanctity of rights. ‘In the course of World War Two,’ wrote the distinguished international lawyer Hersch Lauterpacht, ‘“the enthronement of the rights of man” was repeatedly declared to constitute one of the major purposes of the war. The great contest, in which the spiritual heritage of civilization found itself in mortal danger, was imposed upon the world by a power whose very essence lay in the denial of the rights of man as against the omnipotence of the State.’

It was all very well, however, to proclaim a crusade in defence of rights but which rights were at issue and for whom? Quincy Wright was reflecting liberal American thought when he hazarded a definition which focused upon civil liberties, equality before the law, and freedom of trade. But others objected that this ignored the new social demands generated by the war. Nazi occupation, according to the Pole Ludwik Rajchman, ‘was a process of levelling down entire populations, which creates a psychological atmosphere for compelling authorities, the powers that will be, to accept very far-reaching reforms’. He argued that hundreds of millions of people were ‘thinking today in terms of the future exercise of human rights, which cannot but include the right to a minimum standard of social security’. Thus at the outset we find the debate under way between broad and narrow conceptions of human rights: starting during the war, this argument would gain in intensity during the Cold War and after, as the Soviet bloc and the Third World attacked the minimalist view of the Western powers.

The new commitment to rights raised knotty problems of race and empire. In the late 1930s, lawyers had witnessed the development of a body of Nazi jurisprudence which consciously attacked liberal notions of individual autonomy in the name of the interests of the race and the state. Now they argued that anti-Semitism inside Germany had paved the way for the racist ambitions which led to the Nazi conquest of Europe, as well as to the extermination of millions of Jews discussed openly and in detail by Maritain and others by 1943.
Yet Western intellectuals – not to mention governments and public opinion – hesitated to make any connection with the ideas of racial superiority still very much current in their own societies.27

Noting that this was ‘an ideological war fought in defense of democracy’, Swedish Social Democrat Gunnar Myrdal observed that ‘in this War the principle of democracy had to be applied more explicitly to race … In fighting fascism and nazism, America had to stand before the whole world in favor of racial tolerance and cooperation and racial equality.’ Some white Americans were increasingly uncomfortable at the hypocrisies involved in fighting Hitler with a segregated army. Black Americans commented upon ‘this strange and curious picture, this spectacle of America at war to preserve the ideal of government by free men, yet clinging to the social vestiges of the slave system’. ‘The fight now is not to save democracy,’ wrote Ralph Bunche, summing up what was probably the dominant view among African-Americans, ‘for that which does not exist cannot be saved. But the fight is to maintain those conditions under which people may continue to strive for realization of the democratic ideals. This is the inexorable logic of the nation’s position as dictated by the world anti-democratic revolution and Hitler’s projected new world order.’28

British attitudes were marked by similar hypocrisies. Dudley Thompson, a Jamaican volunteer arriving in England to join the RAF, was asked: ‘Are you a pure-blooded European?’ George Padmore, the remarkable journalist imprisoned in 1933 by the Nazis for attacking Hitler’s racial policies, spearheaded the efforts of the Pan-African movement to force the British to extend their democratic crusade to the empire. Under Churchill, the archetypal romantic imperialist, this was never likely to happen. Hard though it may be now to credit it, the British government actually launched its own Empire Crusade in late 1940 to whip up support for the war. Whitehall’s feeble effort to spread a ‘dynamic faith’ among the public contrasted with the Pan-African efforts to develop the British version: ‘The British Empire is exactly the opposite. There has been nothing like it in the world before; it is a commonwealth, a family of free nations – linked together by a loyalty to one king. It stands for progress; it is the hope of the future.’29

That the Empire Crusade turned out to be a complete flop may tell us something about the attitude of Europeans to their empires. During the war this seems to have been based largely on indifference, at least in Britain and France (though not perhaps in the Netherlands). In all these countries, domestic matters were of much livelier concern than questions of imperial government. The cause of empire beat weakly in British hearts. But so too did anti-imperialism. Most Europeans seemed scarcely aware that any inconsistency was involved in defending human liberties at home while acquiescing in imperial rule overseas. One examines the resistance record in vain for indications of an interest in the predicament of colonial peoples. In Italy, for example, the retention of colonies was a question of amour propre. In France, there was much discussion of remodelling the empire but virtually none of dismantling it; the Left more or less ignored the issue, and their silence at the Brazzaville Conference on imperial reform in early 1944 was entirely characteristic. Queen Wilhelmina simply offered to turn the Dutch Empire into a commonwealth which ‘would leave no room for discrimination according to race or nationality’. To the Indian Congress Party’s demands for British withdrawal, Whitehall countered by arresting Gandhi and offering Dominion status.30

To astute and sensitive observers of the Allied war effort, the ambiguity of European attitudes to race was one of the most striking features of the war. The American anthropologist Robert Redfield remarked on how, faced with Nazi theories, democracy had been forced to a ‘self-examination’ of the inconsistency between what it professed and practised: ‘The ideal is now asserted as a program for an entire world – a free world,’ Redfield noted. ‘And yet the leaders who announce this program are citizens of the countries in which racial inequality is most strongly applied.’ Redfield predicted in the future ‘a moderate reaction favourable to intolerance’ with a ‘corresponding postponement of the resolution of the inconsistency’. This was not far from the truth: if the war, with its renewed stress on racial equality and human rights, did eventually contribute to the ending of European imperialism, it did not do so automatically: Europeans (and white Americans) remained largely unmoved by the drama of their
own racial problems. So long as colonial subjects were willing to fight on their behalf, they had little incentive to alter the structure of power in a radical fashion. But here too, in ways largely invisible to British, French, Belgian and Dutch eyes, the war itself was the catalyst of change: Ho Chi Minh continued the struggle he had begun against the Japanese — against the French; Asian, African and Caribbean servicemen — Kenyatta and Nkrumah among them — returned home from fighting in Europe prepared to continue the struggle which had been started against Hitler.11

THE NATION-STATE AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

In 1944 the international lawyer Raphael Lemkin called for the United Nations, by their victory, to impel the Germans to ‘replace their theory of master race by a theory of a master morality, international law and true peace’. But it was not only Lemkin who believed that the revival of international law was essential to any future world peace and moral order. The racial basis of Nazi jurisprudence and Germany’s abandonment of the accepted principles of international law had been regarded since the late 1930s as among the principal causes of the breakdown of order in Europe. Nazi aggression had undermined the very existence of an ‘international community’. At the same time, Nazi treatment of the Jews persuaded many people that if the individual was to be protected against the state, the traditional doctrine of state sovereignty in domestic affairs would have to be reconsidered. A revival and reinvigoration of international law thus emerged as the natural adjunct to liberal concern for world peace and, in particular, for the safeguarding of human rights.32

‘Effective international organisation is not possible,’ wrote Quincy Wright in 1943, ‘unless it protects basic human rights against encroachments by national States.’ Wright observed that, unlike Poland or Czechoslovakia, Germany had not been obliged to conclude a minorities treaty with the League of Nations, with the result that ‘there was no formal ground on which the League of Nations could protest against the beginning of the persecutions in Germany. It was a general principle that a State was free to persecute its own nationals in its own territory as it saw fit.’33

But the protection of human rights required the existence of a body superior to the state to which the individual could have recourse. The Austrian jurist Hans Kelsen insisted that ‘a right consists only in the legal possibility to invoke a court ... [International law] can confer rights on individuals only under the condition that individuals have direct access to an international court.’ His colleague Lauterpacht warned that the international protection of human rights ‘touching as it does intimately upon the relations of the State and the individual ... implies a more drastic interference with the sovereignty of the State than the renunciation of war.’ But in his aptly named Peace through Law, Kelsen argued that only people who believed in a ‘theology of the State’ refused to recognize the need for all states to be bound by international law. Sovereignty was simply a red herring. ‘We can derive from the concept of sovereignty’, he went on, ‘nothing else than what we have purposely put into its definition.’34

The limits of sovereignty, then, reflected political rather than jurisprudential or philosophical considerations. But who was going to make states acknowledge the supremacy of international law? Liberal thought in the inter-war period had reposed its confidence in the pressure of world public opinion to safeguard human rights. It was obvious that a more effective instrument of enforcement would be required in the post-war period. What complicated matters was the Allies’ commitment, as enshrined in the Atlantic Charter, to respect traditional ideas of state sovereignty. The post-war state, in other words, was being asked in some measure to acquiesce in its own weakening. Experienced lawyers like Kelsen and Lauterpacht saw no realistic alternative to persuading individual states to make their international obligations a part of domestic law. The alternative was to push for some form of World State, but this they regarded as utopian.

An equally serious dispute centred on the question of whether the human rights to be enshrined in the new post-war order should be individual or collective. The League of Nations had chosen the latter
in its system of protection for ethnic minorities in eastern Europe. Yet despite the obvious importance of safeguarding minorities, strong arguments were advanced in favour of demolishing rather than improving the collective-rights approach. President Beneš and the Czech government in exile denounced the League system on the grounds that experience had shown it had actually jeopardized their national security. ‘Every protected minority will ultimately find its Henlein,’ warned one observer. In addition, the states of eastern Europe resented the fact that they had been singled out for special obligations towards their minorities whereas the Great Powers, including Italy and Germany, had not had to suffer such an indignity.

‘In the end,’ wrote Beneš in 1942, ‘things came to such an extraordinary pass that the totalitarian and dictator states – Germany, Hungary and Italy – persecuted the minorities in their own territories and at the same time posed as the protectors of minorities in states which were really democratic.’ Rather than attempting to restore the League system, Beneš suggested that the post-war approach to minorities should be based upon ‘the defense of human democratic rights and not of national rights’.

On top of this, in this opposition, the major Allied powers – Britain, France and the United States – also showed little enthusiasm for reviving a system which had succeeded in internationalizing the most serious source of tension in Europe without finding adequate means of resolution. As the post-war settlement in Europe would show, the main interest of the major powers was in limiting their obligations to minor states, and this meant that they too were happy to bury the League’s approach to collective rights. The result was that the United Nations’ eventual commitment to individual human rights was as much an expression of passivity as of resolve by the Allies. It was a means of avoiding problems, not of solving them. This fact helps us understand why so few of the wartime hopes for a reinvigoration of international law were to be realized.

The wartime desire to limit national sovereignty by inducing states to surrender some of their powers to a higher authority was not confined to matters of law. One of its most striking manifestations was to be found in the vogue for federalism, which approached fever pitch around 1940. In a war which many attributed to the cancerous development of national rivalries, the idea of creating international harmony through federation seemed increasingly attractive. A Dutch resistance leader saw ‘this war as the great crisis of the “sovereignty of the state”’. For one English lawyer ‘the alternatives are war once in every generation, or federation’.

In both Britain and France such ideas had been much in the air in the late 1930s. The Federal Union movement was founded in 1938 in London and soon proved extraordinarily popular. Its call for a union of democracies was based on the view that ‘no international order based on co-operation between sovereign States will prove either effective or durable since all sovereign States in the last resort seek their own national self-interest’. In his Federal Europe, R. W. G. MacKay described ‘a system of government for a New European Order, the establishment of which would enable the peoples of Europe to hope with some confidence that in future they might live and work in peace free from the fear of war, want and insecurity’. The spectacular proclamation in the darkest days of June 1940 of an ‘indissoluble union’ between Britain and France was the culmination of this vein of thought.

Even though that union was never realized, the federalist idea only slowly lost its allure and remained a striking feature of official and unofficial planning for the future of Europe. A plethora of map-makers speculated upon how the continent might be carved up, and though their fantasies varied the fundamental principle was common to virtually all of them. Thus an American geographer, in a 1942 article for Collier’s called ‘Maps for a New World’ (heralded by the blurb: ‘Here’s a brave new world redesigned for lasting peace – a world from which war-breeding frictions are gone, where all nations live secure and unafraid, thanks to the new science of political geography’) offered a Europe carved up into a ‘British–Dutch Commonwealth’ alongside the ‘United States of Fennoscandia’, ‘Czechopolska’, a German–Magyar state and a ‘Balkan Union’. More serious, though scarcely more accurate, was the frontispiece of Bernard Newman’s 1944 book.
The New Europe. This showed a map which divided Europe into West European, Scandinavian, Baltic, German, Central European, Balkan and Iberian federations. Only Italy escaped intact.37

British and American officials engaged in post-war planning also tended – as they had in 1914–18 – to see federation as an attractive solution to Europe’s border problems. Austria, for example, posed British Foreign Office clerks with no less of a dilemma than the Habsburg Empire had done earlier. Few in Whitehall appear to have believed that Austria could survive as an independent state, but even fewer were happy to allow the Anschluss to stand: a surrogate empire in the form of Danubian ‘integration’ was the answer. Reviving the inter-war Balkan Union, and press-ganging Bulgaria into joining it, was an analogous pipe-dream.38

Churchill was drawn to the idea of a United States of Europe, envisaging an arrangement by which Britain could exert leadership on a continental scale. From May 1940, US planners for the post-war world came to believe that a new international organization, far from being incompatible with regional or continental unions, would in fact be more firmly based if they were created first. Indeed Newman’s 1943 map was very similar to that envisaged by the US State Department in 1940.39

At the same time, though, we should keep these schemes in perspective. Federalism diminished in popularity inside and outside government as the war went on. One reason was the strong hostility of the Soviet Union to arrangements which seemed intended to create anti-Soviet blocs in eastern Europe. Another was the objection of many small countries which – despite the examples of the wartime Czech–Polish and the Greek–Yugoslav alliances – worried about disappearing into a Europe more than ever dominated by the major powers.

Inside continental resistance movements, the idea of Europe stood for an ethical heritage rather than a specific set of politico-economic arrangements. Asserting the existence of common European values was a way of denying the durability of Hitler’s New Order. By talking of the struggle as a European civil war, the Italian Partito d’Azione set its struggle for a ‘democratic revolution’ firmly in a continental framework. High school pupils in Paris in 1943 demanded ‘a new European order’ to take the place of the Nazi order, and insisted that what they had in mind was not a Europe dominated by one hegemonic state, nor an economic and financial network like the Pan-American union, but ‘a cultural and moral community which must be transformed by the war into a political and social one’. Le Franc-Tireur announced that ‘as one regime collapses, another is being born. It arises from the fire of the struggle of liberation and from the icy cold of prisons, with the mass resistance that has sprung up from the French maquis to the Polish plains, from the factories of Milan to the German forced labour camps, from Norwegian universities to the mountains of Bosnia’.40

There were some more specific commitments to the ideal of federation. But in general the strength of the commitment was in inverse proportion to the size of the group concerned. The anti-Fascist ‘Ventotene Manifesto’ of August 1941, for example, reflecting the ideas of British federalists, had only limited circulation during the war. Resistance support for federation was rarely at the head of their programme. Hence, the efforts made by some historians to trace the origins of the Common Market back to declarations of the wartime resistance are in the last resort unconvincing, and one could with equal if not greater justice argue that its origins lay with the Nazis: by 1943 many Axis sympathizers were keener ‘Europeans’ than their opponents. In general, résistants remained motivated – as did most Europeans – by considerations of domestic social and economic policy and patriotism, their horizons bounded by the confines of the nation-state.

For at the same time as giving an impetus to federalism, the war had actually increased nationalist sentiment in Europe. Patriotism, after all, was far more important than ‘Europeanism’ as a motive for resistance. Intelligence reports coming out of Holland in late 1943 noted that ‘the population is... ardentely nationalistic. There is even reason to fear an intensification of Dutch nationalism. A blood-bath is imminent.’ British pride at the country’s stand against the Third Reich may help explain why support for federal union faded away as the war ended. France saw a resurgence of the ‘idea’ of the nation.
When Polish resistance groups agreed that 'the Polish Republic will be a member of the federation of free European nations', this was less an expression of federalist faith than a desire to ensure the security of an independent Poland after the war. In traditionally nationalistic countries like Greece, internationalist sentiment never took hold. There, as in Poland, Albania and Yugoslavia, a virtual civil war within the resistance led both Left and Right to insist on its nationalist credentials. In general, conservative and right-wing resisters to the Germans were more hostile to the idea of surrendering national sovereignty than were socialists or Christian Democrats; but even the latter tended to attach greater importance to the cause of reform at home. Federalism remained, in other words, a relatively weak element of the wartime consensus.41

THE NEW CONSENSUS: LIMITS AND CONTRADICTIONS

In 1944 the émigré Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek published a small book entitled The Road to Serfdom. 'If we take the people whose views influence developments, they are now in the democracies all socialists,' bemoaned Hayek. 'Scarcely anybody doubts that we must move towards socialism.' This prospect he found deeply alarming. Why, he asked, had the West gone to war against Nazism if it was prepared to stamp out freedom at home? The Road to Serfdom argued incisively that freedom and what Hayek preferred to call 'collectivism' were incompatible. According to Hayek, the idea of 'democratic socialism' was simply a confusion of terms; any attempt to achieve such a synthesis would tilt society inexorably towards totalitarianism. Those, like H. G. Wells, who argued that economic planning and the protection of human rights could coexist were deluding themselves; planning required dictators and reduced parliament to impotence. Denouncing 'the totalitarians in our midst', Hayek called for people to turn away from the mirage of 'the great utopia' and to return to what he termed 'the abandoned road' of economic liberalism.42

Some four decades would pass before Hayek's ferocious polemic succeeded in gaining an influential audience, and then it would become the new bible of the Thatcherite laissez-faire revivalists in their assault on the post-war social order. But in 1944 Hayek was a voice in the wilderness. His insistence that Western planning was equivalent to Soviet collectivism fell on deaf ears, as did his assault upon the notion of democratic socialism. The Austrian neo-liberal tradition found a readier audience in the United States.

Far more in keeping with contemporary European opinion was the expatriate Hungarian-Jewish sociologist Karl Mannheim, who argued (in Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction (1940)) the contrary view to Hayek's. For Mannheim, the age of laissez-faire was over. He argued that in a modern industrial society 'there is no longer any choice between planning and laissez-faire, but only between good planning and bad'. In a discussion which anticipated Isaiah Berlin's Two Concepts of Freedom, Mannheim insisted that there are different conceptions of freedom, and that the libertarian's insistence upon 'freedom from external domination' leads him to neglect the other forms of 'freedom as opportunity' which certain types of planning create in society. For Mannheim, democracy needed to come to terms with planning if it was to survive; the enemy to beware was not the planner but the bureaucrat. As he puts it: 'The problem of the democratic constitution of a planned society mainly consists in avoiding bureaucratic absolutism.'43

In retrospect what is striking is the lack of debate on these issues in most of Europe. The two countries where economic liberalism was most in evidence after 1945 were West Germany and Italy; there, the idea that state planning was associated with totalitarianism had a plausibility borne of bitter experience. Yet not even in those countries could there be a return to Hayek's 'abandoned road'. Elsewhere the principle of state intervention — either for a mixed economy as in western Europe, or for a planned and controlled economy, as in eastern Europe — was accepted with surprisingly little resistance. Behind this development lay the memory of capitalism's inter-war crisis, the prestige which the Soviet system won in the war against Nazism as well as the sense produced by wartime state
controls and rationing that state intervention could increase social
fairness.

It was also questionable whether economic planning was compatible
with the new internationalism. It was, after all, the Left and the social
reformers who tended to be in favour of both abandoning laissez-faire
at home, and creating new international institutions with enlarged
powers. E. H. Carr, for example, proposed the creation of a European
Planning Authority "whose mission will be nothing less than the
reorganization of the economic life of "Europe" as a whole'. With a
characteristic blend of realism and idealism, Carr did not blanch at
the idea of taking advantage of the 'centralized European authority'
that Hitler had established while abandoning the nationalist premises
upon which it was based.44

But how could national planning, which Carr also advocated,
coexist with planning at a continental level? What if national economic
interests did not mesh with those of Europe as a whole? In general,
there was little awareness on the Left of such a potential conflict. But
here the critique from economic liberals was penetrating. Hayek
insisted that international planning was a nonsense:

One has only to visualize the problems raised by the economic planning of
even such an area as western Europe to see that the moral bases for such an
undertaking are completely lacking. Who imagines that there exist any
common ideals of distributive justice such as will make the Norwegian
fisherman consent to forgo the prospect of economic improvement in order
to help his Portuguese fellow, or the Dutch worker to pay more for his bicycle
to help the Coventry mechanic, or the French peasant to pay more taxes to
assist the industrialization of Italy?45

Hayek insisted that Carr was wrong; such planning could not be
democratic in scope, but must always rest on 'a naked rule of force'
like the Nazi Großraumwirtschaft. Reviewing Carr's book, C. A.
Manning enquired: "If the Nazi way with small sovereign states is
indeed to become the common form, what is the war about?" Hayek
argued that the notion of European planning implied 'complete disre-
gard of the individuality and of the rights of small nations'.46

Other liberals agreed with Hayek that international federation
was, in principle, desirable. But in their view, it could only remain
democratic in so far as it eschewed the idea of supranational planning
and based itself upon the creation of free-trading areas. 'Federal
government can only work under a free market economy,' stated von
Mises, another Austrian neo-liberal. He suggested that, though it was
unlikely to happen, the Western democracies should aim at removing
barriers to trade as well as abandoning étatsisme at home. Rather than
pursuing utopian and unrealizable schemes for 'world planning',
politicians should work towards the more modest goal of international
economic agreements and regulations. The eminent Italian liberal
economist, Luigi Einaudi, was thinking along similar lines. In Per
una federazione economica europea (For an economic federation of
Europe), issued in September 1943, the future President of the Italian
Republic advocated free trade and economic federation as a realistic
means of bringing harmony to Europe. States, he argued, would
not surrender their political independence at a stroke to some new
international federation; but they might be prepared to relinquish
certain economic powers for the sake of greater security.47

In this debate, the liberals were ultimately more successful than
they were where domestic reform was concerned. This was partly
because they had logic and, for once, political realism, on their side.
But it was also because their message had powerful supporters. US
Secretary of State Cordell Hull was committed to the cause of free
trade; the post-war planners in his department followed his lead and
stressed the importance of eliminating economic nationalism in Europe
through tariff reduction and the introduction of convertibility. It did
not hinder matters that the US also stood to benefit from such policies.
Finally, the liberal argument won the day not least because the eco-
nomic planners preferred to exercise power at a national level. As a
result, the post-war economic 'miracles' would be based on a delicate
blend of étatsisme at home and liberalization of trade.
During the war, cautious commentators had warned against utopian expectations. 'How new will the better world be?' asked historian Carl Becker. 'Many people are saying that what we have to do to make a new and better world is to “abate nationalism, curb the sovereign state, abandon power politics and end imperialism,”' he noted, adding, 'Maybe so. But if so, then I think we have an impossible job on our hands ... Making a new and better world is a difficult business and will prove to be a slow one.'

In England, Mass Observation reported that pessimism at the prospects of any far-reaching change after the war was growing. Following Beveridge, people hoped for full-scale reform but did not believe it would happen. They now believed that post-war unemployment was avoidable but would occur nonetheless. 'I think it will be like after the last war, dreadful unemployment,' said an older man. Increasing cynicism and uncertainty led people to dream of emigrating or living off the land. The return to civilian life provoked a sense of unease and anxiety among soldiers and their families.

Inside occupied Europe, the résistants' expectations of a better future were tempered by the fear that just as their activities and values had emerged during the war, so too they would disappear when the war ended. This uncertainty was evident in Italy where members of the Partito d’Azione worried that the demise of Fascism might lead in turn to the end of anti-fascism. As one put it, '“Antifascist” may one day become as useless and irritating a word as “fascist”.' What then, would happen to the ideals and aspirations of the resistance? Would the world return to political and business as usual?

From the resistance perspective, these fears were given added weight as it became clear that political power was slipping from their hands. Across Europe, former resistance leaders were being marginalized as the war came to an end. In Italy, Ferruccio Parri gave way to Alcide de Gasperi in December 1945; in Poland, the Red Army backed the Lublin Committee, who had been parachuted in from Moscow. In

France, de Gaulle ordered the demobilization of the Maquis. Across Europe exiles and refugees returned to take power and policies were imposed from above. The most striking case of all was Greece, where the British-backed royalist government actually fought with the left-wing EAM/ELAS in Athens in December 1944, crushing the main wartime resistance movement there.

We will examine in the next chapter the extent to which pro-Nazi and collaborationist elements in society and the state bureaucracy were purged after the war. In general, however, these purges left intact the same structures of power through which the Germans had ruled Europe: local civil servants, police, business organizations and the press. There may have been good reasons for this, but many former partisans and members of the underground were left with the feeling that they and their cause had been betrayed.

A later generation of historians has echoed their complaint. A recent collection of studies of the experience of women during the war describes what happened as a retreat in peacetime from the gains made during the war itself. We should compare this critique with a very different school of thought which sees the war as a forcing-house for social change. On the surface they appear incompatible; but are they really?

Looking back at the way visions of the post-war world emerged during the struggle against Germany, what must surely strike us is the extent to which a genuine consensus of ideas concerning domestic reform – political, economic and social – was attained and lasted well into the post-war era. Consensus, in other words, was a reality not merely a wartime propaganda myth, as some recent scholars have argued. The Labour government’s creation of a National Health Service, together with its commitment to educational reform, nationalization and full employment rested upon the studies carried out during the war and survived the changeover of power in 1951. Elsewhere in western Europe too the mixed economy and welfare state became the norm, despite stops and starts as liberals tried to halt the growth of public spending or swam briefly against the dirigiste current. There was, to some extent, an ‘emulation effect’ as, for example, France followed the British and Belgian lead in reforming
social security. Under Soviet rule, eastern Europe moved towards economic planning and the development of a social security system; given the acceptance of such measures by exile governments during the war, it seems likely that not dissimilar developments would have taken place even without Soviet pressure. Across Europe, in other words, the repudiation of laissez-faire was complete. As a result, the idea of democracy was resuscitated, fitfully and abortively in eastern Europe, but with much greater success in the West.

However, in other areas of reform, advances were less durable. Women’s rights had been promoted by resistance movements during the war; this was part of what many regarded as their ‘dual war of liberation’ – against the Germans and against the ‘reactionaries’ at home who opposed social reform. Moreover, the war itself had profoundly altered traditional gender roles, disrupting family ties and providing women with new tasks and challenges outside as well as inside the home. Liberation did bring some enduring changes, notably the extension of the suffrage in France, Yugoslavia, Greece and other countries where women had formerly been excluded. But just as after 1918, the ending of the war revived more traditional relations between the sexes. Governments tried to get women to withdraw from the workforce and return to the home, both in order to give employment priority to returning servicemen and to encourage the production of babies. In countries like Greece and Italy, this trend was blamed by the Left on capitalism, but as it was also occurring in such uncapitalist environments as Tito’s Yugoslavia, other explanations for the reassessment of patriarchy must be sought.

Part of the answer lies in the new post-war pro-natalism, based on the old concerns about the birth rate and population decline – natural enough in the aftermath of the greatest bloodletting in Europe’s history. But the answer may also be found in ordinary people’s reactions to the war; the feeling of sheer exhaustion after years of fighting, and the desire to retreat from the world of ideological strife contributed to an idealization of domesticity. With this nostalgia for the home, many men and many women looked forward to settling down and starting a family. ‘After the war I shall get married and stay at home for ever and ever,’ said a twenty-year-old, working on the day shift. ‘I’ll get right out of it when the war is over,’ said another, older married woman. ‘Straight out of it. I’ve been here about fifteen years now. I was married six years ago. I suppose I’ll go on for a time till my hubby gets settled, and then I’ll go home and increase the population.’ ‘For better or worse,’ concluded the Mass Observation team, ‘the larger number of opinionated women want to return to, or start on, domestic life when the war is over.’

In the case of attitudes to race, one can scarcely talk of a retreat from wartime radicalism. European attitudes to race were slowly changing anyway before the war; the war itself appears hardly to have accelerated the process. Anti-Semitism did not disappear from Europe after 1945: to the contrary, it intensified across the continent immediately after the war ended as Jewish survivors returned home to find their property inhabited by others and their goods plundered. There were also few signs in 1945 that the European powers intended to do anything other than cling on to their colonies. Being subjected to Nazi violence appears to have made them more rather than less inclined to inflict imperial violence of their own: French forces killed up to 40,000 Algerians in the aftermath of the Setif uprising in May 1945, and left perhaps as many as 100,000 dead in Madagascar in 1947. Decolonization, for all the efforts of the 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, remained off the European political agenda until forced back as nationalists raised the costs of hanging on to the colonies. In so far as the European imperial powers had been humiliated by the war and were now overshadowed by the anti-imperialist superpowers, they felt more rather than less inclined to reassert their authority overseas. It was hardly a coincidence that it was the one imperial power which could have been said to have ‘won’ the war – Great Britain – which first accepted the need for decolonization.

The vision of a united Europe flickered on fitfully as the nation-state reasserted itself and adjusted to the exigencies of the Cold War. Early efforts to force the pace led to the creation of such bureaucratic drones as the Council of Europe, a far cry from the idealistic visions of 1943. At the start of the 1950s, the failure of the EDC (European Defence Community) marked the end of the federalist dream for three decades, making Nato rather than any purely European organization the
watchdog over the newly sovereign German Federal Republic. Thereafter, the Europeanists were a chastened but more realistic cohort, following Einaudi's advice and adopting a gradualist programme which, beginning with the ECSC in 1951, led in turn to the Common Market and the European Union.

As to the revival of international law, the realization of wartime dreams was also patchy and unsatisfying. The United Nations' commitment to human rights was as weak as its overall position in power politics. From the doctrinal point of view, human rights were given priority over economic and social rights in the Charter. But in terms of the protection of minorities the UN Charter represented a step backwards from the League. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 did symbolize the new status of the individual in international law, and lasting mistrust of the Nazi doctrine of state supremacy, but it contained no provisions for enforcement and remains little more than a pious wish.33

More far-reaching in its implications was the Genocide Convention of the same year - passed after a remarkable one-man crusade by Raphael Lemkin, who had been disappointed at the refusal of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg to judge acts committed by the Nazis before 1939. Lemkin and others had seen the war-crimes trials as an opportunity to secure world peace by increasing the powers under international law to take action against individuals as well as states. The Genocide Convention added an important new crime to those recognized under international law, and imposed obligations upon ratifying states to act to prevent or punish its commission. But the Convention's potential has been entirely ignored by the international community and there has been little evidence to back the UN's confident assertion that 'the feeling will grow in world society that by protecting the national, racial, religious and ethnic groups everywhere in the world we will be protecting ourselves.' For four decades, a series of genocides went unpunished outside Europe; in 1992 that indifference extended to Europe itself.34

Now that the United Nations are beginning to reconquer Europe from the Nazis, the 'democratic' phase of colonial policy comes into effect . . . What (the Europeans) used to refer to with a certain disdain as 'native politics' is now being applied to them.

Dwight Macdonald, 'Native Politics', 1944

The Second World War - the culmination of nearly a century of growing violence between the European powers inside and outside the continent - was really several wars in one. It was, first and foremost, a military conflict, fought out by armed forces, prompted by Hitler's imperial ambitions. But it was also a war between races, religions and ethnic groups - a bloody reopening of accounts by extreme nationalists wishing to revise the Versailles settlement by force. Thirdly it was, in many areas west and east, a class war in the broadest sense, whether of landless braccianti against pro-Fascist landowners in northern Italy, or poor hill farmers against the urbanites. Finally, as resistance movements burgeoned in 1943-4 and provoked bitter reprisals by collaborationist militias, the war became a civil war of extraordinary ferocity stirred up by German arms and funds whose roots stretched back to 1919, and even - in France - to 1789. This polarized atmosphere was intensified by the approach westwards of the Red Army and eastwards of the Allies.7

The death toll of approximately forty million easily outweighed not only the thousands killed in the Franco-Prussian, the Boer or the
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9 ibid., op. cit., pp. 60–63; Proudfoot, op. cit., p. 361; A. Königseder and J. Wetzel, Lebensmut im Wartesaal: Die jüdischen DP im Nachkriegsdeutschland (Frankfurt am Main, 1994)

10 Skrjabina, op. cit., p. 109; W. Benz (ed.), Die Vertriebungen der Deutschen aus dem Osten (Frankfurt am Main, 1995)


13 Schechtmann, op. cit., p. 363