CONVERSATION ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Houston: Numerous people have stated that the present world situation is entirely new because of the development of new weapons. I wonder if you would amplify this idea; in particular, would it not take a very large number of nuclear explosions suitably distributed over the earth to really destroy all human life? Is this number not so large that such a situation is very unlikely? Is it not true also that in the past on occasions and at least in certain regions large fractions of the population, that is something of the order of fifty percent or so, have been destroyed by war, or famine, or disease? Is it not possible that what one means by destruction of mankind really is the destruction only of our own particular immediate locality?

Mr. Lear: I have been thinking on somewhat the same lines as you, Dr. Houston. While it may well be true that we face the possibility of absolute annihilation for the first time in history, have there not been times when the relative magnitude of destruction seemed so great as to threaten the end of civilization? I have in mind the Punic wars and the religious wars of the 17th century. May we not make some profitable applications to the present situation from these experiences?

Mr. Toynbee: Well, Dr. Houston and Dr. Lear, you have started in by asking me one of the biggest questions now facing us.

Dr. Houston, you have the inside knowledge, and I do not have it, so I feel some trepidation in trying to give you an answer. I do agree that in the past, on occasions and in cer-

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tain regions, something up to fifty per cent of the local population has been wiped out. This was borne in on us last July when I was traveling in Northeastern Persia. That region has not yet recovered from the depopulation caused by the Mongol invasion, seven hundred years ago. All the same, I see points in our present situation that do seem to me to be new. There is the increase in the degree of our power of destruction today: Doesn’t this really amount to a difference in kind? And hasn’t the attack quite outstripped the defence? When experts and politicians use the word “defence” nowadays, don’t they really mean something quite different: retaliation? And what use is it to me to retaliate when this will not save me and my children and grandchildren from being wiped out? Then, isn’t the technological unification of the whole face of the globe something new? In the thirteenth century, while the Mongols were wiping out the population of Northeast Persia, people in England, Japan, and Ceylon could sleep at ease. And people in Mexico and Peru never heard of the Mongols’ existence. But today all mankind’s eggs are in one basket. Isn’t global war an accurate description of what a Russo-American atomic war would be? This is why I have fears, today, about the future of the human race as a whole.

Mr. Tsanoff: The preservation of the human race is indisputably of primary importance. But nations as well as persons are concerned with a certain kind of survival. We want the preservation and the promotion of a social system which makes human life really worth living. About this social ideal we and the Communist dictators have different ideas. Some of these differences are radical; others are subordinate and not insurmountable. Would you care to discuss this problem which always complicates any plan of our coming to terms?
Mr. Toynbee: I feel that this is a question that every individual has a right to decide for himself and must decide for himself. But I do not feel that any individual, nation, or government has a right to decide it for other people over those people's heads. What is more, if any of us do try to decide this "to be or not to be" question for other people, we shall find ourselves running into pretty vigorous opposition from them.

If I find myself in a situation in which I feel that life is really not worth living for me, I have the remedy of suicide. This is a way out that has been used by the Greeks, Romans, Chinese, and Japanese. Christianity has discountenanced suicide. But it has discountenanced still more the old heathen custom of slaughtering a lot of other people to keep one company on one's way to the other world. If one opts for suicide, one should "go it alone." If one can persuade the rest of one's countrymen to commit suicide simultaneously, well and good. But to try to condemn other people to die with one—and that is what one will be doing if one fights an atomic war—well, to my mind, that is not legitimate and is not practical politics either.

Dr. Houston, you said that one might be facing the possibility of the destruction of one's own particular locality. Well that is what the people in Britain and in the rest of Western Europe are facing today. Atomic weapons certainly could wipe us out, even in their present early stage of development. Americans once said: "No taxation without representation." Europeans now say: "No annihilation without representation." We mean to decide the question "to be or not to be" for ourselves. American bases for intermediate-range missiles obviously attract local annihilation; and we have those bases on our soil. That is why we are so anxious today to see America make a genuine all-out attempt, with-
out any mental reservations, to come to terms with Russia. There is a fear in my country that American policy is being influenced by wounded pride—that you are feeling like a college that has just been beaten in a football game which you think you ought to have won; so you are determined to win the next game. Probably this quite misrepresents the present American state of mind. But if there were any truth in this picture, it would put quite a dangerous strain on the NATO alliance.

Mr. Houston: I have heard it said that one new element in the present world situation is that the political alignment consists of two large groups, often referred to as the East and the West, in competition with each other. But is there not still a large uncommitted section of the world which constitutes a kind of public opinion, a public opinion which will judge the actions of these two major competitors? Do you think this public opinion group is large enough to be determining? Should our "missionary war" be directed toward them?

Mr. Toynbee: Yes, I think the public opinion of the uncommitted half of the world does probably hold the casting vote between our Western bloc and the Russian bloc. I believe the Russians have been quicker than we have to realize that the issue between them and us is probably going to be settled, not by wars, but in a competition of ideas and ideals and ways of life. In my view our "missionary war" should be directed towards the Asian and African peoples. And what is the effective way of waging a "missionary war"? We shall not convert anybody by abusing our opponents and singing our own praises. It is deeds, not words, that impress people, as we so often tell the Russians. Western deeds that would
impress the Asians and Africans would be to give self-determination to Cyprus and Algeria and to give up segregation in South Africa and anywhere else in the Western World where segregation is being practiced today. So, as I see it, the "missionary war" begins on the home front. It is not in our power to make our opponents reform themselves; it is in our power to reform ourselves. So we have to start from the parable of the mote and the beam.

Mr. Lear: History seems to afford few such examples of reformation. However, is self-reformation the secret of power in the advance of the Oriental religions and Christianity in the ancient world? And of the Mendicant Orders in the Middle Ages?

Mr. Toynbee: I think self-reformation is the secret of spiritual power in any time and place.

Mr. Tsanoff: Dr. Toynbee, you evidently do not advocate a single world government, nor a single federation of states, but advocate a better understanding and increasing cooperation between different nations. What do you regard as the contributions which a variety of national cultures can make to our civilization, and where do you see the real dangers of a too aggressive nationalism?

Mr. Toynbee: Aggressive nationalism is rampant today all over the world. It could easily blow the world up. There is an urgent need to damp it down; and as I see it, there is only one way of doing this. We have to right people's genuine wrongs and satisfy their just claims. If we do that, they will probably calm down in time. Our aim, I feel, should be to take the sting out of national differences, so that these
shall no longer generate resentments, hatreds, hostilities. We do not want to abolish national differences; for these, in themselves, are the salt of life and the source of creation. We should take pleasure in one another's distinctive national characteristics, as being so many common treasures of the whole human race. We need to develop a dual loyalty. Our paramount loyalty must be given to the human race as a whole now that, for the first time, its survival is in danger. But this is quite compatible with retaining a subordinate loyalty to one's own local nation. You are familiar with this situation in the United States. A loyal American can also be a loyal Texan.

Mr. Tsanoff: Will you discuss in this connection the true role of the United Nations Organization and the major problems which confront it?

Mr. Toynbee: In my belief, the United Nations is not an embryonic world government and not a club of like-minded nations. It cannot be an exclusive club, considering that America and Russia are both members of it. We shall, I believe, have to build a world government, but the germ of this, I fancy, is going to be world authority for the control of atomic energy. The function of the United Nations, as I see it, is to serve as a constitutional forum in which nations that are not like-minded, and that object to one another's manners and customs and ideas and ideals, can nevertheless discuss controversial business in a reasonable way and try to arrive at agreed settlements. So I hold that membership of the United Nations ought to be all-inclusive.

Mr. Tsanoff: The broad international strategy which you advocate, Dr. Toynbee, demands not only wise and patient
diplomacy but also a long-range preparation in reasonable public spirit. This long-range preparation involves a policy of public education. Will you please outline for us the main ways in which our boys and girls can be trained in the right principles of international relations?

Mr. Toynbee: The best way, I believe, is to get to know one’s neighbours—especially neighbours who are one’s opponents. When you come to know a fellow human being, it becomes difficult to hate him or fear him one hundred per cent. Of course, only a few of us in any country can get to know even a few foreigners at first hand. But I am all for the promotion of exchanges of personnel—exchanges of students, technicians, doctors, professors, lawyers, business men, government officials, ministers of religion. I would jump at the chance of any opening for such exchanges between ourselves and the Russians and Chinese. The Communist government of China has already been inviting parties of people from Western countries to visit China.

Mr. Houston: How can one guarantee the possibility of carrying on this so-called “missionary war”? What is there to prevent the missionaries from being exterminated? Can one depend on a neutral public opinion to establish rules of the game?

Mr. Tsanoff: And may I return to a previous question in another way? Let us grant that some of the issues between us and our opponents are secondary and demand concessions on both sides. Good statesmanship can be trusted to deal with them. But are there not also some fundamental principles on which we are diametrically opposed, which we can nowise surrender? Can there be any justice and peace so
Mr. Toynbee: Well, surely in human life nothing can be achieved without taking risks. There are risks in conducting missionary warfare. But would it not be still more risky to leave the missionary field entirely to the other side? And there can be no doubt that the Communists will be going on with their missionary work. I do not think we should let ourselves be put off because the Communist governments follow courses to which we strongly object. As we see it, our objections are well justified. But, in our private lives, we often have to do business with people who are objectionable to us. Why should we expect to be exempt from this unpleasant necessity in our international relations? And, however much one objects to the conduct of somebody with whom one has to do business, there is one common-sense rule: If one genuinely wants to come to terms with him, one must meet him as an equal—that is, meet him with normal courtesy and consideration.

We shall never come to terms with him if we treat him as a condemned criminal in the pillory. If we feel toward him as the Pharisee felt toward the Publican, we had better pray the Pharisee's prayer silently.

Mr. Houston: Can one really separate a "missionary war" from a war of force?

Mr. Lear: The permanent state of missionary warfare is essentially a war of ideas as opposed to armaments. Could you explain how the early Christians waged this type of war so successfully against the pagans in the early Roman Empire? Would you regard the expansion of Islam, and the Crusades
as well, as involving ideological warfare? Do these historical episodes reflect cultural collisions of the cold war type underlying the hot war?

Mr. Toynbee: Dr. Houston, I believe the distinction between a "missionary war" and a war of force can be maintained. Think of American missionary activities in China during the hundred years ending in 1948. They were successful just because the Chinese felt sure that American armed force would never be used to promote American missionary work. Or think of the Christian Church's missionary work in the Roman Empire, to which you have just referred, Dr. Lear. From the beginning of Christ's ministry down to the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, Christianity was never propagated by force. It made headway because it regarded all human souls as being of inestimable value, even if they are obscure and apparently powerless, in the worldly sense, as the African and Asian peoples may seem to us to be today. One secret of the Christians' success is brought out in a revealing letter written by the anti-Christian Emperor Julian. The wretched Galileans, he says, have won peoples' hearts by looking after the poor, the sick, and the aged—our pagan aged and sick and poor, as well as the Christians' own. You see, as we have told the Russians, what counts is deeds.

But, of course, in later ages, Christians have tried to propagate Christianity by force. The Christian Emperor Theodosius had begun to use force against the pagans in the Roman Empire before the end of the fourth century. The early Muslims followed this bad Christian example, and we Western Christians resorted to the Crusades. Your Mexican neighbours, and the Peruvians down there beyond the Equator, were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Spaniards.

Now, Crusades are not missionary wars; they are military
wars. One of our objections to the methods of Communism is that it has tried to convert people by force. If it gave that objectionable method up, and competed with us by trying to convince both us and the uncommitted peoples that Communism is a better way of life than ours is, then we should have nothing to complain of. Our remedy would be to compete on the same genuinely missionary lines, always remembering to begin our missionary work at home, in our own hearts.

Now I am afraid that, for some time to come, we and the Communist powers are likely to continue to be so suspicious of one another's good faith that, even if we do turn over to missionary warfare, we shall still keep our military armaments in reserve. I hope, though, that as time goes on we shall both come to feel that keeping up our armaments is a handicap to us in our missionary warfare and that we then shall agree to drop our armaments. The side which has the courage to take the risk of dropping them first may win a considerable advantage, I fancy. Missionary war, I believe, will go on as long as the world lasts.

*Mr. Lear:* Is this a prime example of the historical doctrine of recurrence or repetition? Will history repeat itself in this matter although never in precisely the same way? And is this a primary condition of progress?

*Mr. Tsanoff:* We may note men's different reactions to the present world-crisis. Some men cite former historical crises which have been overcome and say confidently that we shall again muddle through somehow: there is no need to take things too tragically. Others take a dismal view, that men and nations never learn anything from history and only go from bad to worse. What is the use of any moral endeavor,
when we are all going to be blown to smithereens one of these days? How do you as a historian judge the present crisis? Is the world-tragedy of our day unique, and is it really hopeless?

Mr. Toynbee: Well, I am not a determinist, and I do not believe that any of you gentlemen are either. I believe we can learn from history not to repeat our forefathers' mistakes. The British, for instance, haven't repeated the mistake of King George III's advisers in British dealings, since then, with Canada and with India. I believe that past experience can also help us to avoid mistakes in dealing with problems that are at least partly new—and I stick to my belief that there are some important new points about the situation in which the human race finds itself today. We can look the future in the face with good hope if we hold fast to the fundamental point of our democratic faith, which is also a fundamental point of Christian faith. I mean, the belief that the individual can make some difference to the course of human affairs by his own action, however weak and however insignificant he may feel himself to be. At any rate he can do something about reforming himself; and, for each of us, this is the necessary first step towards trying to do his bit for saving the world.

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