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PROBLEMS FACING THE WEST *

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Characterizing our Western civilization as one founded on respect for the individual, Dr. Spaak alerts the reader to the threat of the Communist doctrine which considers the individual a servant of the State, an object rather than a subject. Despite the darkening horizons, however, the author finds that war is not inevitable, for, paradoxically, today's horrifying weapons of destruction are conducive to peace. The coming struggle, he says, will be fought in social and economic form on the battlefields of the under-developed countries, and it is, therefore, essential that the countries of the West judiciously appraise their common interests and strive for a unified front.

In preface, Dr. Spaak remarked: "I am conscious of the fact that I am only a politician, that is to say, a man concerned with current affairs and the problem of the moment. I can devote little time to the exhaustive analysis of events and to reflection upon them. I am one of the victims of the age in which we do too much too quickly, and I doubt whether this evening, I shall prove worthy of the man who devoted his whole life to the practice of Law and philosophy, who disposed justice with serenity and who, at the same time, was a great teacher. . . . All I can do is to appeal for your indulgence, master my complexes and tell you about what is on my mind: the problems which face the West."

In discussing the problems which face the West, I will begin with the question: "Do we, on the whole, correctly assess the importance of the present period and the gravity of the problems facing us?" Throughout the history of mankind one finds a few periods of calm, many

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more that are torn by conflict, but only occasionally those we may call really decisive. It is my belief that we are now traversing one of the latter, one of those marked by the clash of two civilizations. The victory of one side or the other will set the pattern of Man's evolution for centuries to come. The Twentieth Century is a decisive period because the Christian civilization and the Communist civilization directly confront each other.

As I have just said, such periods are rare. But it is not the first time nevertheless that we find ourselves before one. When Attila's hordes were halted in the year 453 close to Rheims, when King Charles the Hammer defeated the Arabs beneath the walls of Poitiers, when the Turks were driven from the fortifications of Vienna, the passions involved were of a special character. They transcended any national framework and the usual wartime objectives of conquering or defending territory. These wars were fought in defense of a way of life, of certain beliefs, of a faith, in short of a civilization, then still in its infancy but already giving promise of the development to come.

In a different world, the world of today, in which greater savagery is combined with even greater craftiness, the essence of the problem remains the same. I am surprised that so few people seem to realize this. True, there are plenty of people in the world who are anti-Communist, but mostly for the wrong or irrelevant reasons.

First of all there are those who are frightened by the social reforms which Communism has achieved, which cannot be gainsaid and must not be underestimated. They are wrong. We should never be afraid of social reform or stand aloof from whatever can bring to men greater equality in their way of living. I am convinced that ours must be the century of social justice, of the abolition of all privilege. We must accept neither the privileges of birth nor of wealth. Apart from the natural inequalities beyond our control, all must be given equal opportunities so that the elite is really formed of the most intelligent and the most industrious. This ideal can, of course, admit of no geographical or racial limitations.

It is also a mistake to be anti-Communist because of antipathy towards their economic system. I would not dream of denying the value as well as the interest of comparing the respective merits of a free enterprise and a managed economy, but I refuse to believe that the differences between them are sufficient to provoke lasting discord and still less the resort to war.

These social and economic quarrels are only the outward, superficial symptoms of an infinitely graver and more deep-seated conflict. The real problem of which we should be conscious is that Communism

seeks to create a new civilization; in other words that it tries to impose a way of life in direct conflict with that to which we subscribe and which is fundamental to our concept of personal happiness and our concept of society. Since this is a point to which I attach the utmost importance, I will make a special effort to explain clearly what I mean. Please excuse me if I dwell on this point and am unequal, as I fear, to the task I have set for myself.

It is very difficult to convey in a few sentences what constitutes the essence of our civilization. Its history is well known. Greece was its cradle, and it derived its original impetus from the audacity and acumen with which the Ancient Greeks approached all questions. Since then, it has received the indelible imprint of Christ's teaching, it has been fortified by the efforts of the Humanists to develop greater understanding and more tolerance between men, and it has reached its apogee with the great political revolutions that transformed the world on both sides of the Atlantic. Its definitive character has been shaped by the urge for justice which marked the end of the Nineteenth Century, as it does our own times.

How can these twenty-five centuries of thought and action be condensed into a sufficiently clear and simple formula? Such a formula, however, exists and, although constant repetition has made it commonplace, it has lost for me none of its power. It still moves me as it did the first time I heard it. That formula is: "Respect for the individual."

This was the beginning of it all, the source to which everything can be traced. Everything we treasure is to be found in this simple formula. It is the key to our personal behavior. It sets the pattern of our relationship to others and even guides our political life, since there can be no respect for the individual without democracy, no respect for human values without social justice. Tyranny and poverty are both incompatible with this belief.

So important and difficult is the problem with which I am now dealing that I must call for some "expert" assistance. Numerous are those who, with infinitely higher qualifications than my own, have studied the problem I am endeavoring to lay before you. The most ancient authors are not the least remarkable. Thucydides, in the famous speech he ascribes to Pericles, gives a complete exposition of the inner philosophy of political democracy and explains its significance for mankind. The most admirable thing about it is that his words, so new when they were used for the first time, still perfectly express our feelings today. They are both prophetic and timeless. Listen to what he says:

“Our system of government is not a copy of the institutions of our neighbours, but is rather a model for them. It is called a democracy because power is not in the hands of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. . . . We do not think that there is an incompatibility between thought and action; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated . . . No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the State is kept in political obscurity because of poverty or humble birth; but all are called upon freely to express their opinions on public affairs.”

Closer to us in time, there appeared last year in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* an article on the value and future of Western civilization in which Mr. Louis Rougier summed up the subject in the following lines, which I find admirable:

“We have reached the end of our survey. We are now in a position to define Western civilization: it is the end product of a line of thought that regards nothing as fated as long as it is avoidable, that does not countenance any wrong which can be righted nor any ignorance in respect of meaningful problems; it seeks incessantly to increase the mastery of Man over his environment, both natural and social, so that he may ameliorate his condition, but only with the aid of liberal procedures which recognise that the dignity of the individual must at all times be respected.”

The two quotations seem to me to give a very fair summary of the imperatives of our civilization. I would only add that they are for me the confirmation of the intrinsic value of the basic ideas which constitute our spiritual heritage.

We must, however, beware of undue pride. Much remains to be done, there are many steps to take and numerous prejudices to overcome before the principles of which we would like to be worthy can be applied in full. I know it well. But what cheers me and sustains my hope is the realization that there is nothing in these principles themselves that stands in the way of making progress toward a better world. Our effort, if unrelenting, will therefore bring us slowly but surely nearer to our ideal.

If ours were the only experience to go by, on the planet, we should be assured of success. It happens, however, to be in direct conflict with the practice of the Communists, not only because the principles

they follow are the very opposite of those I have just described, but also and perhaps mainly because the Communists maintain that they must be applied universally. Their doctrine, as we have good reason to know from seeing it in action over the last forty years, is characterized by complete contempt for the individual, who is considered to be the servant of the State or Party, terms which are virtually synonymous. Moreover, in Communist doctrine the individual is an object rather than a subject, and is deprived of all the rights which to us are fundamental. We have further evidence of this every day. I am not referring to the excesses and cruelties of the revolution. Although these may not be excusable, they are at least understandable and probably inevitable. I am not even referring to the tyrannical political regime. What I am referring to are everyday events in that very country whose leaders claim that it is in full development and that it has found a stable equilibrium.

What I have particularly in mind is the self-criticism of which Bulganin furnished a recent example, as did the lamentable experience of Pasternak. Is there not something unbelievable and frightful about this succession of public confessions, a humiliating mixture of admissions and abuse? In the West countless men have for centuries stood out against every kind of political tyranny and intellectual persecution. I can conceive of no more moving sight than that of the individual who, regardless of danger and oppression, acts, speaks his mind and defies the incomprehension and gross excesses of authority.

In the West, there is a long and impressive tradition stretching from the early Christian martyrs to the "resistance" of the last war. To proclaim one's faith and to lose one's life rather than disavow one's convictions is something that the Communist moral code as well as the Communist State censures and renders impossible unless, of course, the faith in question is that of the Communists. The great trials which, with us, have done so much to set the spirit free are, with them, an occasion for the staging of unspeakable tragedies which leave the spectator profoundly humiliated. The foremost among the accused—after the most shocking ill-treatment, it is true—are reduced to the wretched state of confessing to crimes which are often fictitious. How long it is since the cry of the human conscience was heard! It is smothered, not only by the police machinery of an all-powerful State, but by the very rules of a moral code in which it has no place.

As for Pasternak, the reluctant Nobel Prizewinner, his misadventure is one of the most pathetic human stories of our times. He is said to be talented and even to possess genius. It is not for me to make a pronouncement on that point. But his acceptance of the honor

conferred on him followed by his refusal, by the vicious attacks of his colleagues, by his recanting and feeble explanations—all this condemnation of free thought and self-expression by impassioned fanaticism, without a single protest from any part of the Communist world—leave a bitter after-taste and, from the human standpoint, a feeling of shame.

That is why we must be on our guard and ready to defend ourselves: our opponents at home must never be reduced to playing the role of a Bulganin; our scientists and artists must continue to enjoy that freedom of thought which nothing can replace. It is that and that alone which justifies, but which so fully justifies anti-Communism.

Though the struggle is a hard one, it is by no means without hope. The Hungarian uprising demonstrated to an astonished world that there are values which time and oppression cannot completely destroy; that there remains in the minds of many men, in spite of years of slavery, the living memory of the freedom they have known; and that even among the young whose only training has been Communist, there is an instinctive desire for independence, a yearning for liberty and an imperious demand for those moral and political standards which enable a person to keep his self-respect.

Communism officially denies all this. It tells us over and over again that its victory is inevitable, unescapable. Its philosophy is not only completely material but determinist. According to its teaching, nothing can prevent the defeat of what it describes successively as “the Capitalist world,” “the bourgeois world,” “the imperialist world” and “the colonialist world.” In its calculations, it takes no account of the progress, of the changes we are constantly making. It believes us to be unchanging and unchangeable, devoid of imagination or daring, fascinated by this alleged historical fatality as a rabbit is by a snake.

I am struck, however, by the fact that even in their most abusive tirades, Communists are unable to conceal their envy and admiration and have never themselves made a clean break with the past whose representatives we are. “Popular democracy” is the name they give to their regime. If the Communists would only re-read Thucydides, they would realize that the regime they advocate has nothing in common with true democracy. They know, however, that the word “democracy” always strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of men. That is why, with barefaced political hypocrisy, they have deliberately retained the word. Communism dares to wring the neck of freedom in deed, but is afraid to do so in word.

This nostalgia in the realm of ideas becomes envy when it is a question of material things. What is the great promise reiterated in all the speeches of the Communist leaders? It is this: “In a few years,

you will be living as well as they do in the United States." The grand design of Communism, the pattern it takes as its model, is the arch-enemy himself. Communism does not offer its hearers a different form of existence. In its wildest promises, it offers only what already exists in the United States. It is here that what separates us becomes clearly perceptible.

I am, of course, well aware of the importance of economic factors, just as I fully realize the importance of people attaining high living standards, but I also know that these things do not make up the whole problem confronting mankind; they are not the be-all and the end-all of human existence, of the human adventure. To mine coal, produce steel, discover oil, master the atom, launch sputniks into outer space, all this is important and can even be awe-inspiring, but we must emphasize that it is not everything. We must not allow ourselves to be taken in by this materialistic challenge, we must not fall into the trap laid for us. There are other things beyond statistics, graphs. There are other things in the world beyond economic rivalry. There are the demands made upon us by the spirit. I am thinking not only of schooling and education, but of the yearning for something that raises us above ourselves, the right we claim to introspective meditation, to the inner life, to the belief that we are more than mere producers of worldly wealth, the certitude that there is something within us that transcends the purely material in mankind.

Have I made myself clear? Have I rightly assessed the essential features of the Communist challenge, explained its significance and why we must meet it? It remains to be seen—and this is no less important—*how* we must meet it.

Of course, there is and can be no question of recourse to force. As the West draws nearer to its philosophical and moral ideal, it becomes increasingly estranged from, and horrified by, the very idea of war. Legitimate defense is now the only setting in which we can conceive of war and accept it. But legitimate defense is still a clear duty. If only the blind fanaticism of the Communists did not prevent them from perceiving this truth, the world would be a very different place.

Are we really threatened with a war which will certainly not be started by us? Although this is a period of international tension in which great difficulties darken the horizon, I think not. Paradoxical as it may seem, the means of destruction devised by man are today conducive to peace. They have completely changed the axioms of war.

Sceptics say: "Men will always fight since they always have." To my mind, this is a quite insufficient explanation. It is true that throughout their history men have so far always fought each other, but it is not enough to note the fact; its explanation must also be sought. They have always fought each other because one side or the other, and sometimes both, felt assured of victory. Victory was the means of settling certain problems, of increasing one's patrimony, and, at some sacrifice, of adding to the wealth of the community. This was true for countless ages, but it is no longer true today.

One of the fundamental truths of our times is that the concept of military victory, in the sense and with the effects I have just referred to, can no longer be entertained. "Military victory" is a term which should now be struck out of our vocabulary. Does anyone still believe that the problems a war would leave in its wake would be easier to solve than those which face us at present? Does anyone believe that any group could add to its wealth during or after a war? Ernest Renan, after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, already had this to say: "The only vanquished army is the great army of the dead." How true, and how much more so today, whatever the uniform!

Statesmen aware of their responsibilities cannot doubt this. They know full well that a modern war would involve a great deal more than the conquest of certain territories and the collapse of certain regimes. They know that it would strike a terrible blow at mankind itself. Horror of the possibility of such a calamity protects us from it in some degree. Our optimism, however, should be tempered by the realization that we may be at the mercy of a madman or of an accident. Neither of these possibilities can be completely ruled out. Even quite recent history has given us examples of lunatics in power; this and the overwhelming pride of which men are capable, their confidence in themselves, their conviction that they will be able to control the course of events is such that they may not always be able to resist the temptation to play with fire. Take the case of Mr. Khrushchev at Berlin.

Subject to these reservations, I think we can nevertheless remain confident, provided that our confidence springs from our courage and firmness of purpose. We must never forget that we are confronted with a dictator resolved to concede nothing to us "for love" and on whom no impression can be made except by steady determination.

We must never forget the events in which we have played a part as spectators and as actors. The lesson of Hitler should not be lost on us. All dictators have a great deal in common and are forced to follow the rules which their regimes themselves impose on them. The great mistake made by the free countries of Europe before the Second World

War was not Munich. In 1938 it was already too late. The mistake of the free countries was to allow the left bank of the Rhine to be re-occupied by Hitler's troops against existing agreements. The mistake was to allow Hitler to denounce unilaterally a treaty signed by Germany and to have stood passively by while he carried through this trial move. To compensate for our lack of courage in 1936, much was required of us a few years later. The Berlin crisis faces us with a similar problem and I am grateful to the United States Government for having so fully understood this.

Please excuse this rather long digression—I could not resist the temptation—and let us revert to the question of meeting Communism without recourse to war. It is my own belief that in the coming years the struggle will assume an economic and social rather than a military form, and I believe that the countries described as “under-developed” will constitute the real battlefield.

Even this prospect causes me some anxiety for I often wonder whether we are equipped to meet the challenge. I do not propose today to discuss the respective merits of a free enterprise and a managed economy, but I cannot overlook the fact that with regard to action in the under-developed countries, the USSR has one or two trump cards which it plays with consummate skill, and that one of these trump cards is precisely the harnessing of its whole economic power to political ends.

I certainly do not deny that the free world is making great efforts to solve certain problems raised by the under-developed countries, and in this respect I wish to pay special tribute to the effort of the United States. Neither can I ever forget all that Europe owes to the Marshall Plan. Yet I am forced to the conclusion that although the effort of the Soviet Union in this field is not by any means as great, it manages to derive far more profit from its activities. The importance of the question cannot therefore be expressed in terms of quantity, for it is more a psychological problem, it is more a question of ways and means. The great success obtained by the Communists is due to their having abandoned the idea of economic aid, of grants, with their inevitable implications of charitable paternalism, and to their having succeeded in putting their relations with the under-developed countries on a basis of commercial equality. This arrangement, far from injuring the feelings of the beneficiaries, excites instead their pride.

In the free world, our free enterprise economies and our disorganized, if not competitive, efforts have prevented us from obtaining similar results. The spirit of competition, which undoubtedly stimu-

lates effort, must, on occasion, give way to the spirit of organization and co-ordinated effort. Notwithstanding the colossal resources of the Communist world, the free world dissipates its efforts, and this is true in every field. Even in an organization such as the Atlantic Alliance, the common production of armaments encounters almost insuperable obstacles. Everywhere, the industries of the different countries produce the same types of aircraft, all, as near as can be, equal in performance. National pride is gratified to the full, but I wonder whether anyone has ever calculated how much this costs in terms of wasted money and intellectual effort which, properly directed, might have been far more profitably employed.

When the Russians launched their first sputnik, it was thought that the West would be jolted into greater understanding of the true state of affairs. Was it not to be expected that our feelings of astonishment, disappointment, envy and fear would point their own moral? President Eisenhower and Mr. Macmillan, following a meeting in Washington, issued a sensational communiqué, or rather a communiqué which should have been sensational. The two leaders of the Western world announced that the future of their countries and of all the countries of the free world was no longer to be found in independence, but in their interdependence. This was a vital and revolutionary pronouncement, promising great changes if it were taken seriously.

For a few weeks, there was an apparent awakening of interest, but it soon flagged, and although it would be unjust to say nothing has been done along the bold lines suggested, the measure of success achieved compares unfavorably with the issues at stake. And yet what savings we could make, what resources we could spare if the Europeans would realize that neither their happiness nor their national pride really demands that they should re-invent what the Americans have already discovered, and if only the Americans would understand that their safety would not be jeopardized if they shared with their friends those secrets which are already familiar to their enemies!

I only hope that this warning, this cry of alarm which I utter, will be heard: let us not be blind, too proud of our traditions or too confident in our abilities. In a world in which the Communists are prepared to sacrifice everything to their ideal of power and in which all the resources of their vast country, closely directed by a strong central authority, are devoted to the achievement of clearly defined political aims, our individualism, so necessary and so fruitful in other fields, places us in a position of manifest inferiority. We shall not win the economic battle waged under the name of peaceful co-existence either in our own countries or, above all, in the under-developed countries if,

by failing to recognize our common interests, we are unable to discipline ourselves and to organize our efforts.

This brings me to the heart of my subject. The Western world must unite far more closely than it has so far succeeded in doing. It must arrive at a more judicious estimate of its true interests. It is in such unity that its salvation lies, and it must strain every nerve to achieve it and to do so rapidly.

Great progress has certainly been made, and we might feel satisfied and re-assured by this if only the world were not developing at an ever faster rate. In Europe, besides the Coal and Steel Community and Euratom, we have now established a Common Market which will make its six member countries into the most powerful commercial unit in the world. All this is excellent and bodes well for the future. Within the Atlantic Alliance, we have built up a joint military machine capable of deterring aggression and we are gradually perfecting, by new methods of continuous consultation, a collective diplomacy and a co-ordinated international policy. All this, and it is a great deal, has been achieved within what, historically speaking, is only a short period of time—barely ten years. These are indisputable accomplishments and, when one is feeling optimistic, one can be pleased with them. But there are also days of doubt and anxiety, when one thinks of the ground lost, of the magnitude of the problems facing us, of the courage we shall need to surmount them. Days when our zeal and impatience is frustrated. Days on which we are overwhelmed by the fear of being too late with the solution which we know to be the right one.

A further difficulty with which we have to contend is that of keeping in touch with reality, of not squandering our efforts on goals which, however excellent in themselves, are over-ambitious and out of harmony with conservative psychology of our governments and peoples. After ten years of struggle, effort and experiment, I am conscious of the fact that what delays and obstructs our progress is the refusal of most of our governments and peoples to accept some form of supra-national authority.

Looking at the evolution of the world from the philosophical point of view, Father Teilhard de Chardin remarks: "The era of nations is past. It is now up to us, if we wish to survive, to shake off our old prejudices and set about building the Earth." Ideally, he is probably right. But speaking from the economic and philosophical standpoint, our goal, the goal to which our present efforts are directed, is naturally a more modest one. Nevertheless, here too we can say that the era of nations is past. It is now up to us, if we wish to survive, to set about building the West.

Since the end of the Second World War, we have come to realize the importance of international organization and this in itself is a tacit admission that national efforts in isolation are insufficient. We have multiplied the number of organizations. Some are world-wide like the United Nations. Others are of a regional nature, based on the Atlantic, like NATO, or on Europe, like the Coal and Steel Community or the Common Market. But in every case, we have flinched from pursuing our principles to their logical conclusion. We have been reluctant to set up a true authority, thus demanding of these organizations a wisdom and a sense of the general interest of which they are incapable and of which we ourselves are incapable in our national life.

I am ever more firmly convinced that all these international organizations, whether world-wide or regional, increasingly essential as they are for the solution of our present problems, will only become fully effective when it is understood that over and above the will of nations there exists an international law deriving its sanction from the majority, and to which all countries, small and large, must submit. Until this truth has gained general acceptance, our efforts to organize an international society will inevitably remain incomplete and ineffective.

The principles of unanimity and the veto are bad principles. They cripple and threaten to destroy our best intentions and our most promising initiatives. How can a system requiring unanimity or recognizing the right of veto, inconceivable in our national life, prove successful in international relations? Nobody so far has succeeded in finding an answer to that simple question. Indeed there is no answer. There is only the hard fact that nations show extreme reluctance to take a further step along the road which has led us, at any rate in Europe, from the family to the tribe, from the tribe to the city, from the city to the county or duchy, and thence to the nation. In support of the refusal to take this step forward, now so imperative, all the old arguments are revived, the same which have always proved false in the past and which held up that necessity to move forward which no one would dare to question today. Political short-sightedness and egotism are not dead, but now they threaten to destroy the very things we are striving to save.

Supra-national authority is essential today. To hasten its coming we must deliberately abandon, I believe, two ideas which, though they may be philosophically sound, are unrealistic. It is not true that all nations are equal, and that being equal, they must all have the same powers in international organizations. As long as this concept prevails, we shall make no progress towards our objectives. The United States has a more important part to play in the world and a greater respon-

sibility than, say, Belgium. To deny this fact is quite simply to compel those of us who are working in the field of international organization to build on sand and thus to condemn our endeavors.

A solution does exist, however. It consists in the weighted vote, which would give to each state, in every international body, powers proportionate to its true importance. If we can bring ourselves to break with the principles of equality and unanimity, and can start to build, instead, on the principle, both fair and realistic, I have just described, a major obstacle would be cleared away and we could begin to move forward, progressively and prudently, towards a supra-national authority, to my mind indispensable.

I know only too well that I have by no means exhausted the subject, possibly an over-ambitious one, which I chose to speak to you about. I have merely touched on a few of the problems now facing the West. But even this very brief and tentative outline will perhaps have given you some idea of the number, the magnitude, the complexity and the gravity of the problems we must resolve if we are to survive.

There is no cause for discouragement. The diagnosis is clear. The remedies are known. It would indeed be sad if we had neither the intelligence nor the courage to apply them. With a little audacity, we cannot only preserve our way of life but so conduct ourselves that the noblest principles underlying our civilization will triumph in the end.

Beyond our present endeavors, I can discern a still more important task, one more all-embracing and universal: that of forging the unity of the world in a spirit of tolerance and brotherhood. It is my belief that we alone are capable of carrying out this task. It is, at any rate, we who are the best equipped for it and therein lies, I would guess, the real and enduring vocation of the West.