

SUNDAY POSTSCRIPT

by

SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE

Sunday, 22nd March, 1942. 9.15-9.30 p.m. Home Service & Forces Programme

One of the common sayings of today is that this war is or should be a total war. What do we mean by total war? Some people when they use that phrase are thinking of the nation as a whole - they mean that the war has to be waged not only by fighting men but by workers keeping up production, in fields and factories and mines, by housewives in their homes, keeping up the health and strength of their families. But to me total war means also something else; it means total for each individual - that each individual should be putting the whole - not just part of himself - into war effort.

Of course, that does not mean that every human being in the country should be doing now something so directly concerned with war that he would not be doing it in peace. The human beings of this country include, thank Heaven, the children, and there must be people looking after those children; there must be food and clothes and houses for everybody; there are countless necessary tasks common to war and to peace.

Of course, also, some of those who are now failing to put the whole of themselves into the war effort, are failing not through any fault of their own. They are longing to do war work but they do not get the chance at all or they get only half used when they would like to be fully used. The nation isn't yet fully organised for war - most of us have ideas about things which it seems to us that the Government might do better.

But tonight I'm not concerned with things which only the Government can put right. I'm speaking to ourselves as individual citizens, about ways in which we may fail to be total in war through causes within our control, about what we might do to put that right and why we ought to be total in war. Let me give some examples. In the factories engaged in making munitions the one thing that matters now is immediate output, both quality and quantity. If the manager in charge of a factory thinks of anything but that, if he thinks, for instance, of dividends for his shareholders now or later, or of what his factory may be used for after the war and of how it can be made most useful or profitable in peace, then he is not total in the war - he's half out of the war, half neutral. If a workman in a factory or on a farm or in a mine does less or worse work than his best, if he is less regular in attendance than he could be, either because he thinks he is not getting paid enough or because he is being paid so well that he does not want to earn more, or because he thinks that he ought not to pay Income Tax on earnings - that is not total war. In peace time it is right to make conditions about one's work. In peace it is reasonable to stop working when one thinks one has earned enough - for managers and for workmen alike that is an essential part of freedom - to be able to choose leisure, seeing more of one's family, time for study or just going to the races - in place of making more money. But many things right in peace are utterly wrong in war. Total war for the worker as for the soldier, sailor or airman or the fire fighter means going all out when called on, irrespective of reward. Moreover, being total in war is not simply a question of how one behaves at work; one can wage total war or fail to wage it in one's home, by being a saver or a waster, a cheerer or a grouser. If, for instance, a housewife whose man is away from her, in one of the Services or on war production, keeps on worrying him about her domestic troubles, nags at him to come home, without leave, or interrupting his work - she is not total in war; she's half out of the war - half neutral.

I have given these examples not to suggest that they are common: it doesn't matter how common or rare they are. They oughtn't to happen at all. I believe that nearly all of us want to be total in this war: most who fail, do so for reasons beyond their control; sometimes when the reason is within our control, it is not any petty or selfish reason. Many people in peace devote themselves to a cause - they serve a movement like trade unionism or co-operation, they work for a political party, they seek to remedy a social injustice. Some go on doing so in war, even though this may mean reducing the war effort, by disagreements or by occupying the time and thought of Ministers and managers on matters irrelevant to the war. That is failing to be total in war for an unselfish motive, but it is failure none the less.

There is another thing which sometimes holds an individual back from total war; that's our British sense of justice. We're ready to do or bear anything if we get fair play - but we're apt to ask for fair play first. That means sometimes that if we are asked to do something or to bear some hardship we hesitate, because we are not sure that the same demand is being made of all our fellows. That is right and reasonable in peace. But it is very dangerous in war. The Government ought to see that the hardships and burdens of war are distributed as fairly as possible. But it isn't at all easy to ensure fair play for everybody at any time, still less in a war. And quite plainly in war we can't afford the time to insist on fair play first in every case. We've got to take what is given to us, do to the utmost everything that comes to us to do, and trust to getting justice later. That alone is total war. That's how it was on Trafalgar Day. Nelson's signal was "England expects that every man this day will do his duty". Nelson's signal was not "England expects that every man this day will see that everyone else is doing his duty before he does his own".

Total war means living in and for the present - for war and not for peace, without allowing thought of what may happen to one in peace diminish one's effort in war. Does that sound grim and horrible? Perhaps it does. War is a grim and horrible business, and we do not make it any less so by shirking the fact. But that is only part of the answer to my question. There are three other things I want to say about it. First, saying that the individual should be total in war without thought of his personal future, does not mean that the Government of the country should take no thought for the future.

The Government even while waging war should be framing plans for peace, plans to abolish the evils from which we have suffered in peace, after we have ended this evil of war. Of course, our Government is doing just that and I happen to have been working for the Government on one side of that - the question of planning insurance against economic insecurity, of every kind. I can't tell you of course just what the plans are likely to be, but I can say that I've no doubt at all that we know how to abolish want through economic insecurity, and that it's our wish to do so as soon as the war ends, on one condition - that we've won the war. On that condition I sincerely believe that we're within sight of a world for all, far safer, far freer than anything that we have known.

Second, though war work is often grim and exhausting, that doesn't mean that one mayn't enjoy doing it. To go all out as one of a team is fine. To work with people with whom in peace one may have differed is one of the consolations of war.

Third, whether we like it or not, we really have no choice - we must be total in war - every one of us - if we do not want to lengthen the war and perhaps lose it in the end. To risk losing the war because we are thinking of our individual rights either now or afterwards, is just plain silliness. None of us will have any rights worth thinking about if Germany wins.

/Countries

Countries which tried to be neutral in this war haven't had much luck. They've been overrun themselves and been a danger to their neighbours. Individuals who weaken our war effort by standing out of total war, are like those neutrals in doing no good for themselves and a danger to the rest.

We must all wage total war for our own sakes, but having said that I want to say even more strongly, that we ought not to be fighting only for ourselves. We didn't begin the war that way. We ought not to be content to defend our island now. Everybody will fight like anything to defend his home; there's no merit in that. We, in Britain, ought to do better. The Russians are fighting ^{magnificently} because they're defending their homes, but I do not believe they'd be fighting so well for that alone. They are fighting also for ideas, for their ideals of how society should be organised. We, too, on this island have stood and stand for ideas - of tolerance, fair-play, freedom of speech and thought, kindness, the value of the individual soul. Our fathers went out and spread those ideas all over the world; it is up to us to fight to keep them alive not only in this island, but in the world.

If you saw a bully kicking a child, you would not, before doing anything to stop him, wait to argue as to whose fault it was that the bully got loose; you would not ask whether the child was British; you would not look round and see whether it was not someone else's job to come to the rescue. You'd go straight in. That picture of the bully kicking the child is not fancy. It is a fact; it's what you would see with your own eyes if you could go freely about Europe. All over Europe you would see everyday helpless men and women and children being killed by starvation or the bullet or the bayonet. You'd see the same thing happening to our own people and the Chinese in Asia. Your way and mine of going in and putting the bully in the place where he belongs is for every man and woman of us at once to be as total in war as we can, and to do all we can to let the Government know that a total war is what we want, so that they needn't be afraid to take any measures of organisation that are needed.

There was once in history a kind of war called the Crusades. Some of the Crusades at the end came to be waged for bad as well as for good motives - but they began as wars for no gain of power or wealth, as wars of the common people for an idea and a faith. That is the kind of war which we must wage today, a war of faith of all the people, to rescue the threatened freedom of mankind. That kind of war is needed, that's what the world expects of a people with our strength and our history, of the sons and daughters of the race which built the free British Commonwealth and founded the free United States of America. A war of faith is what the world is waiting for. Do not let it wait another moment.