

NEWS AND VIEWS

Lord Halifax and International Affairs

MANY speeches dealing with the present crisis have been made since the War began six months ago. That of Lord Halifax at Oxford on February 27 surpassed them all not only in the clarity with which the fundamental issues at stake were set forth, but also in the eloquent and moving enunciation of their relation to a philosophy of life which looks beyond the individual ideal to an aim worthy of the pursuit of mankind at large. Addressing his audience, as he said, with the dual personality of Chancellor of the University and H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Halifax made no attempt to gloss over the facts, unpleasing as they may be, or to ignore the grave dangers for the future of civilization which they imply. The one fact by which above all he is appalled is that this "waste land" we live in, as the present state of European civilization has been called, has been brought about not by the mistakes, the pride, and the selfishness of an older generation, but by that of youth, deprived of the elements of true judgment, which has been the driving force behind the Nazi movement. But, if on one side force is an instrument of aggression, on the other, youth will fight to break down the barrier which must be broken down, if the youth of Europe is to avoid living always in this "waste land".

The antagonisms which have brought about the present conflict in Europe are by now familiar in terms to all; but as formulated by Lord Halifax before an audience composed largely of those whose task will be to ensure that right prevails, they are seen to penetrate to the very fundamentals of human associations. On one side is an all-embracing and overpowering system—a system based on the conception of the so-called economic man—and over against it the ideal which has made as its end the perfection of the individual "in the conviction that here, too, lay the secret of life for all society". It must be remembered that "the substance of any conventional code . . . must derive from the depreciation by society of the principles of its own survival" and, he went on to say, "If we are to recapture the secret of order for international society . . . we must as individuals strive to erect or maintain standards that will bring true freedom through the way of discipline". If any good thing can come out of so great an evil, it is that the outbreak of War has constrained the British peoples to reason with themselves upon the nature and aims of the societies in which they live. If there still be those in whose minds there lingers a doubt, they cannot fail now to see the issues clearly in the light of what Lord Halifax has said.

Universities in War-time

DR. RAYMOND PRIESTLEY, vice-chancellor of the University of Birmingham, devoted his address at the annual meeting of the Court of Governors of the University to a discussion of war conditions. He said that the university, until now, has fared very well. Numbers are almost up to normal and on the science and applied science side the great majority of students will remain until they have graduated. "Reservation is not intended to prevent, and will not prevent, university-trained youth from playing its part in the country's war effort. Their advent is merely deferred until they are fully prepared to pull their weight." In this way fully trained men will become available at the end of each academic year, and there will be a proportion able to play their part in the reconstruction that must follow the end of the War if European civilization is to make up leeway and resume its advance. Dr. Priestley went on to say that he believed it is not necessarily bad for young university men to pass through the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force on the way to their normal work in the world. He quoted his own experience of the War of 1914-18: "I came out of it a better man—more humane and better able to deal with situations and with men". When the War ends, the universities and university men will have a more important part to play even than in war-time, and it would be fatal if a false impression got abroad that university personnel claims to be set apart from the generality of citizens.

The recognition by the Government that the work of the universities of Great Britain is part of the national cause in the War has provoked criticism. Dr. Priestley believes this to be unfair. Indeed, he thinks that there can never have been an occasion when, in similar circumstances of national strain, a Government has been more far-sighted in this particular respect. In the War of 1914-18, education almost closed down. By the decision to refrain from enlisting the youth of the nation before the age of twenty, the Government has given technical and university education a chance to continue their task. For this purpose the universities require adequate finance. "They provide the technical experts on whom the servicing of the post-War world will depend. They provide the teachers who must tune to concert pitch the bodies and minds of succeeding generations. They ought to produce a large proportion of the enlightened leaders for the new era. Certainly if they do not, leadership, though it may be powerful, will not be enlightened." He also referred to the universities as "the chief repositories, exponents, and defenders of that freedom of thought that has been quenched in the totalitarian State".