

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this book has not been to sketch a detailed programme of a desirable future order of society. If with regard to international affairs we have gone a little beyond its essentially critical task, it was because in this field we may soon be called upon to create a framework within which future growth may have to proceed for a long time to come. A great deal will depend on how we use the opportunity we shall then have. But whatever we do, it can only be the beginning of a new, long, and arduous process in which we all hope we shall gradually create a world very different from that which we knew during the last quarter of a century. It is at least doubtful whether at this stage a detailed blueprint of a desirable internal order of society would be of much use—or whether anyone is competent to furnish it. The important thing now is that we shall come to agree on certain principles and free ourselves from some of the errors which have governed us in the recent past. However distasteful such an admission may be, we must recognise that we had before this war once again reached a stage where it is more important to clear away the obstacles with which human folly has encumbered our path and to release the creative energy of individuals than to devise further machinery for "guiding" and "directing" them—to create conditions favourable to progress rather than to "plan progress". The first need is to free ourselves of that worst form of contemporary obscurantism which tries to persuade us that what we have done in the recent past was all either wise or inevitable. We shall not grow wiser before we learn that much that we have done was very foolish.

If we are to build a better world we must have the courage to make a new start—even if that means some *reculer pour mieux sauter*. It is not those who believe in inevitable tendencies who show this courage, not those who preach a "New Order" which is no more than a projection of the tendencies of the last forty years, and who can think of nothing better than to imitate Hitler. It is indeed those who cry loudest for the New Order who are most completely under the sway of the ideas which have created this war and most of the evils from which we suffer. The young are right if they have little confidence in the ideas which rule most of their elders. But they are mistaken or misled when they believe that these are still the liberal ideas of the nineteenth century, which in fact the younger generation hardly knows. Though we neither can wish, nor possess the power, to go back to the reality of the nineteenth century, we have the opportunity to realise its ideals—and they were not mean. We have little right to feel in this respect superior to our grandfathers; and we should never forget that it is we, the twentieth century, and not they, who have made a mess of things. If they had not yet fully learnt what was necessary to create the world they wanted, the experience we have since gained ought to have equipped us better for the task. If in the first attempt to create a world of free men we have failed, we must try again. The guiding principle, that a policy of freedom for the individual is the only truly progressive policy, remains as true today as it was in the nineteenth century.

结论

本书目的不在于描绘一幅未来社会理想秩序的详细方略。如果说关于国际事务我们稍有超出本质上至关重要的议题范围,那是因为在,这个领域可能很快会号召制订一个框架,囊括未来很长时间的发展。怎样利用这个即将到来的机会十分重要。但无论我们做什么,它只能是一个暂新、漫长、艰巨过程的开始,我们都希望逐步创造一个跟过去四分之一世纪我们所认识的那个世界完全不同的世界。现阶段一幅描绘理想社会内部秩序的详细蓝图是否有用——或者是否有人有能力描绘它,至少存疑。现在重要的是,我们应该就某些原则达成一致,从近期影响到我们的某些错误中解脱出来。不管多不愿意,我们必须承认,二战前再度到达一个阶段,清除因愚蠢而造成挡在我们前进道路的障碍、释放个人创造力,比设计进一步的制度来“引导”或者“指挥”它们更重要——创造有利于进步的条件而不是“对进步进行计划”。首先要做的就是从形式最糟糕的当代蒙昧主义中解脱出来,蒙昧主义试图告诉我们,最近所做一切不是明智的就是必须的。我们只有知道所作所为十分愚蠢,才能更加明智。

如果我们建设一个更好的世界,我们必须有从头开始的勇气——甚至这有点“以退为进”的意思。表现出这种勇气的,不是那些相信必然趋势的人,不是那些宣扬“新秩序”不过是过去四十年趋势延续的人,不是那些只知道模仿希特勒的人。的确,那些呼唤新秩序最大声的人,正是那些完全全受到造成这场战争的、祸害我们的思想的影响的人。如果年轻一代不相信那些统治其多数父辈的思想,他们是对的。但如果他们相信这些仍然是十九世纪的自由主义思想,那他们就错了、被误导了。年轻一代几乎不了解十九世纪自由主义思想。尽管我们不能希望也无力回到十九世纪的现实中去,但我们有实现十九世纪理想的机会——这些理想并不可鄙。在这方面,我们没有资格比祖辈更有优越感;我们永不应忘记是我们,在二十世纪,而不是他们把事情弄得一团糟。如果他们完全没有了解创造一个他们想要的世界有哪些必要条件,之后我们所获得的经验应该让我们具备更好的条件来完成这项任务。创造一个人类自由的世界,如果第一次尝试失败,我们必须重来。个人自由的政策是唯一真正进步的政策,这一指导原则,在十九世纪正确,在今天仍然正确。