

vanquished will also be taken into consultation before we can decide how this new and better world is to be laid out.

There is one observation I would like to make on the subject of peace aims which I do not think has been made before. It is this. This idea of building a better world does not require a war to bring it into men's minds. Every statesman who has any right to such a name has been hoping and trying to improve the general condition of the world whenever he had any opportunity of doing so, but the condition in which Europe has been kept for such a long period by the policy of Germany has made it absolutely impossible to make any progress in this task of improving world conditions on the scale which we should have liked to see. It is because they have forced us to the conclusion that, until this policy is abandoned, it will continue to be impossible, with any confidence and with any certainty, to carry out those schemes of improvement to which the right hon. gentleman referred—it is because of the conviction that, until that policy is abandoned, it will be impossible to do that, that we and our Allies have been forced to take up arms.

When I spoke on this subject on Sunday, I said that the conditions in which peace aims could be achieved could not at present be foreseen. I did not say that they were remote. I do not know. I said that they could not be foreseen, and I say now that none of us knows how long this war will last, none of us knows in what directions it will develop, none of us knows, when it is ended, who will be standing by our side and who will be against us; and in those circumstances it would be absolutely futile—indeed, it would be worse than futile, it would be mischievous—if we were to attempt to lay down to-day the conditions in which the new world is to be created.

Mr. A. Jenkins: Cannot you lay down the principles?

The Prime Minister: The hon. member asks whether we cannot lay down the principles. I endeavoured to do so the other day, but evidently those principles did not commend themselves to the hon. member. If he intends to speak during the debate, he can say how he would amend the principles which I ventured to suggest. What I assert is that, while you may lay down general principles of that kind, it is no use at this moment to state that such and such machinery shall be set up in order to carry them out, because you do not know whether that will be possible in the conditions which then prevail.

We have not entered this war with any vindictive purpose and, therefore, we do not intend to impose a vindictive peace. What we say is that, first of all, we must put an end to this menace under which Europe has lain for so many years. If we can really do that, confidence will be established throughout Europe, and while I am not excluding the necessity for dealing with other parts of the world as well, I feel that Europe is the key to the situation, and that if Europe could be settled, the rest of the world would not prove so difficult a problem. If we can establish that confidence, then many things which have seemed difficult or impossible in the past might prove to be, if not easy, at any rate attainable.

The right hon. gentleman said that imperialism must be abandoned. He did not define imperialism, nor did he say what country he had in mind as practising imperialism to-day. I really do not know what he meant, but if imperialism means the assertion of racial superiority, if it means the suppression of the political and economic freedom of other peoples, if it means the exploitation of the resources of other countries for the benefit of the imperialist country, then I say that those are not characteristics of this country, but that they are characteristics of the present administration in Germany.

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In this country, whatever may have been the case in the past, we have no thought of treating the British Empire on the lines which I have described.

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We shall need all our courage, all our tenacity, all our patriotism to achieve our war aim, for let us not make the mistake of under-rating the strength of our enemy. When we have achieved that aim, then, indeed, we may find that we require an even greater vision, an even stronger will to win the peace than it has taken to win the war. I do not doubt that when that time comes there will be those who will have that vision, who will have that will, and I only trust that they may have greater fortune in fulfilling their own ideals than those had who were left to win the peace after the war of 1914.