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In my own mind I make a distinction between war aims and peace aims. Our war aim can be stated very shortly. It is to defeat our enemy, and by that I do not merely mean the defeat of the enemy's military forces. I mean the defeat of that aggressive, bullying mentality which seeks continually to dominate other peoples by force, which finds a brutal satisfaction in the persecution and torture of inoffensive citizens, and in the name of the interests of the State justifies the repudiation of its own pledged word whenever it find it convenient. If the German people can be convinced that that spirit is as bad for themselves as for the rest of the world, they will abandon it. If we can secure that they do abandon it without bloodshed, so much the better; but abandoned it must be. That is our war aim, and we shall persevere in this struggle until we have attained it.

When we come to peace aims we are dealing with something to be achieved in conditions we cannot at present foresee. Our definition of them can, therefore, only be in the most general terms, but there can be no harm in declaring the broad principles on which we should desire to found them.

Our desire then, when we have achieved our war aim, would be to establish a new Europe; not new in the sense of tearing up all the old frontier posts and redrawing the map according to the ideas of the victors, but a Europe with a new spirit in which the nations which inhabit it will approach their difficulties with goodwill and mutual tolerance. In such a Europe fear of aggression would have ceased to exist and such adjustments of boundaries as would be necessary would be thrashed out between neighbours sitting on equal terms round a table with the help of disinterested third parties if it were so desired.

In such a Europe it would be recognised that there can be no lasting peace unless there is a full and constant flow of trade between the nations concerned, for only by increased interchange of goods and services can the standard of living be improved. In such a Europe each country would have the unfettered right to choose its own form of internal government so long as that Government did not pursue an external policy injurious to its neighbours. Lastly, in such a Europe armaments would gradually be dropped as a useless expense except in so far as they were needed for the preservation of internal law and order.

It is obvious that the establishment of this Utopian Europe which I have briefly sketched out could not be the work of a few weeks or even months. It would be a continuous process stretching over many years. Indeed, it would be impossible to set a time-limit upon it, for conditions never cease to change and corresponding adjustments would be required if friction is to be avoided. Consequently, you would need some machinery capable of conducting and guiding the development of the new Europe in the right direction.

I do not think it necessary, nor, indeed, is it possible, to specify at this stage the kind of machinery which should be established for this purpose. I merely express the opinion that something of the sort would have to be provided, and I would add my hope that a Germany animated by a new spirit might be among the nations which would take part in its operations.

There, then, for the present I leave the peace aims, and once more I would remind you that before we can begin to translate them into action we have got first to achieve our war aim and win the war.

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*Extracts from Speech by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on
November 28, 1939.*

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The Member for Limehouse, he is concerned that we should not be content merely with our determination to defeat the enemy and thereby accomplish our war aim, but that we should at once get to work on the definition of our peace aims, that we should undertake what he has described as planning beforehand for a new and better world. I was sorry to hear that the right hon. gentleman was disappointed with what I said on this topic last Sunday evening, but I am relieved to think that his disappointment was not universally felt throughout the world. It has occurred to a number of people, though not to the right hon. gentleman, that the peace aims which are to be achieved when the war is over cannot be laid down by this country alone, but that there will be others to be consulted. There will be the Dominions and our Allies, and it may be that the