A CLEAR distinction must be made between two political aggregates which go equally in current language by the name of empire. For there is the homogeneous national and there is the heterogeneous composite empire. In a sense, all empires are composites, at any rate if we go back to their origins; but in practice there is a difference between the imperial aggregate in which the component elements are not divided from each other by a strong sense of their separate existence in the whole and the imperial aggregate in which this psychological basis of separation is still in vigour. Japan before the absorption of Formosa and Korea was a national whole and an empire only in the honorific sense of the word; after that absorption it became a real and a composite empire. Germany again would have been a purely national empire if it had not burdened itself with three minor acquisitions, Alsace, Poland and Schleswig-Holstein which were not united to it by the sense of German nationality but only by military force. Let us suppose this Teutonic aggregate to have lost its foreign elements and at most have acquired instead the Teutonic provinces of Austria. Then we should have had an example of a homogeneous aggregate which would yet be an empire in the true and not merely in the honorific sense of the word; for that would be a composite of homogeneous Teutonic nations or, as we may conveniently call them, sub-nations, which would not naturally harbour any sentiment of separatism, but rather, drawn always to a natural unity, would form easily and inevitably a psychological and not merely a political unit.

But this form in its purity is now difficult to find. The United States are the example of such an aggregate, although from the
accident of their rule by a periodically elected President and not a hereditary monarch we do not associate the type with the idea of an empire at all. Still if the imperial aggregate is to be changed from a political to a psychological unit, it would seem that it must be done by reproducing *mutatis mutandis* something of the system of the United States, a system in which each element could preserve a sufficient local State independence and separate power of legislative and executive action and yet be part of an inseparable greater aggregate. This could be effected most easily where the elements are fairly homogeneous as it would be in a federation of Great Britain and her colonies.

A tendency to large homogeneous aggregations has shown itself recently in political thought, as in the dream of a Pan-Germanic empire, a great Russian and Pan-Slavic empire or the Pan-Islamic idea of a united Mahomedan world. But these tendencies are usually associated with the control by this homogeneous aggregate over other elements heterogeneous to it under the old principle of military and political compulsion, the retention by Russia of Asiatic nations under her sway, the seizure by Germany of wholly or partially non-Germanic countries and provinces, the control by the Caliphate of non-Moslem subjects. Even if these anomalies were absent, the actual arrangement of the world would lend itself with difficulty to a remodelling of empire on a racial or cultural basis. Vast aggregates of this kind would find enclaves in their dominion inhabited by elements wholly heterogeneous to them or mixed. Quite apart therefore from the resistance and refusal of kindred nations to renounce their cherished nationality and fuse themselves in combinations of this kind, there would be this incompatibility of mixed or heterogeneous factors, recalcitrant to the idea and the culture

---

1 All three have been broken by the effects of revolution and war, but, if the nation idea dwindled, the last might still at some future date revive: the second, if Communism destroyed the national idea, may still be a possibility.

2 This has been modified by the substitution of a Soviet Union claiming to unite these Asiatic peoples voluntarily with Russia: but one is not quite sure whether this is a permanent reality or only a temporary apparent phenomenon.

3 These two empires have now disappeared and there seems to be no possibility of their revival.
that sought to absorb them. Thus a Pan-Slavonic empire would necessitate the control of the Balkan Peninsula by Russia as the premier Slav State; but such a scheme would have to meet not only the independent Serbian nationality and the imperfect Slavism of the Bulgar but the quite incompatible Rumanian, Greek and Albanian elements. Thus it does not appear that this tendency towards vast homogeneous aggregates, although it has for some time played an important part in the world’s history and is not exhausted or finally baffled, is ever likely to be the eventual solution; for even if it triumphed, it would have to meet in a greater or less degree the difficulties of the heterogeneous type. The true problem of empire therefore still remains, how to transform the artificial political unity of a heterogeneous empire, heterogeneous in racial composition, language and culture, into a real and psychological unity.

History gives us only one great and definite example of an attempt to solve this problem on this large scale and with antecedent conditions which could at all afford any guidance for the vast heterogeneous modern empires, those of Russia, England, France to which the problem is now offered. The old Chinese empire of the five nations, admirably organised, was not a case in point; for all its constituent parts were Mongolian in race and presented no formidable cultural difficulties. But the imperial Roman had to face essentially the same problems as the moderns minus one or two very important complications and he solved them up to a certain point with a masterly success. His empire endured through several centuries and, though often threatened with disruption, yet by its inner principle of unity and by its overpowering centripetal attraction triumphed over all disruptive tendencies. Its one failure was the bisection into the Eastern and Western Empires which hastened its final ending. Still when that end came it was not by a disruption from within but simply by the decaying of its centre of life. And it was not till

---

4 This empire has so altered its form into that of a free Commonwealth that the objection is no longer relevant; there is no longer an old-world empire but a free Commonwealth and a number of subject peoples moving rapidly towards self-government.
this central life faded that the pressure of the barbarian world without, to which its ruin is wrongly attributed, could prevail over its magnificent solidarity.

The Roman effected his sway by military conquest and military colonisation; but once that conquest was assured, he was not content with holding it together as an artificial political unity, nor did he trust solely to that political convenience of a good, efficient and well-organised government economically and administratively beneficent which made it at first acceptable to the conquered peoples. He had too sure a political instinct to be so easily satisfied; for it is certain that if he had stopped short there, the empire would have broken up at a much earlier date. The peoples under his sway would have preserved their sense of separate nationality and, once accustomed to Roman efficiency and administrative organisation, would inevitably have tended to the separate enjoyment of these advantages as independent organised nations. It was this sense of separate nationality which the Roman rule succeeded in blotting out wherever it established its own dominant influence. And this was done not by the stupid expedient of a brutal force after the Teutonic fashion, but by a peaceful pressure. Rome first compounded with the one rival culture that was superior in certain respects to her own and accepted it as part of her own cultural existence and even as its most valuable part; she created a Graeco-Roman civilisation, left the Greek tongue to spread and secure it in the East, but introduced it everywhere else by the medium of the Latin language and a Latin education and succeeded in peacefully overcoming the decadent or inchoate cultures of Gaul and her other conquered provinces. But since even this process might not have been sufficient to abolish all separatist tendency, she not only admitted her Latinised subjects to the highest military and civil offices and even to the imperial purple, so that within less than a century after Augustus, first an Italian Gaul and then an Iberian Spaniard held the name and power of the Caesars, but she proceeded rapidly enough to deprive of all vitality and then even nominally to abolish all the grades of civic privilege with which she had started and extended the full Roman citizen-
ship to all her subjects, Asiatic, European and African, without distinction.

The result was that the whole empire became psychologically and not only politically a single Graeco-Roman unity. Not only superior force or the recognition of Roman peace and good government, but all the desires, associations, pride, cultural affinities of the provinces made them firmly attached to the maintenance of the empire. Every attempt of provincial ruler or military chief to start provincial empires for their own benefit failed because it found no basis, no supporting tendency, no national sentiment and no sense of either material or any other advantage to be gained by the change in the population on whom the successful continuity of the attempt had to depend. So far the Roman succeeded; where he failed, it was due to the essential vice of his method. By crushing out, however peacefully, the living cultures or the incipient individuality of the peoples he ruled, he deprived these peoples of their sources of vitality, the roots of their force. No doubt he removed all positive causes of disruption and secured a passive force of opposition to all disruptive change; but his empire lived only at the centre and when that centre tended to become exhausted, there was no positive and abounding life throughout the body from which it could be replenished. In the end Rome could not even depend on a supply of vigorous individuals from the peoples whose life she had pressed out under the weight of a borrowed civilisation; she had to draw on the frontier barbarians. And when she fell to pieces, it was these barbarians and not the old peoples resurgent who became her heirs. For their barbarism was at least a living force and a principle of life, but the Graeco-Roman civilisation had become a principle of death. All the living forces were destroyed by whose contact it could have modified and renewed its own force. In the end it had itself to be destroyed in its form and its principle resown in the virgin field of the vital and vigorous culture of mediaeval Europe. What the Roman had not the wisdom to do by his organised empire, — for even the profoundest and surest political instinct is not wisdom, — had to be done by Nature herself in the loose but living unity of mediaeval Christendom.
The example of Rome has haunted the political imagination of Europe ever since. Not only has it been behind the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne and Napoleon’s gigantic attempt and the German dream of a world-empire governed by Teutonic efficiency and Teutonic culture, but all the imperial nations, including France and England, have followed to a certain extent in its footsteps. But, significantly enough, every attempt at renewing the Roman success has failed. The modern nations have not been able to follow Rome completely in the lines she had traced out or if they tried to follow, have clashed against different conditions and either collapsed or been obliged to call a halt. It is as if Nature had said, “That experiment has been carried once to its logical consequences and once is enough. I have made new conditions; find you new means or at least mend and add to the old where they were deficient or went astray.”

The European nations have extended their empires by the old Roman method of military conquest and colonisation, abandoning for the most part the pre-Roman principle of simple overlordship or hegemony which was practised by the Assyrian and Egyptian kings, the Indian States and the Greek cities. But this principle also has been sometimes used in the shape of the protectorate to prepare the more normal means of occupation. The colonies have not been of the pure Roman, but of a mixed Carthaginian and Roman type. Official and military, enjoying like the Roman colonies superior civic rights to the indigenous population, they have been at the same time and far more commercial colonies of exploitation. The nearest to the Roman type has been the English settlement in Ulster, while the German system in Poland developed under modern conditions the old Roman principle of expropriation. But these are exceptions, not the rule.

The conquered territory once occupied and secure, the modern nations have found themselves brought up short by a difficulty which they have not been able to surmount as the Romans surmounted it,—the difficulty of uprooting the indigenous culture and with it the indigenous sense of separateness. All these empires have at first carried with them the idea of imposing
their culture along with the flag, first simply as an instinct of the conqueror and as a necessary adjunct to the fact of political domination and a security for its permanence, but latterly with the conscious intention of extending, as it is somewhat pharisaically put, the benefits of civilisation to the “inferior” races. It cannot be said that the attempt has anywhere been very prosperous. It was tried with considerable thoroughness and ruthlessness in Ireland, but although the Irish speech was stamped out except in the wilds of Connaught and all distinctive signs of the old Irish culture disappeared, the outraged nationality simply clung to whatever other means of distinctiveness it could find, however exiguous, its Catholic religion, its Celtic race and nationhood, and even when it became Anglicised, refused to become English. The removal or slackening of the foreign pressure has resulted in a violent recoil, an attempt to revive the Gaelic speech, to reconstitute the old Celtic spirit and culture. The German failed to Prussianise Poland or even his own kin who speak his own language, the Alsatians. The Finn remained unconquerably Finnish in Russia. The mild Austrian methods left the Austrian Pole as Polish as his oppressed brother in German Posen. Accordingly there began to rise everywhere a growing sense of the inutility of the endeavour and the necessity of leaving the soul of the subject nation free, confining the action of the sovereign State to the enforcement of new administrative and economic conditions with as much social and cultural change as may be freely accepted or may come about by education and the force of circumstances.

The German, indeed, new and inexperienced in imperial methods, clung to the old Roman idea of assimilation which he sought to execute both by Roman and by un-Roman means. He showed even a tendency to go back beyond the Caesars of old to the methods of the Jew in Canaan and the Saxon in eastern Britain, methods of expulsion and massacre. But since he was after all modernised and had some sense of economic necessity and advantage, he could not carry out this policy with any thoroughness or in times of peace. Still he insisted on the old Roman method, sought to substitute German speech and culture for the indigenous and, as he could not do it by peaceful
pressure, he tried it by force. An attempt of this kind is bound to fail; instead of bringing about the psychological unity at which it aims, it succeeds only in accentuating the national spirit and plants a rooted and invincible hatred which is dangerous to the empire and may even destroy it if the opposed elements are not too small in number and weak in force. And if this effacing of heterogeneous cultures is impossible in Europe where the differences are only variations of a common type and there are only small and weak elements to overcome, it is obviously out of the question for those empires which have to deal with great Asiatic and African masses rooted for many centuries in an old and well-formed national culture. If a psychological unity has to be created, it must be by other means.

The impact of different cultures upon each other has not ceased but has rather been accentuated by the conditions of the modern world. But the nature of the impact, the ends towards which it moves and the means by which the ends can most successfully be worked out, are profoundly altered. The earth is in travail now of one common, large and flexible civilisation for the whole human race into which each modern and ancient culture shall bring its contribution and each clearly defined human aggregate shall introduce its necessary element of variation. In the working out of this aim, there must necessarily be some struggle for survival. The fittest to survive will be here all that can best serve the tendencies Nature is working out in humanity, — not only the tendencies of the hour, but the reviving tendencies of the past and the yet inchoate tendencies of the future. And it will be too all that can best help as liberating and combining forces, best make for adaptation and adjustment and for deliverance of the hidden sense of the great Mother in her strivings. But success in this struggle is worst and not best served by military violence or political pressure. German culture for good or ill was making rapid conquests throughout the world before the rulers of Germany were ill-advised enough to rouse the latent force of opposing ideals by armed violence. And even now that which is essential in it, the State idea and the organisation of the life of the community by the State which is common both to
German imperialism and to German socialism, is far more likely to succeed by the defeat of the former in the war than it could have done by its victory in a brute struggle.

This change in the movement and orientation of the world’s tendencies points to a law of interchange and adaptation and to the emergence of a new birth out of the meeting of many elements. Only those imperial aggregates are likely to succeed and eventually endure which recognise the new law and shape their organisation to accord with it. Immediate victories of an opposite kind may indeed be gained and violence done to the law; but such present successes are won, as history has repeatedly shown, at the cost of a nation’s whole future. The recognition of the new truth had already commenced as a result of increased communication and the widening of knowledge. The value of variations had begun to be acknowledged and the old arrogant claims of this or that culture to impose itself and crush out all others were losing their force and self-confidence when the old outworn creed suddenly leaped up armed with the German sword to vindicate itself, if it might, before it perished. The only result has been to give added force and clear recognition to the truth it sought to deny. The importance even of the smallest States, Belgium, Serbia, as cultural units in the European whole has been lifted almost to the dignity of a creed. The recognition of the value of Asiatic cultures, confined formerly to the thinker, scholar and artist, has now been brought into the popular mind by association on the battle-field. The theory of “inferior” races, an inferiority and superiority measured by approximation to one’s own form of culture, has received what may well turn out to have been its death-blow. The seeds of a new order of things are being rapidly sown in the conscious mentality of the race.

This new turn of the impact of cultures shows itself most clearly where the European and the Asiatic meet. French culture in Northern Africa, English culture in India cease at once to be French or English and become simply the common European civilisation in face of the Asiatic; it is no longer an imperial

5 Now Yugoslavia.
domination intent to secure itself by assimilation, but continent parleying with continent. The political motive sinks into insignificance; the world-motive takes its place. And in this confrontation it is no longer a self-confident European civilisation that offers its light and good to the semi-barbarous Asiatic and the latter that gratefully accepts a beneficent transformation. Even adaptable Japan, after the first enthusiasm of acceptance, has retained all that is fundamental in her culture, and everywhere else the European current has met the opposition of an inner voice and force which cries halt to its victorious impetus.  

The East is on the whole, in spite of certain questionings and scruples, willing and, where not wholly willing, forced by circumstances and the general tendency of mankind to accept the really valuable parts of modern European culture, its science, its curiosity, its ideal of universal education and uplift, its abolition of privilege, its broadening, liberalising, democratic tendency, its instinct of freedom and equality, its call for the breaking down of narrow and oppressive forms, for air, space, light. But at a certain point the East refuses to proceed farther and that is precisely in the things which are deepest, most essential to the future of mankind, the things of the soul, the profound things of the mind and temperament. Here again all points not to substitution and conquest, but to mutual understanding and interchange, mutual adaptation and new formation.

The old idea is not entirely dead and will not die without a last struggle. There are still those who dream of a Christianised India, the English tongue permanently dominating if not replacing the indigenous languages, or the acceptance of European social forms and manners as the necessary precondition for an equal status between a European and Asiatic. But they are those who belong in spirit to a past generation and cannot value the signs of the hour which point to a new era. Christianity, for instance, has only succeeded where it could apply its one or two

6 There has been a recrudescence of the Europeanising turn in Turkey and in China reinforced by the influence of Bolshevist Russia. Wherever there is a retardatory orthodoxy to overcome, this movement is likely to appear, but only as a passing phase.
features of distinct superiority, the readiness to stoop and uplift the fallen and oppressed where the Hindu bound in the forms of caste would not touch nor succour, its greater swiftness to give relief where it is needed, in a word, the active compassion and helpfulness which it inherited from its parent Buddhism. Where it could not apply this lever, it has failed totally and even this lever it may easily lose; for the soul of India reawakened by the new impact is beginning to recover its lost tendencies. The social forms of the past are changing where they are unsuited to the new political and economic conditions and ideals or incompatible with the increasing urge towards freedom and equality; but there is no sign that anything but a new Asiatic society broadened and liberalised will emerge from this travail. The signs everywhere are the same; the forces everywhere work in the same sense. Neither France nor England has the power — and they are fast or slowly losing the desire — to destroy and replace the Islamic culture in Africa or the Indian in India. All they can do is to give what they have of value to be assimilated according to the needs and the inner spirit of the older nations.

It was necessary to dwell on this question because it is vital to the future of Imperialism. The replacement of the local by the imperial culture and as far as possible by the speech of the conqueror was essential to the old imperial theory, but the moment that becomes out of question and the very desire of it has to be renounced as impracticable, the old Roman model of empire ceases to be of any avail for the solution of the problem. Something of the Roman lesson remains valid, — those features especially that are essential to the very essence of imperialism and the meaning of empire; but a new model is demanded. That new model has already begun to evolve in obedience to the requirements of the age; it is the model of the federal or else the confederate empire. The problem we have to consider narrows itself down to this, is it possible to create a securely federated empire of vast extent and composed of heterogeneous races and cultures? And granting that in this direction lies the future, how can such an empire so artificial in appearance be welded into a natural and psychological unit?