

AID TO RUSSIA

By Wm C. Martens, Jr.

War and the problems of war, in terms of Justice, are perplexing and confusing to the average man. Even more so to the historian whose research and documents must, perforce, record the sins of omission and commission which attach in degree more or less to every nation.

Disputes may arise as to extenuating circumstances and how the intricacies of International Law may make it possible to condone here where it cannot be justified there. But the origin of the present world conflict, no less than its precursors, is shrouded in shades of right and wrong through which only one clear light shines. German and Japanese aggression, wanton and ruthless attack without adequate warning or simple declaration of intent, appeal to brute force as the law of life rather than its servant, subjugation of the mind to the primordial instinct of fear, have made the current war a just one for the Allies. Whatever the previous merits of the German-Japanese cause, any doubts or questionings the man of peace and morality may have had should have been quelled by the invasion of Poland and the onslaught at Pearl Harbor. For these acts, in a moral sense at least, there can be no excuse. To refuse to fight and uphold peace after such a demonstration brands a man as a moral craven unequal to providing the security necessary to maintain his home and his family. Self-defense is the prerequisite to both individual and national integrity.

Pearl Harbor did for the Americans what the air raids on Britain did for England. It united them as a nation in self-defense and merged isolationists and interventionists in a common cause. The Battle of Britain gave a final and conclusive answer to those Britons who wanted peace at any price, while Pearl Harbor made national honor our own stake in the war and Republican and Democrat alike voted unanimously for it. Disunity over going to war has given way to disputes over how efficiently the war is being conducted and what policies shall prevail when the

war is successfully concluded.

The average man in America is now just as bewildered and perplexed about the policy he desires his government to pursue, once the longed for peace is attained, as he was about whether it was necessary to give up peace in order to preserve something even more valuable. Once again he stands at the crossroads, as at the end of World War I when he turned sharply to isolationism, and wonders whether he may not be biting off more than he can chew; e.g. He is not sure about the implications of the Atlantic Charter and instinctively distrusts its practicality. What bothers him most is his lack of comprehension of the nation which has gained his whole-hearted respect, admiration, and gratitude as the impregnable wall against which Hitler's might has been hurled in vain. Russia, he instinctively has come to like, but this liking he also finds puzzling and disturbing. Why this worry? Will time prove it unjustified and remove its basis in direct and frank relations between the Russian and American Governments, or is it well grounded and must it be reckoned with as another threat to his National security? What part will Russia have in American Foreign Policy? Russia, and U.S. relations with her, have become the keystone in the arch of whatever American Foreign Policy may now be evolving and represent the ultimate test of the scope and practicality of the Good Neighbor Policy.

When Russia was invaded by Germany in June of 1941, the common bond of defense against aggression united her with the Allies. The Russo-Finnish War and the Russo-German pact disappeared from the horizon as so much water over a larger dam. And this was promptly recognized in the United States. Isolationists and Interventionists were joined in extending lend-lease aid to Russia, and whatever minor dissatisfaction there may have been in isolationist quarters still dubious of lend-lease aid itself as a possible incitement to war, vanished almost completely with our own Pearl Harbor. The plot had now struggled to its climax and the United States, Britain, and Russia were indissolubly arrayed in a death conflict against Hitler. And, in the judgement

of many, around the central point of Russia will be resolved the extent to which America reverts to isolationism or becomes a permanent collaborator in European affairs.

Part II

Many reasons have been given why the United States entered into the first World War. American loans to the Allies and the desire of big business and banking interests to preserve and protect established connections and property unquestionably played a part. Then there was the democratic creed and its basic hostility to authoritarian rule, and finally, the blood and cultural ties of English speaking peoples. But with due allowance for all these factors, and many more, the real enthusiasm of Americans for victory and participation was in something far deeper. America believed it was a war to end wars and soldier and civilian alike faced hardship and danger with the faith and courage born of the hope of a new and better world. When the Armistice was signed in 1918 and the manifold ramifications of European politics was revealed in clearer perspective, there was a period of bitter disillusionment and America refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and participate in the idealistic Mr. Wilson's League of Nations.

This reversion to isolationism was not surprising in the light of traditional American Foreign Policy. Washington, in his Farewell Address, had warned against entangling alliances and intervention in European affairs, while Monroe introduced as a fundamental policy, non-interference in political affairs of the American continent by any European power. These two doctrines are deeply embedded in American thought and practice. And Mr. Wilson's fourteen points, particularly those defining territorial rights and limits, seemed to destroy the Washingtonian aspect of United States policy and active participation in the League would inevitably undermine the Monroe Doctrine. America made several efforts to compromise, such as tentative acceptance of the World Court, but once the issue was clear, the retreat

was steady and complete until the accession of Hitler to power early in 1933 caused many thoughtful people to worry once more.

World change was in the air. Time and distance had been reduced steadily. Lindbergh had flown the ocean and radio became a household accessory. News traveled almost as rapidly as it was gathered. Monetary theorists questioned the value of the gold standard and recommendations for goldless currency systems received more and more attention as orthodox economics received one defeat after another. Depression and poverty rocked many nations, including the United States, and the perennial debates on what form of government made possible the highest standard of living and how to produce more haves and less have nots became more violent. Socialism became a bigger factor in all governments and Communism, Fascism, and Nazism were militant organizations as well as individual governments.

Suddenly the conscience of many people was troubled. Stories of persecution and murder, helpless minorities driven hither and thither, justice denied and injustice glorified, increased slowly but so steadily as to make people realize where there was so much smoke, there must be some fire. Night invasions of the ghettos and atrocities of an almost unbelievable character against the Jews added fuel to the fire of uneasiness. Persons forcibly deprived of property and opportunity came to the United States. Mass meetings called to stir protest, in America and elsewhere, were quieted by statements such as "It is much exaggerated, perhaps they had it coming to them, and besides it's none of our business so long as they don't interfere with us--after all, it's their government and what they want". Nevertheless, the march of events was slowly reversing isolationism of the extreme variety and militant interventionists began to make headway with the slogan, "America is next"---they soon will want to destroy it too---Nazism, as well as Communism, wants not only world revolution but world conquest and domination. Commencement addresses at universities and the usual meetings to commemorate historical events began to recall Woodrow Wilson more and more and exalt

him as a misunderstood man who was far ahead of his time. Only selfishness and ignorance, they said, had blocked the League of Nations. America must assume its rightful responsibility and use its power in European affairs if civilization were not to perish and security vanish from the earth. Isolationism was now on the defensive and took the form of attacks on war in the positive sense, and placated its enemies with platitudes on the use of moral suasion on the negative side.

The great majority of Americans were opposed to war by instinct, as well as having some remote memories of the previous conflagration which were distinctly unpleasant. Nevertheless, they recognized all too clearly how steadily they were being thrust into it, despite their best effort to resist. For a long time, they refused to believe it would come and prior to Pearl Harbor maintained a strong front of refusal to declare war, no matter what the provocation. Lend-Lease aid to the Allies was good enough, wasn't it? Why should their sons and friends get into it?

Suddenly, it was upon them and their acceptance of it was complete and sincere but without enthusiasm and merely as an unpleasant duty to be performed at any cost.

Peace they desire earnestly, but their hopes for a lasting one and a better and new world are not as bright as they were at the corresponding stage of World War I. And Mr. Wilson's fourteen points were not nearly so idealistic nor so impractical as Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill's Atlantic Charter which was issued just as fortuitously and without prior consultation or approval of either the American or British people, in a manner almost the same as the earlier counterpart. The four freedoms are great ideals, but two of them, freedom from want and freedom from fear belong to the realms of nature and metaphysics, while the others require political creeds at variance with authoritarian government and hence advocate indirectly at least, the very World Revolution to which the democracies have so long objected in Communism. The only freedom of importance overlooked in the Atlantic Charter is the freedom to figure out your own freedom. And that is where Russia, America and Britain's No. 1 ally, and relations with Russia become the major problem in American Foreign Policy. Certainly

the interventionist extreme represented by the Roosevelt-Churchill agreement must be tempered if we are to build a solid foundation for including Russia in the new world structure. Russia has earned our friendship and it needs the best statesmanship possible to make Russia understand we value this friendship and want to earn hers in return. The trend toward isolationism is now in full swing in America, and Russia is the key to the situation. World peace requires world understanding and in a sense never before the world needs to understand as well as recognize the importance of Russia to the World. What a jolt this is to the average American! Communism has been anathema to him for years and has represented the crackpot at his worst in America. It is small wonder he is bewildered and worried. Is it any surprise he begins to seek comfort in blind isolationism and wants to revert, as before, to the ostrich-like extreme of the World War I aftermath? Let us make an examination of the Russo-American relationship and see if it is not possible to guide our ship of state between the shoals into the middle waters where for a time, at least, the Aristotolean principle of the golden mean and the Platonic conception of the good, the true, and the beautiful can meet. Only by honest, fearless analysis, live and let live and the devil take the hindmost, and comprehension of the evolutionary flow of history can this be achieved; and at the outset, honor and chivalry in the concrete sense must take their perspective from the moment and not from the contractual relationship of previous agreements, or our efforts will be in vain.