The Just War of Unjust Nations

EDUARD HEIMANN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, in his second Inaugural, gave an interpretation of the Civil War. We read therein: "Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding. . . . The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come but woe to the man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him?"

No more penetrating analysis of the present conflict can be found. The woe is this terrible war; the offense is ours, it is the democracies' injustice and selfishness. The war, of course, has been caused by Nazi and Japanese aggression; but they could not be as formidable as they are if we had not nourished them. They live on the injustice and selfishness of the democracies.

The rise of Hitlerism is no accident. We must not look for a scapegoat. It is true that there are special sources of Hitlerism in German history and tradition. But without them there would still be some kind of Hitlerism today. Sinister forces are always lying in wait in the depths of the individual soul as in those of society. Today civilized society has lost control of them. This is only another way of saying that they arise from, and reflect, the weakness of the democracies. Had the democracies been what they are supposed to be, they would have been impregnable. Our defects gave Hitler and his allies their chance.

And it is general defects of the democracies which are thus responsible. None of them kept clear of such defects. They all, from Republican Germany to the United States, made their contribution towards the rise of Hitlerism. All established schools of thought tried their hands at Hitler and all failed, from the Tories to Labor and from the Vatican to the Kremlin. This is a remarkable display of the universality of guilt but it must not be taken to prove that if all the guilty parties resolved to be just from now on, Hitler would be undone. We cannot, in fact, purge ourselves of our past guilt without dealing with the overt evil of Nazism which the sins of our past have made possible.

We shall deal with the various aspects of this universal guilt under several headings:

Unemployment

We, the democracies, permitted unemployment to develop, to spread, and to persist. There is no more humiliating plight for a decent man than to be barred from making a living, depend on charity, and be deprived of the respect and self-respect that come from a job well done. This plight is bound to destroy human and social stability. It drove German youth into the ranks of communism and then into those of the still more vocal Nazis. It shook the belief in democracy everywhere and produced the Fifth Column in peace and war. It gave the totalitarians their great opportunity.

Unemployment arises because certain private properties have long since ceased to be private. A property is private if and because what the owner does affects only him and his family. A farmer is a private owner. But a big corporation is not, because what it does directly affects the employment or unemployment of tens or hundreds of thousands and, through market connections, of millions of others, dependent and independent workers. Private property can claim freedom from governmental interference, since it does not interfere with the "general welfare," of which the government is custodian. Big corporations do so interfere.

Their main field is the heavy industries, that is, the production of machines and buildings. This branch of production can be fully utilized only under special conditions, only if and when the industrial system continues to grow and to require more and more machines. For, every machine lives a number of years, and next year's output of machines will not replace this year's but will be added to it. But this is a self-exhausting process, bound to slow down as a point of relative saturation comes into sight and the stimuli of population growth and of revolutionary technological innovations slacken.

In the Great Depression, consumer's goods indus-

tries operated at 80% of capacity or more, but the steel industry at 14%. As employees were dismissed, their demand for consumers' goods shrunk, and the crisis spread. But its focus was the heavy industries and their financial superstructure. It follows that a far-sighted regulation of heavy industry must provide for employment.

With the right overtly hostile and the left looking on in arrogant aloofness, the Roosevelt administration did what it could to institute a minimum of additional employment through public works. We did not succumb as the German republic had done; we managed to keep afloat. But under the circumstances we could not do more. We did not steal the show from the dictators. Planning for full employment seemed to be a dictatorial achievement.

For Hitler understood the problem and mastered it. Without formally abolishing private property, as the Soviet had done, he subjected it to his orders and accomplished full employment, first on the rebuilding of cities, later on the building of his huge military machine. He rescued the people from their desperation and tied their loyalty to his program of world conquest. He thus gained the huge advantage in military preparedness which has brought the world to the brink of catastrophe. He did it by using for his ends the instrument of economic planning which the democracies had neglected to use for democratic ends.

The ironical result is that the economic planning we spurned, when it was needed for the sake of democracy, is now thrust on us by military necessity.

Chaos in Southeastern Europe

Exactly the same reasoning applies to European reconstruction. Here is another democratic omission turned into a fascist opportunity.

The peace treaties of 1919, inasmuch as they affected Germany, were not half so far-reaching and base as American isolationism and Nazi propaganda would have us believe. By far the greatest change which the treaties brought was the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Several new states were carved out of it, others were enlarged by pieces carved out of it. The guiding principle in the reorganization was the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination.

But each one of these states became multinational; state lines cannot be drawn in that region without creating national minorities. This is one consequence of the previous, however obsolete, unity of all these peoples under the old monarchy. In addition, coming as they did from that unity, they were unable to make a living in separation. Their rabid mutual hostility made matters worse.

What was vitally needed was outside leadership in organizing cooperation. A new unity should have been established to replace the Hapsburg monarchy. And it should have been integrated into a more comprehensive organization for mutual protection and aid. Wilson perfectly understood the need for a comprehensive organization of peace and aid, although none of the peace-makers realized the need for a special Danubian organization. But Wilson's positive program was disavowed by the new and rising American isolationism, and the League was doomed from the very outset. For, as America had been needed to win the war, so the peace could not be secured without her—this was in the nature of an arithmetical problem. Left alone by the United States, France and England quarreled, and France, exhausted by the war and scared by the new unsolved problems, turned her back on the small states which depended on her for protection as well as for credits and for the sale of their products. France abandoned the Southeast to Hitler.

This is a perfect parallel to the unemployment case. The small Danubian states were drawn into the German economic orbit, they supplied raw materials to the Nazi military machine, their food supplies enabled Germany to shift more workers into the production of arms. Thus, however, reluctantly, those small states helped make Hitler great. To force them to do this was the second contribution of the democracies towards the growth of Hitler.

Pacifism

Once Hitler had been permitted to become a formidable power, he and his Axis partners were further strengthened by the interplay of pacifism and appeasement policy throughout the world.

Pacifism was the ruling philosophy in all Western countries in the thirties. It dominated the German socialists, whom Hitler overwhelmed without a fight. In France the slogan, "war is worse than tyranny," dominated the teachers' union and through it the intellectual attitude of the left. The French learned too late that tyranny is worse than war, because it adds war to its other evils. In Britain, eleven million people, out of a total population of 45 millions, pledged themselves in a private canvass never to take up arms. In the United States, the Congress went so far as to legislate neutrality in advance, i.e., to forbid itself to help Europe against Hitler, or China against the Japanese.

Pacifism denotes an unselfish will to peace and a readiness to make sacrifices to this end. Pacifism flows from a deep and uncompromising devotion to the idea of peace; it may be irrespective of consequences, but it is anything but ungenerous and ig-

noble. One can study it in the Quakers, who, while declining participation in armed conflict, do not refuse hard and dangerous service as a demonstration of their brotherly love. That there be such pacifism, as a reservation in the midst of turmoil, is all to the good.

But pacifism must not be absolutized into a political program. There is a world of difference between the religious pacifism and the political pacifism which teaches that the unjust and selfish man might suddenly be good and thus avoid that war which is only the consequence of his injustice and selfishness. Political pacifism is absurd because it ignors the nature of man and the logic of history; its effect is invariably to favor the aggressor, and it did favor the Nazis and the Japanese.

It is particularly unfortunate that, in this country, the great majority of churchmen, whose task it is to watch over the standards of judgment, indulged in the absurd confusion of religious and political pacifism, right up to Pearl Harbor. They preached that America should demonstrate her Christian virtue and peaceableness by keeping aloof from the ordeal into which her greed and carelessness had helped to plunge the Chinese, British, and Russians, and for that matter, the Axis peoples as well. It is as true as ever that he who would save his life shall lose it!

Pacifism is at least as much responsible for our plight as is pro-fascist appeasement policy. The British and French labor parties joined their Tories and appeasers in the decision not to oppose seriously the march of the fascist powers into the Rhineland, Abyssinia, Spain, and Austria. The American Congress refused to fortify the Pacific outposts. So powerful was the sway of pacifism over public opinion, so deep did it penetrate even into traditionally conservative groups that paradoxically, the imperialistic countries of Western Europe permitted their armaments to lapse. It is true that the British and French appeasers wanted to capitulate to Hitler at Munich in order to turn his aggression against the Soviet; but had they wanted to resist him, they would not have been able to do it because their countries were totally unprepared. Even the British Navy entered the war with hardly more than half the number of destroyers which it had in 1914. The disastrous identification of social reformism with pacifism has been broken only in the person of President Roosevelt.

Appeasement

The dividing line between political pacifism and pro-facist appeasement policy is not always easy to draw. The Chamberlain government, with which the name of appeasement is principally connected, showed its earnest will to peace by handing over to the Irish the strategic ports which the British still held in Eire under the treaty that gave Eire its freedom.

But the appeasers, in Britain as elsewhere, did try to make a deal with Hitler, at the expense of little Czechoslovakia and of the giant Soviet. They regarded Hitler as a godsend, who, by destroying the Soviet, would save their class prerogatives from the communist menace. They hoped the Soviet would be crushed between the pincers of the white and the yellow Aryans. It did pay to make concessions to him in order to strengthen his might against the Soviet.

The Catholic Church welcomed Hitler and Mussolini into Spain, in the hope that they would restore her hold on the country. Gradually, from the results of this policy, did the Church come to realize that Hitler and Mussolini flattered her only to cheat her as soon as the power was theirs. The Church came to realize that the fascists are anti-Christian in an even more profound sense than the communists, because the latter believe in the Christian values of peace and justice as the ultimate standards of political action, while the fascists mock these standards as unvirile and degenerate. The fact that they do should never have been a secret to the Church.

In France, the appeasers had their way; they overthrew the republic and capitulated to Hitler. In Britain, the appeasers were overthrown by the rising wrath of the people. In our own country, appeasement was kept under control as far as our relations with Hitler were concerned, but was triumphant during several years of our relations with Japan. While the Chinese were bleeding for us as well as for their own liberty, we made profitable deals with the Japanese and supplied them with the steel and oil, without which they could not have staged the war in China or the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Imperialism

This war has often been denounced as a war of imperialism. It is one. This is no justification for Japan's aggression; she has destroyed the highly developed native civilization of Korea, has been trying to do the same thing to China, and is now bent on wrestling from the Western empires countries farther south. But this, again, is no excuse for the Western democracies, whose imperialism has engendered so much enmity.

The Monroe Doctrine, for a hundred years, was regarded as a declaration of Yankee imperialism and dollar diplomacy by all peoples south of the Rio Grande. No wonder that, with all the moral progress made by our good neighbor policy in recent

years, suspicion still lurks everywhere and breaches the system of hemisphere defense.

It is a shining tribute to our recent policy that the Filipinos fought as they did under the banners of MacArthur and Wainwright. They understand that under our protection they are expected and helped to develop self-rule, the only justifiable goal of foreign domination. The contrast between events in the Philippines and those in British Burma is telling.

But let no one believe that we are not still supplying the Japanese with ample material for their propaganda against us. The white man's racial arrogance is the main theme on which the Japanese keep harping throughout Asia and among the Indians of South America, principally Peru. They refer to discrimination in every town of the United States, in our armed forces, and even in many locals of our labor unions, both AF of L and CIO, which exclude Negroes from membership and thereby from employment. It is a real blessing that our heavy indebtedness to and reliance on the indomitable Chinese make it impossible for us to let this war degenerate into a war against the yellow race. The tragic persecution of our co-citizens of Japanese ancestry on the West coast, in indisputed violation of our sacred Bill of Rights, shows the gravity of the danger.

Public opinion in this country is inclined to ignore all this and blame the British for racial arrogance in their empire. The blame is fully deserved, but it must be correctly understood. Just as we could not simply get out of the Philippines and leave them to their own fate and the Japanese, so the British cannot simply get out of India, whatever Indian nationalists and Axis propagandists may tell us. The breakdown of the recent Hindu-Moslem negotiations conducted under the mediation of Sir Stafford Cripps made that quite clear. There is no parallel in the world to the irrationality of the Indian political jungle, with its hundreds of languages, nationalities, and religions, its castes and classes, its tradition of separate units and its lack of a unifying concept or program. It seems that Britain's sins in India are primarily in the past, in playing up the factional dissensions among the Indians and thereby prolonging the necessity of British rule. But the Indians too, have made their contribution to the stale-mate; they are unable to make British rule superfluous by presenting a program on which the quarreling factions can unite, and Ghandi's pacifism found the prospect of Indian independence contingent upon India's participation in the war inacceptable. Now that the British solution of the Indian problem proves too weak in this age of mass warfare, the result of Indian quarrels and British reluctance is that the Indian solution is not yet ripe. The task of lending a helping hand will devolve on us; let us hope we are better prepared.

More generally, white imperialism has proved a hybrid structure. The liberalism of its mother countries could not but benefit the colonies to an extent, varying in the individual cases, by leading them on the way to education and self-rule. This is the unique historical significance of Western imperialism. But this tendency is crossed by racial arrogance and exploitation. It is a horrible charge, both foreign and domestic, on which we have now to pay an interest in terms of blood.

Communism

Our survey of the sins of the Western world would be incomplete if it did not include communism. The communists had been engaged in open collusion with the Nazis, as the capitalistic appeasers had been. In the war itself and the mortal danger which it brought to the West, they had continued the game until the day when it pleased Hitler to terminate it. They had helped to bring down, first, the German Republic, on the theory, in Stalin's own words, that one had to take into the bargain a few years of Hitler rule in order to get rid of the worst enemies of labor, the Social Democrats and the Christian labor unions. This was not a very perspicacious theory or practice. Taking the lesson to heart, the communists, during the thirties, were ardent supporters of the League of Nations and were rightly disgusted with the half-heartedness and dishonesty of the Western League powers. Finally, when the British and French appeasers pursued, over the dead body of Czechoslovakia, their policy of a pact with Hitler and Mussolini, it was, in a sense, logical for the Soviet to prevent the threat and veer around to her own pact with Hitler. Thus she launched Hitler on his war against the West, which he would not have dared to undergo without the certainty of peace with Russia.

Thereupon the Soviet became Hitler's accomplice in the devilish game of swallowing small nations, at the same time when the British were loyal enough to respect, to their own grievous harm, the neutrality of Norway, Holland, and Belgium, and of Ireland, a British dominion. The Soviet was even prepared to abandon Syria, Palestine and Iraq to Hitler in exchange for a free hand in Iran. But then Hitler stopped the game.

Worst of all, during this entire period, diplomatic collusion was accompanied by the most vicious anti-democratic propaganda of communists all over the world. The seizure of those territories is explained by communists as a strategic precaution; but there

is no excuse for concentrating fire for two years on the democracies alone. The Soviet officially set the theme by declaring in the most formal way that Britain and France were guilty of "criminal aggression" against the Nazis; Stalin personally confirmed the Nazi propaganda slogan that Britain and France had attacked Germany in the interest of their imperialists. German communists, refugees from Nazi savagery, distributed anti-British pamphlets in the streets of London. The *New Masses* of New York appeared on June 23, 1941, with the emphatic assurance that the rumors of a rift between Stalin and Hitler were "capitalistic lies." Hitler's surprise attack on the Soviet was needed before Stalin discovered that Britain was fighting "for the defense of democratic liberty."

We have to subsume the Soviet under two different categories. The Soviet is, on one hand, part of the scourge sent to the democracies as a consequence of their sins. A scourge is senseless and monstrous in itself, as the invasion by the Philistines in Biblical history, and to be understood only as a reaction. But the Soviet is, on the other hand, also part of the Christian democratic world; it derives from it and shares the fundamental Christian concepts of justice, liberty and peace, to all of which fascism is opposed. The perplexity is in this dual fact, that communism shares with the Nazis the methods, but applies them in the service of ideals which it shares with the democracies. The logic of world history has thrown the Soviet into the camp of the democracies. As a fighter "for democratic liberty" the Soviet pays the penalty, like the other democracies, for her collusion with the evil.

Doom or Renascence?

Lincoln was right: shall we not see in all this divine purpose? And is there any other explanation of our troubles as complete and profound as this one? We believe there is none.

There is danger, however, that one will arrive at a wrong conclusion from the right interpretation. This danger must be averted. Lincoln did not infer from the offense of slavery that this Union, with everything for which it stands, should perish because it was sinful. He inferred that the wrong must be righted, and that, because it had not been righted without education by woe, woe had been sent to do its work. Many conscientious people draw the wrong conclusion from recognition of our sins. We are not fighting the just war, they say, because we are unjust ourselves; let us take the punishment and go down at the hands of the Nazis and the Japanese. This, however, is an utterly egotistic way of repentance. If we go down in this conflict, it means that the world goes down in an ocean of godlessness, that is, of inhumanity. The woe of the war has been sent us to warn us of our duties. It is still true that the only chance for the world is in those who recognize that justice, liberty and peace are commanded, not in those who mock justice, liberty and peace.

The Philistines were sent as a chastisement over the Hebrews. But the Philistines were nothing but the blind tools of the devine wrath; it was the Hebrews who mattered. They were far from good, they were unjust; but their eyes, not those of the Philistines, had been opened to justice. That is why the Philistines are forgotten, but the Hebrews live by the might of their prophets.

The analogy is not even exhaustive. The Philistines were the blind tools of the divine wrath, their eyes had not been opened. But the Nazis have been baptized, they are members of a Christianized world; they do know that justice, liberty and peace are commanded and mock them. Pre-Christian paganism was brutal but in a sense innocent; Hitlerism is incomparably worse, it is perverse.

Its perversity manifests itself in the use of all thoughts and achievements of civilized mankind for the service of its monstrous aims. To end the perversion and restore proper use and dignity to human achievements, is the goal of this war. *We are not just, but this war is just.* If we understand this, the war will make us more just than we were before.