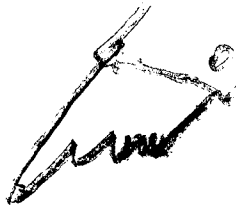


► *His countrymen don't know him —  
but Nazis and Japs know him well.*



## AMERICAN PROPHET OF TOTAL WAR

BY VALERIU MARCU

REFERRING to the Philippines, a book published thirty-two years ago declared:

The conquest of these islands by Japan will be less of a military undertaking than was the seizure of Cuba by the United States; for while Santiago de Cuba did not fall until nearly three months after the declaration of war, Manila will be forced to surrender in less than three weeks.

If this were a fortuitous guess by a crystal gazer, it could be dismissed as a freak of luck. But it was a judgment embedded in a detailed scientific analysis of the strategic picture in the Pacific by a man who traced the bloody lines of the present struggle with uncanny accuracy. This same man foresaw the first World War as an obvious climax to the trends of his day, and warned that it would not necessarily be decisive: "One war if England is destroyed; a series if she is victorious."

The man was Homer Lea, regarded by the Nazi school of "geopolitics" as one of its major prophets, long prescribed study for Japanese and German militarists — and

virtually unknown in his native United States. The fact that he was ignored by his own country did not surprise him. It merely confirmed his main thesis: that America, having grown rich and complacent, was ripe for picking.

"The modern American's conception of military efficiency is but a succession of heroics culminating in victory," he wrote, adding: "The self-deception of a nation concerning its true militant strength increases at the same ratio as its actual militant capacity decreases." And a few pages farther on: "This Republic, drunk only with vanity of its resources, will not differentiate between them and actual power. Japan, with infinitely less resources, is militarily forty times more powerful." With no hope of being heard, Homer Lea pleaded in the first decade of this century for compulsory military service, national discipline and patriotism; and he inveighed against the "commercialism" and pride of wealth which, he believed, were softening his country for collapse.

Even during the first World War, Lea's books (and books about him) were published by the German General Staff. One of the most prominent exponents of German expansionist politics, Count Reventlow, introduced the American prophet of total war to the German public in a long foreword. Lea's ideas were discussed at length in German military periodicals and he became a recognized authority on military politics. More than that, a definite effort was made to popularize his theories, especially his slogan: "To speak of the end of all wars is like speaking of the end of all earthquakes." His theory that the convergence and intersection of lines emanating from centers of power enable us to foresee the theatres of future wars is regarded as the ABC of their science by the professors of "geo-politics."

To the writer's personal knowledge, leading Europeans interested in the problems of war had Homer Lea's works readily at hand. In 1916, I saw Lea's *The Valor of Ignorance* on the desk of Lenin in Zurich. "This book will some day be studied by thousands of people," Lenin told me. I saw it on the desk of General von Seeckt, the great German general. "This Lea is astounding," he told me. "Do you know who he is? I have rarely en-

countered a writer who made one feel so strongly that he carried the burden of a whole continent on his shoulders."

It is significant that today more and more Americans are becoming aware of their own theoretician of total war. There have been a few articles recently. One of his books is being revived by Harper & Brothers, his original publishers. The man who declared that war is not a mistake in politics but the culmination of politics — whose views therefore represent the antithesis of wishful thinking pacifism — was an American, born in Denver, Colorado, on November 17, 1876.

## II

A member of Homer Lea's family on the paternal side distinguished himself as a general in the Civil War. On his mother's side, he came of pioneer stock. His parents were poor and he himself was a sickly child, bed-ridden during the first years of his life. The hope of recovery as he grew up proved illusory. He remained puny, hunch-backed and in need of constant care. Psychologists may make what they will of the boy's early obsession with military affairs.

At public school he was a good

pupil, displaying an exceptional memory. But young Homer was often absent-minded. Dreamy and self-absorbed, he seemed to stray in lands far from his teachers and schoolmates. By making heavy sacrifices, his family sent him to college. Homer Lea studied at the University of the Pacific, Occidental College and Leland Stanford University. Pale, sickly, deformed, he dreamed, in supreme paradox, of a military career! On top of it all, he began to suffer from eye trouble.

The more completely he was debarred from physical participation in the military life, the more time he spent in the ranks of the great armies of the past. His "mania" for military subjects became a byword and a source of amusement among his fellow students. They accused him of knowing all the battles of history and the names of every fallen officer since the days of ancient Rome. Homer met jibes with a faith in himself that appeared strange to his contemporaries. "Wherever people fight there is a chance for a born leader," he declared.

Forced to leave college studies by a lack of funds and by illness, he went to San Francisco. This was in 1899. At that time, across the vast Pacific, opposition to the Manchu dynasty was growing.

China seethed with unrest. Lea sold his meager belongings and, by borrowing and begging, collected enough money for passage to China. The din of battle in a strange country lured him irresistibly. For many years, he had been studying Chinese with the same patience he devoted to the study of history, geography and philosophy.

General Kung Yo Wei entrusted the young American with the training of recruits. Though Lea did not prove equal to this task, he apparently inspired respect among the enemy, because an Imperial general put a price of \$10,000 on his head. He was compelled to flee. Together with Dr. Sun Yat Sen, founder of modern China, whom he had met previously in San Francisco, he fled to Japan. Together, they finally reached the United States. To the end of his life, the American remained a close friend of the Chinese leader.

Up to this point, Lea was only a dreaming adventurer seeking military laurels to spite an inadequate physique. Now something happened to him. The physical yearnings subsided and his energies turned inward, to mental activity.

In all history, there is only a handful of writings revealing the inner essence of war. The authors

are Thucydides, Caesar, Machiavelli, Jules de Maistre, Clausewitz, Lenin — and Homer Lea. Like those predecessors and contemporaries, Lea saw war not as accidental struggle, but as the expression of an eternal law: a climactic manifestation of life. He saw it as a profound and primitive form of justice — steel triumphant against gold, living muscle against dead weight, passionate discipline against pompous self-satisfaction. He set himself to translate these intuitions, buttressed by immense scholarship, into writing.

In San Francisco, he led an isolated life. His best and only friend, Sun Yat Sen, introduced him to Chinese exiles as “the greatest strategic genius of our time.” When revolution broke out in China and Dr. Sun returned to his native land, Lea went with him. Offered a post as chief of staff for the revolutionary armies, he found it impossible to accept because of his uncertain health and almost total blindness.

Lea returned to America. With the fury and the unsparing whip-words of a prophet, he began to adjure his countrymen to awaken to coming dangers. America’s very greatness inspired him with fear. Do not mistake wealth for power, size for potency, he repeated. “The

first duty a man owes his country is to realize that he cannot liquidate his indebtedness to it by vain complacency.” Few harsher indictments of the “softness” of his country have been made than this by Homer Lea:

High or low, the ambitions of the heterogeneous masses that now riot and revel within the confines of this Republic only regard it in a parasitical sense, as a land to batten on and grow big in, whose resources are not to be developed and conserved for the furtherance of the Republic’s greatness, but only to satisfy the larval greed of those who subsist on its fatness.

He wrote two books: *The Valor of Ignorance*, published in 1909, and *The Day of the Saxon*, published in 1912. The latter book he wrote in feverish haste, knowing that the end was close. He died in Los Angeles on November 1, 1912, at the age of thirty-six. His death, like his life, was practically unnoticed in his own country.

### III

To Homer Lea, war between the United States and Japan loomed as inevitable as would a hurricane to a meteorologist:

Strong in faith and in the Red Sun of her Destiny, Japan began more than two decades ago her predetermined march to the Empire of the Pacific. One nation after another, by one means and another, she has removed from her

way. Nothing now remains but the overthrow of this Republic's power in the Pacific. . . . This Republic and Japan are approaching, careless on the one hand and predetermined on the other, that point of contact which is war. . . . It is in this manner Japan prepares, not for war with this nation, but for victory over it.

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, one is shocked to find these words in Lea's detailed forecast:

In a war with Japan there are other conditions of preparedness that will augment the rapidity of her conquest — *viz.*,<sup>7</sup> the movement of her troops and naval forces to positions adjacent to the theatre of war prior to a formal declaration of hostilities. This initiative is characteristic of Japanese military activity. . . .

Lea opposed the British policy of support for Japan, regarding it as sheer madness. Great Britain, he said, was building up her future Nemesis. A geographer by instinct, he knew everything when he saw a map. Thus, he was able to write, in 1909, referring to the Russo-Japanese war:

Subsequent to this war, the strategic position of the British Empire in the Pacific becomes so vulnerable as to be subject to the will of Japan. And as in the same manner Wei-Hai-Wei is now rendered useless by Port Arthur, Korea and the Japanese Isles, so will Hong Kong be wedged in between Formosa and the Philippines, Singapore segregated, and Australia cut off from North America.

Bitterly and in sorrow he spoke

of "the Republic's indifference to the development and potentialities of Japan, its submersion in the ebb and flux of party politics, its heterogeneous racial elements, the supremacy of the individual over the welfare of the nation, and, finally, the nation's vain and tragic scorn of the soldier. . . ." The growing "femininity" of America, as evidenced in pacifist organizations and vague do-good movements was the particular target of Homer Lea's acid prose. His prescription for America included universal military service, construction of strategic railroads and conscious militarization of young and old.

*The Valor of Ignorance*, in which the Japanese-American conflict is outlined, received good reviews in the United States and was promptly forgotten. Only a few professional army men for a while remembered the name of Homer Lea. But in Japan, it produced great agitation. The Japanese behaved as though someone had stolen their most precious secret. The press raised a cry of slander. Anglo-American pacifists took up the cry. One of them, a professor at Stanford, wrote a letter to the *San Francisco Chronicle* denouncing Lea as an imposter who had not even passed his college graduation exams. But

under the public clamor, the book in its Japanese translation was accepted by Nippon's leaders as military gospel.

In his technical and strategic studies, Lea recognized that the world was growing steadily smaller: "Each day mankind is being more crowded and jostled together. In this universal pressure all is in a state of flux. . . . Oceans have become rivers, and kingdoms the environs of a single city. . . ." This shrinkage of the world, he warned, makes America's "valor of distance" — its isolationism, to use a more modern term — a dangerous illusion.

He visualized the new type of soldier and the future methods of warfare. Although many of his specific strategic ideas have been made obsolete by the advent of aviation, the basic concepts which he propounded sound more true today than they did when he wrote:

Battles are no longer the spectacular heroics of the past. The army of today and tomorrow is a sombre, gigantic machine devoid of all melodramatic heroics, but in itself all-heroic, silent and terrible: a machine that requires years to form its separate parts, years to assemble them together, and other years to make them work smoothly and irresistibly. Then, when it is set into motion, naught shall stop it but a similar machine stronger and better.



Drawn by Saul Steinberg

## WHAT'S YOUR FEE, DOCTOR?

BY MILES ATKINSON, M.D.

WHAT is a reasonable fee for a doctor to charge his patient? What should a patient expect to pay his doctor for any particular service? These questions crop up constantly in medical practice and are very difficult to answer. The whole problem of the cost of medical care, for all classes of the community, bristles with difficulties. That problem is the main reason for the trend of thought in this country towards some form of state-aided medicine. As things stand at present, the only people who can comfortably afford to be ill are paupers and millionaires. In this article, however, I am not concerned with any ideal scheme to eliminate these difficulties, but with conditions as they are, with medicine as it is practiced and paid for under the current system.

Under that system, how are fees assessed? The patient often wonders — and so does the doctor.

Here is a case which came to knowledge recently. A man was troubled with that common, distressing and rather plebeian com-

plaint, piles. He consulted a specialist in rectal diseases, who advised injection treatment and quoted a fee of \$250. This, the patient felt, was for the moment beyond his means and he decided to defer the matter. Soon thereafter he had occasion to consult a surgeon in another town on some other matter, and chanced to mention his piles. He also indicated that he had been compelled to postpone treatment because he could not afford it, but that now the ailment was troubling him again. Could he have something to tide him over? The doctor replied that injections would be the most effective way and that, after all, they were not so very expensive. He would give them himself if the patient wished. Asked the fee, he quoted \$15, or "I'll do it for ten if fifteen is more than you can manage!"

That story is true. And when you hear such stories, you are not surprised that people are confused and that the whole question of setting and collecting fees is so difficult. It is made even more