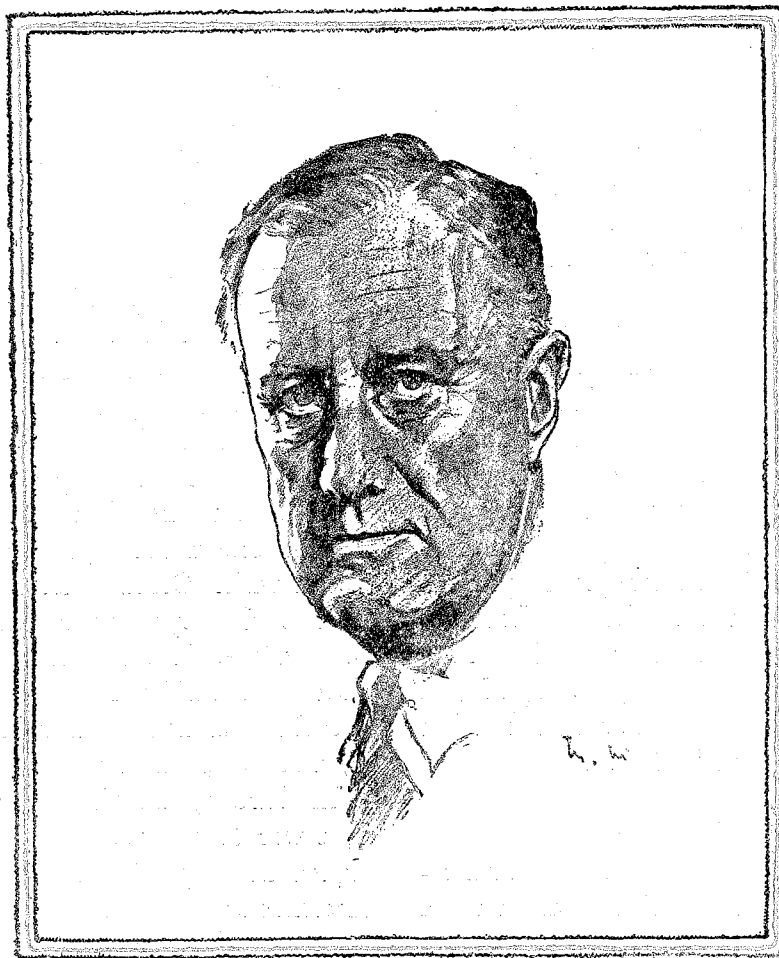


The World Looks to Roosevelt



Portrait by Marcel Maurel

by P. W. WILSON

I

IN THE FATE of mankind, the United States is to-day the greatest single factor. The new world is adjusting the balance of the old. A divided Europe is losing her predominance; even the British Empire is reorganized as an alliance of autonomous communities. The United States, on the other hand, is achieving a synthesis. Immigration has been restricted. Countries of origin recede from the picture and there is less heard of German, Irish, and Italian votes. Industrial and cultural standardization assimilates the appearance and thought of North and South, East and West. The Union has arrived at unity.

Evidence of this unity is to be found in many places, but nowhere is it more striking than in the results of the last election. For the first time since the Civil War the Democratic Party, long in the minority, has swept the country from coast to coast. The capture of Congress as well as the Presidency by the Democrats, with thirty-eight Governorships, suggests that Mr. Roosevelt has received a clear mandate to act.

The resources of this country and the energy to make use of them enter into every reckoning of peace and prosperity throughout the world. As March fourth approaches, mankind is eager to know whether, under Roosevelt's leader-

ship, there is to be a strong initiative in world affairs. Pending his inauguration, the Disarmament and World Economic Conferences are held virtually in abeyance.

A few years ago, it was feared that the United States, with her expanding commerce, would be drawn into imperialism. To-day, commerce has declined, losses have had to be faced, and the country is cautious of international commitments. The nationalism that is manifest throughout the world is expressed here in a mood of isolationism. It is not aggression by this country that the world fears now. The question is whether the United States, by minding what may narrowly be considered her own business and leaving other nations to mind theirs, will fail to meet a great emergency.

Every nation is faced to-day by one basic fact. For five thousand years of recorded history, man has lived in several worlds. To-day, for the first time, all worlds are one. We leap the ocean, we learn our news by lightning, the planet is mapped from pole to pole. Isolation, however "splendid," is no safeguard against a slump in prices, nor does the Farewell Letter of Washington cancel cables from Berlin. To a situation thus unprecedented, no sagacity is adequate which fails to rise above all frontiers of race, sovereignty, and religion.

II

IT is fourteen years since mankind rejoiced over an armistice which brought to an end the most stupendous of all wars. Yet reconstruction is arrested, and a new crisis, cumulative in its momentum, has developed into a danger no less than war itself. The League of Nations meets regularly in Council and Assembly. There have been three score additional conferences, many of them on a spectacular scale. Yet the solutions of urgent problems, even obvious solutions, are evaded, confused, mutilated, or postponed. The right impulse seems to be lacking.

Survey the landscape and everywhere we see frustration. Under the Monroe Doctrine, however interpreted, Latin America is safeguarded from European interference. But there has been no attainment of the Pan-American ideal. The Central American republics have failed to federate. On the southern continent, the quarrel over Tacna-Arica was adjusted only with great difficulty, and over Chaco there has

recently arisen a new dispute.

In the Far East, the policy of the United States was clear. China must be allowed a full opportunity to organize her republican institutions. Her territory must be respected by other powers. Her ports must be open doors to the commerce of all nations. To-day, Chinese citizenship is exploited by the tuchuns. Japan has bombarded Shanghai, absorbed Manchuria, and invaded Jehol. The attitude of France to the south and of Russia to the north is watchful; and amid this scene of immeasurable possibilities the United States occupies the virtually undefended Philippine Islands like a policeman on point of duty. From an area so burglarious, Congress has proposed a withdrawal.

For the Russian revolution, as for the Chinese, President Wilson demanded fair play. Let the people have time to organize their republic; let their territory be respected. But Red Russia was subjected by White Europe to the kind of pressure that forced France, under similar circumstances, into a Reign of Terror, out of which Communism has emerged as the pitiless destroyer of cultural and spiritual liberty. The United States recognizes a Turkey that has a million Armenians to its account. But the challenge of Communism has been met by a ban of outlawry.

In Europe, the United States participated in a war to end wars. By the peace treaties, signed in 1919, the vanquished nations were disarmed at once and the victors promised that they would disarm by agreement. By the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Four Power Pact in the Far East, the Pact of Locarno in Europe, and the Kellogg Pact renouncing war as an instrument of policy, this solemn pledge was emphasized and elaborated. But it is only within English-speaking democracy, British and American, that the pledge has been respected, save as a form of words. On the ocean, where it was least needed, there has been a measure of disarmament. On land and in the air, a dozen years of discussion only reveal the persistence of the interests, professional, commercial, and political, that are vested in preparations for war. Every plan has been discussed, approved in objective, and delayed in detail. To-day, the question is no longer whether the victor nations will reduce their armaments; it is whether the vanquished, led by Germany, will increase them. Also, there is

developing a difference between the powers that wish to maintain the new map of Europe and the revisionist powers that would change this map.

We are told that leadership has failed. Statesmen may be as able as they were but they seem to be less effective. It is not only that they handle larger affairs. Their freedom to handle any affair is restricted. At the outset of the twentieth century the world was three-fourths monarchist and authority was absolute. To-day, three-fourths of the world is republican and authority is representative. The representation of inferiority in thought has made the progress of world affairs like that of a convoy where the speed is determined by the slowest vessel.

The entire conception of democracy for which the United States stands is assailed by skepticism and everywhere the upheaval is shaking governments. In Latin America there have been revolutions. Japan is disturbed. Cabinets in France and other countries change like a kaleidoscope, and in Germany the kaleidoscope itself depends precariously upon the frail tissues of an octogenarian Field Marshal. In countries like Italy, Poland, Russia, Turkey, and Persia a fascist philosophy, emphasizing the efficient, supports an autocrat who seeks by force to reduce a chaos to cosmos. Even in Britain there has been a *coup d'état*, not indeed dramatized as in Italy, but thinly disguised under the forms of a national administration.

III

THE BROAD tendency of history is a progress from worse to better. It may be a more abundant life on this planet that is in the birth pangs now. But it is not defeatist to be warned by the researches of archaeology. Many times in the course of its advance civilization has suffered a setback, nor in any case is there doubt as to the reason. Apparently there is only a single instance of an era collapsing as the result of causes outside man's control. The Land of Wu — the only trace of which is the statues on Easter Island — may have been thus engulfed. But it was no eruption of Vesuvius that caused the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. It is no earthquake in Japan, no flood on the Yangtse, that we have to fear to-day. Against such local mishaps civilization

can insure itself. If the pinnacles of Angkor were forgotten amid the jungles of Indo-China, if sacred pyramids were deserted amid the forests of Peru, it was because something was amiss in the mind of man.

To-day the capitalist system is challenged. The financial credit on which it is based has been shaken. Currencies have collapsed. Obligations have been repudiated. Securities have lost value. At times, confidence in the system has been seriously undermined. What the world needs is neither panic nor panacea, but clear, sound thinking from premise to conclusion.

One premise we may start with is this: the world as a whole has hardly been developed at all. For twenty years scarcely a railroad has been built in China. Motorcars are only beginning to replace camels on the caravan routes of the Sahara and Arabia. Plumbing, telephones, medical service, education — indeed, a thousand amenities — are available only within limited areas, and even so, are available only for the few. If the task of enriching life on this planet were seriously to be resumed, it would afford work for every able-bodied wage-earner over a period extending far into the future. The mere suggestion of unemployment ought to be absurd.

In the economic state of the world to-day and in the failure of the nations to establish an effective guarantee of peace, despite the memory of the recent holocaust, we have sufficient reason to fear another set-back in the progress of civilization. Whether we are to give in to it or to pull ourselves out of it depends entirely on us, the nations of the world, for what we have to fight is not nature or destiny, but ourselves and the human frailties in us. Ignorance, blindness, prejudice, selfishness, procrastination — these are the basic causes of world ills. With the welfare of all nations as interdependent as it has come to be to-day, it is not sufficient that any one should attempt to reform. A united effort at regeneration is necessary. But to get such an effort under way requires that some one nation shall take the lead, and that enough others shall join heartily in the enterprise at the start to whip the laggards into action.

Because of its power and solidarity, and because it is less depression-worn than the other nations of the world, the United States is the

one best fitted to take the initiative. How shall she go about it? Some of the groundwork has already been done. For the maintenance of peace among nations, there is the League of Nations — ineffectual so far, it is true, but at least the machinery has been set up. For the establishment of a wise economy whereby order and wellbeing may be promoted within nations, a World Economic Conference has been called. Both await this country's leadership.

IV

IN SPITE of all dissent, it will never be possible for the United States to divorce herself of interest in the League of Nations. It is only in a technical sense that the chair of the United States is empty now. If she is not "allied" with the League of Nations, she is "associated," and leading the Disarmament Conference she exercises an influence second to none other.

The chief issue which keeps her out of the League is this: To what extent, if at all, are oversea commonwealths to belong to a "league to enforce peace" where peace is most precarious, that is, in the Far East and around the shores of the Mediterranean? In other words, under what circumstances are boys on the banks of the Mississippi again to be called upon to fight battles over the banks of the Danube? The United States could to-day join the League of Nations and the World Court under ample safeguards against any actual or implied obligation, in advance of the occasion, to act as belligerent. She could then develop her latest doctrine, that in the next war there would be no neutrals, which principle would enable her to withhold support from the aggressor — a reserve power of immense deterrent influence. With strong British support, she could insist on disarmament as the only certain security against war. If Russia were brought into the League, thus completing the family of the more important nations, the influences that make for peace, both in the Far East and in Europe, would be strengthened.

There is a general hope in foreign countries that the United States will be as active in the World Economic Conference as in her insistence on disarmament. Such participation should be free and unfettered. The trouble over currencies, quotas, debts, and unbalanced budgets is serious and even desperate. But the

root of that trouble lies much deeper.

In the middle ages, a man's speed was four miles an hour and his radius of commerce for most of his essentials was the county holding its market in the county town. Trade was simple. But within that area it was unrestricted and dependably continuous. To-day, counties and towns are enlarged. Even the United States discovers that she is not and never can be self-contained. But the same principles apply. There can be prosperity only if industry and agriculture — the two Europes, the two Americas, the two worlds — are free to exchange their output. The farmer and the artisan are mutually producer and consumer.

The machinery of world-development is not confined to mass production. There is a complete machinery available for mass distribution. It includes the instantaneous announcement of supply, demand, and price, facilities for all investment, a momentary exchange of currencies, and every reasonable device for extending credit. Why is it, then, that everything should be overstocked at the very moment when these very things are eagerly desired and badly needed? Why do cities stand a siege while the countryside is overwhelmed by a surplus? The exchange between industrial and agricultural products — very broadly defined — has been upset.

The plain, stark fact that now stares us in the face is inescapable. It is not that trade has declined merely. It is that trade has been outlawed. Since the war, we have trebled the tonnage of shipping, and at every port on this planet cargoes are, in effect, refused admittance. We talk of canalizing the St. Lawrence River for ocean-going vessels. Presumably they are to sail in ballast. We drive a tunnel through Mount Ceniz. At each end, the customs-house delays passengers and holds up goods. Economic warfare continues and provokes preparations for military warfare.

At Geneva and in the United States, economists plead for the removal of barriers to trade. Hitherto, they have pleaded in vain. Despite a series of conferences ending at Stresa, the Danubian countries achieve no substantial relief, while at Ottawa the net result of imperial adjustments is a further strangling of international trade as a whole. It matters not where we turn — India's boycott of cotton grown in Louisiana and woven in

Lancashire, or China's refusal of silk manufactured in Japan, or the British retaliation against the Irish Free State on account of the repudiated annuities on Land Purchase. The result is the same. Trade is sacrificed.

The United States has arrived at a long foreseen epoch in her economic evolution. She has changed from a debtor to a creditor country, from a borrower to a lender. Her balance of trade has lost its equilibrium. By excluding foreign goods, she is preventing payments due to herself from being made, except as new loans, accumulating like a snowball. Also, she is arresting her export trade, which can only be financed by imports.

The vital question for this country and for the world is whether the veto on commerce is to be relaxed. In the United States, the fear is that foreign competition, like Asiatic immigration, will lower the standard of life to the level of less favored regions. It will always be a matter of argument whether that high standard was due to the tariff around the frontiers of the United States or to free trade over the continental area within those frontiers. But it seems now to be clear that, in an era of mechanical production, the only guarantee of a high standard of life anywhere is the uplifting of that standard everywhere. In the pursuit of

happiness, no country can advance except as a pioneer for mankind as a whole.

V

SIXTEEN years ago, President Wilson was raised by public opinion in the United States to a brief and uneasy, yet by no means inglorious occupation of the world as a stage. An influence that depended wholly on public opinion broke down. Yet it is onto this vacant stage that inevitably President Roosevelt steps when he enters the White House, and once more public opinion is on trial. To suggest that, even in the greatest of all elected positions, a man, whatever his qualities, can create a new heaven and a new earth, would be preposterous. There are problems that, by their very nature, cannot be solved in a century. But the influence of the United States, strongly asserted, would promote conditions favorable everywhere to such solutions, and some problems would fade into obsolescence. There is to-day a larger outlook among responsible men and women in this country and throughout the world. In setting forth not on a narrow and nationalistic tow-path but on that broad international highway that alone leads to peace and prosperity President Roosevelt would fulfill his appointed destiny.

The Secret Heart

*Across the years he could recall
His father one way best of all.*

*In the stillest hour of night
The boy awakened to the light.*

*Half in dreams, he saw his sire
With his great hands full of fire.*

*The man had struck a match to see
If his son slept peacefully.*

*He held his palms each side the spark
His love had kindled in the dark.*

*His two hands were curved apart
In the semblance of a heart.*

*He wore, it seemed to his small son,
A bare heart on his hidden one.*

*A heart that gave out such a glow
No son awake could bear to know.*

*It showed a look upon a face
Too tender for the day to trace.*

*One instant, it lit all about,
And then the secret heart went out.*

*But it shone long enough for one
To know that hands held up the sun.*

— Robert P. Tristram Coffin