

F O R U M

and Century

DECEMBER, 1938



VOL. C, NO. 6

Peace at a Price

Editorial Foreword

CONTRASTING 1914 and 1938, the *London Times* said in a recent editorial:

A few days' delay in 1914 would have saved 8,000,000 lives. Europe then had lost control of its policies. One country carried another like climbers on a rope into the abyss. The rope binds the nations today. But it is a choice and not blind necessity that now governs a possible catastrophe.

The decision of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the acquiescence of Europe in dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by negotiation instead of by war has been accepted with delirious joy by the public both in the dictatorships of Germany and Italy and in the democracies of France and Great Britain. In puzzled silence, Americans have seen motion pictures of the happy, cheering throngs in the streets of the four capitals, as gay in Paris and in London as in Rome and Berlin.

Only in the United States and in Russia — and, of course, in Czechoslovakia herself — does peace at the present price meet with profound disfavor. In the United States, for the past year or more, when war in Europe seemed to be brewing, the antiwar feeling was a rising tide. Every private poll recorded an "against war" answer from the majority of our people. Now that Mr. Chamberlain has averted war, it is somewhat disturbing to hear so many Americans shouting that war was the answer which

should have been given Hitler. Do they feel that to do a great right it is never just to do a little wrong? Why is it that, at this distance from the scene of compromise, friends of disarmament have overnight become advocates of a big navy?

We Americans are at heart more ardent champions of the ideal of democracy, wherever it is threatened, whether in Hankow or in Prague, than we are of even our own democracy at home. We are chagrined at the spectacle of the disappearance of one more democracy, especially the plucky Czechoslovakia that for nineteen years we have admired.

PRICE OF PAST ERRORS

YET EVEN IN this heart of democracy the unspoken relief over Mr. Chamberlain's compromise is tremendous. The stock market has zoomed upward. Factories are calling back their unemployed. And the reputable Gallup poll records a startling rise in the popularity of President Roosevelt, owing to the part he played in pleading for world peace:

The question before the world today, Mr. Chancellor, is not a question of errors of judgment or of injustices committed in the past. It is a question of the fate of the world, today and tomorrow. The world asks of us who, at this moment, are the heads of the nations, the supreme capacity to achieve the destinies of the nations without forcing upon them

as the price the mutilation and death of millions of citizens.

Nazi Germany and her Reichsführer are products of those injustices of the past to which President Roosevelt referred. The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the militarism of Germany are the delayed results of the errors of judgment of the treaty of Versailles. These errors were pointed out in THE FORUM in 1922, ironically enough by a Jewish American financier, the late Otto H. Kahn. His prophetic article is reprinted in the present issue. Mr. Kahn indicated that the racial allotments of Czechoslovakia were historically impractical. He foresaw that the shackling of the German people would never restore order in Europe.

The realistic fact facing foreign affairs today is that four great races whose ways are not our ways are renewing their youth and determined to have more room under the sun. Russia, Japan, Italy, Germany, all bristling with armaments, have enslaved personal liberty to the might of the state. Until some tragic negation arises, the way of silent disapproval by democracies, of open compromise, of trade when possible and peace even at a price, is a better way of living on the same planet with dictatorships than is the way of insult and war.

Americans who were in England in the recent weeks of suspense appreciate the heroic and unceasing consecration of Mr. Chamberlain, day and night, to the task of preventing war. No means, secret or open, did he leave untried. He was successful in 1938 where Sir Edward Grey failed in 1914.

The scene in London in September was tragic. Although the people were outwardly calm, a visitor had only to talk for a moment with any passer-by to discover the deep, corroding anxiety below the surface. The preparations in London were too grim to be ignored. Sound trucks patrolled the streets, urging the populace to fit on gas masks. At least one visiting American who purchased a gas mask was later heard fervently thanking God for Mr. Chamberlain. The country districts suffered from the same dejection. One farmer's wife was saying to another, "It ain't fair to expect us to fight for them furriners."

The peace achieved by Mr. Chamberlain is indeed a peace at a grim price, but it is not quite peace at any price. With war or without

war, Czechoslovakia, as set up by the treaty of Versailles, was doomed. Eventual war between the dictators and the democracies may or may not be inevitable, but, at this writing at any rate, millions of human beings have enjoyed the privilege of living their lives at least another month without being slaughtered or mutilated.

Recriminations by Americans against Mr. Chamberlain or the dictators are futile. Let us rather expend our righteous energies in good example, by being decent to the Jews in our own midst and by affording generous opportunities for education and employment to our unfortunate negro population.

We have been given a reprieve from world disaster. How long it will last we do not know, but for the time being the opportunity for constructive thought and action is with us. There are certain things that we can do to make the reprieve enduring. First, we can declare a voluntary moratorium on international name calling and scolding — in the press, on the air, and in our private conversations. We may disagree fundamentally with the program of the dictatorships but we gain nothing by recriminations. Secondly, we can work to make democracy in America a living, dynamic reality. Finally, we can arm for the protection of our own liberty, however threatened.

NEW ARMORED PEACE

THE WORLD is entering a new kind of international setup, a period in which we are to try out armed and armored peace. We have learned that it is not inevitable that armaments lead to war. Displays of military strength, instead of actual hostilities, are now being used as pawns on the international chessboard. Our elaborate machine civilization, with its complicated technology and new standards of living, requires a correspondingly costly national defense.

If another crisis stupendously tragic for human freedom and the democratic ideal should arise on this planet, America will fight again. Meanwhile, like Great Britain, we will continue to explore every avenue for peace and, at the same time, arm and rearm sufficiently to meet that emergency.

Henry Goddard Leach

Too Many Automobiles

by J. GEORGE FREDERICK

HAS NOT THE TIME come when the automobile — the terrible bloody Turk of modern life — must firmly be shown its proper place and kept there as a vital matter of public welfare?

We are so accustomed today to the presence of the hordes of automobiles we have built and bought that most of us are probably incapable of a dispassionate view of the situation. But suppose, for the sake of a fresh, revitalizing outlook on the matter, we draw this perfectly correct statistical image:

A tyrant from another planet suddenly lands on earth and puts this ultimatum to the American people —

1. Every year I am going to kill violently and painfully as many persons as the United States lost in the 18 months of the World War (and 300 more for good measure).

2. Every year I am going to injure seriously every man, woman, and child in the cities of Buffalo and Washington — a total of 1,000,000 people.

3. Every year I am going to cause you damages of \$1,750,000,000, and next year, for good measure, I am going to cause you \$1 in damages for every dollar's worth of new automobiles you build (\$2,000,000,000).

4. Every year I am going to cause you damage three times as great as the loss from all the fires in your country.

5. Every year I plan to crack down on you a little harder.

Can you imagine the Supreme Emergency Councils which would gather at Washington, the patriotic defiances which would be hurled? Can you hear the passionate language which would be used to describe this horrific threat to American life, limb, and property?

Now what are we to think of the boasted \$2,000,000,000 automobile industry if, as is actually likely this year, the nation is losing (besides the lives and the limbs) as much

money in total traffic-accident damages as all the passenger cars and trucks manufactured are worth?*

We are thus arrived at the fantastic point where our great American automobile factories are no longer able to make and sell as many dollars' worth of cars and trucks as the dollars which car riders waste every year in accidents! And this is to ignore entirely our 1,000,000 injured and 40,000 dead. What is a human life worth? Say it is worth only \$10,000 and you have an annual loss in human life of \$400,000,000 — from automobiles!

We Americans are a heedless lot. We visit the Gettysburg battlefield and shudder at the carnage which once took place there (7,000 men lost their lives). Do we know that we have a Gettysburg on our roads *every 60 days, year in and year out?*

Even then, we need a cumulative perspective to see the ghastly thing in focus. *This* carnage is *continuous* and *increasing*, despite occasional temporary periods of decline. The automobile industry's wizard, Charles F. Kettering, has urged us to look forward, not backward; let us take a 20-year look. There are learned statisticians who have calculated the 20-year cost of the World War; let us now figure the probable price of the next 20 years' warfare with the automobile.

Under the bloody Turk's tyrannical domination, in that period we may expect that 800,000 to 1,000,000 American citizens will die violent deaths — as though a cloud of bombing planes were to slaughter every man, woman, and child in the city of Cleveland. In 20 years the automobile also will injure every man, woman, and child in the entire States of New York, Cali-

* The National Safety Council estimates the cost of traffic accidents in 1937 at \$1,740,000, a jump of \$100,000,000 over 1936. This cost covers property damage, medical expense, wage loss, insurance overhead. The outlook is for about a \$2,000,000 traffic-accident loss in 1938: a sum approximately equal to the probable total of factory sales of cars and trucks for domestic use.