

# Not Be Based on Power Politics NO!

By Joseph C. Williams

**W**ORLD organization must be based on power politics. To maintain the truth of this assertion does not exclude the theoretical possibility of an alternative: a truly just international organization, necessarily predicated, I believe, on the democratic principles of the dignity of man and universal suffrage. That is the alternative: not even my opponent makes a case for its practicability in the world as we know it.

Power politics, as defined by the opposition, is "an effort to attain or remain in the top position in the world in power and wealth." I agree. I am content, what is more, to find no fault with his contention that: "if we can eliminate power politics . . . we shall eliminate what has been up to now the principal cause of war." (This is somewhat like debating the questions: if Napoleon had never lived; if Hitler had been killed in the first World War . . .)

## REAL QUESTION

The question vital to this debate, however, my opponent dodges skillfully through 2,000 words of discussion, i.e., *can* we eliminate power politics from modern world organization, assuming that its elimination is infinitely desirable? However much impressed I am with my opponent's thesis, that struggles for power and wealth cause wars, I find nowhere in his discussion any practical suggestions for the elimination of these factors. However much I agree that we are trying to attain "a world organization for peace," I contend that we must attack the problem from the standpoint of what is practicable *now*.

In spite of the Atlantic Charter, the Four Freedoms and the Fourteen Points of Woodrow Wilson, diplomacy at the 1946 Peace Tables shows complete, if tacit, acceptance of the power politics principle. The two most powerful states today are unquestionably the United States and Russia. Unquestionably, they do not see eye to eye and, unfortunately, in the power politics world in which we live, their interests obviously conflict. The U.S.S.R. wants, if not communism, then a cordon of "buffer" communist states at her frontiers. The United States wants not only to prevent the spread of communism wherever possible, but to keep as much of the European and Asiatic continents outside Russia's orbit as possible, with an eye on the threat to a balance of power.

Since my opponent is completely convinced of the economic basis of all power struggle, I shall remind him of the serious economic problem involved here. The foreign trade policies of the U.S.S.R. have put the capitalist states

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stronger and the nomads were no longer a serious threat. Condotierri, who later developed into feudal barons, learned how to sell their services to the farmers, but eventually they proved too rapacious and the towns organized to protect their citizens.

As the world became more complex, governments learned methods of taxation—one of the most effective was the sale of monopolies, and this technique was used at home and abroad.

Spain became *the* great power by its use. England warred with Spain because she wanted access to Spain's colonial possessions. France warred with England to decide which should be Spain's successor as primary colonial power.

The American Revolution was fought in part so that the American colonists could break away from the British colonial empire. Germany became a great power and warred with the older nations—or so at least the Germans thought—for a place in the sun, which might be another way of saying—a share in the loot.

The United States was more or less outside all this at first because it was relatively inaccessible and because it later grew very rapidly in strength and wealth. Russia, under the Czar, more accessible than the United States, but the least economically sound of the European states, was backward, but inherently of great strength.

The usefulness of the balance of power was growing and English statesmen, particularly, came to see that the domination of the world by one power was desirable only for that power and its favorites. British foreign policy tended always to side with the weaker of the two powers or groups of powers contending for mastery of the world.

### CRITICISM OF POLICY

However, there were always critics of this policy. The basic criticism was ethical and religious. After all, might did not make right. Unfortunately, ethical and religious considerations found practical considerations too powerful for them until, for a short time, the British liberals worked out a formula that seemed to approximate Woodrow Wilson's plea for "rough justice." This was free trade with each man buying in the lowest market and selling in the dearest.

Free trade never went so far as to eliminate the East India Company and control of the colonial states. It was upset eventually because it could not stand up against the American system of protection. However, under free trade, the world had relatively fewer wars.

The United States had just adopted a policy of protection for necessary industries. It later modified this to protection for the American standard of living and, in addition, gradually but steadily inflated its price structure.

This policy had had critics at home. First was Jefferson who did not want the United States to become an urban civilization. He thought that democracy and cities were incompatible. Later, the middle western farmers

could see that behind the tariff walls the United States was a great area of free trade. They could also see that cotton and wheat were produced in excess of the capacity of the American market to consume them, so, as they saw it, they sold in a free market and purchased in a protected one. This gave the manufacturers a great advantage over them. Inflation at first seemed to be only a relief from debt. Periods of inflation were followed by periods of deflation and, in the process, men who dealt in goods rather than in dollars came to feel that the system was stacked against them.

They saw clearly first, that there should be, if you were a wheat farmer, a constant relationship between the price of a bushel of wheat and the value of mortgaged wheat growing land. They saw that there should be a "parity" between the price of all farm products and all the manufactured products, within the United States.

Organized labor came to think in terms of the B.L.S.'s "Cost of Living" index. Labor leaders felt that their men should get a wage which did not impair their living standards and, when possible, which improved them.

Owners of mortgages, farm land and machinery, came to think in terms of security which meant that, if possible, the returns of capital should be the same regardless of wages or prices.

The wealth of the United States grew at first because of its economic policies. Whether these policies have passed their usefulness and, if so, when that usefulness was passed are rather academic questions in the light of our experience with Europe in World War I and World War II.

Our policies had become: raise wages, raise profits, raise prices and inflate when need be. Occasional depressions caused temporary reductions in the price levels, but no one will maintain that prices in the United States are lower in 1946 than they were in 1776. One thing machinery has not done is to lower the price level.

The United States, because of its size and economic strength, was the principal source of supplies to its Allies in both World Wars.

When we sold to the Allies in the World Market at our 1914 to 1918 prices, they contracted debts they could not pay for an exaggeration of the same reason that the American farmers could not pay their debts based on the same sale of their products to the world market at American prices.

Lend-lease was the early recognition of this same fact in World War II. Whether American armed forces were more or less important than American industry is hard to say, but American power and wealth certainly tipped the balance of power in favor of the Allies in both wars.

To state that the conflicts in the United Nations and in the world between Russia and the United States are primarily conflicts for wealth rather than power seems mistaken on the face of it. Some of the conflicts are conflicts for wealth. The Russian penetration of Northern Iran, like the American penetration of Saudi-Arabia, could give rise to a conflict primarily for wealth. This possibility makes possession of the Dardanelles more important to both sides—in this case a conflict of power. To digress a moment

and lest this seem like a defense of Russia, the first rule of power politics is to stay on top once you get there. No American should want to see the United States in second place in a power politics world. If we can turn voluntarily from a peace based on force to a peace based on justice we should, but in the process we do not want to lose power only to find that the basis of peace is still power.

Some of the conflicts between Russia and the United States are due to underlying differences of political theory complicated by conflicts for power and wealth. The conflicts over policy in Poland reflect this difference.

The American Revolution was a revolution primarily concerned with establishing the dignity of man and decreasing the power of the state. It was among other things a revolution against "the divine right of kings." It proclaimed that "just governments rest on the consent of the governed." The Americans believed that the Bill of Rights, the separation of power and rotation in office were the three measures that would prevent government from again becoming an oppressor.

### **SOCIALIZATION VS. DEMOCRACY**

The American Revolution and the Industrial Revolution started at about the same time. The Industrial Revolution in America helped the growth of the nation. Whether or not the great new wealth was fairly divided, it increased so rapidly that serious doubt about the fact that this was the best of all possible worlds did not arise early. The Industrial Revolution in Europe increased the wealth of Europe, too, but in the process it became apparent, particularly in Germany, that this wealth was not equitably distributed. The Germans did not have a great democratic tradition that caused them to doubt the state. On the contrary, they believed in the state and their social democratic theories were concerned primarily with the state as the more equitable distributor of wealth. Socialization was more to be desired than democracy.

The Russian Revolution was influenced more by German thinking than by American. In fact, on the political side, it was and is a counter-revolution. There is a fundamental conflict between the concept of a state based on freedom of speech and a state based on the right to vote "yes" for the official party program. But Russia would not, I think, go to war with the United States to force Canada to adopt a one-party system, nor, I think, would the United States go to war with Russia to enable Poland to adopt what we consider democratic processes.

However, we support the Poles who oppose Russia and Russia is becoming more friendly with the Argentine regime, which opposes the United States.

I am not attempting to say that it is impossible that the world will ever see a war based on political theory. I am sure that if we can eliminate power politics, the organization of the world based on power and wealth, we shall eliminate what has been up to now the principal cause of war.

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at a disadvantage. Russia's basic trade intention is eventual withdrawal from capitalist economy: autarchy. Because capitalist countries fear that in the effort to become self-sufficient any state may have to dominate the world, they see no limit to the growth of Russia. (See Germany's economic policies, 1933-1945, or the Japanese Greater East Asia.)

Granting the truth of this thesis, Russia obviously has every reason to distrust and fear the capitalist states.

How, from a practical standpoint and given a general atmosphere of distrust and fear, can the United States and Russia be prevailed upon to cease the struggle for power and wealth? My opponent and I agree that all the great political thinkers realized peace can be based only on justice. Yet with the possible exception of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, none of the great thinkers had practical solutions starting with the world in which we find ourselves. Granting that Wilson's Fourteen Points faced reality, let us see how practical they were as steps toward a better world order, a peace based on justice.

*I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.*

In contrast I offer Yalta, Teheran, Moscow, and, just to make my opponent squirm, Versailles. The meetings in New York at the moment, in the public eye though they may be, seem to me no more open and frank on vital issues than, for example, the behind-the-scenes conferences at Versailles. As a matter of fact, it is questionable whether Wilson's first point is practicable.

*II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas.*

Now that the air has replaced the seas as the most important medium of communication between countries, it is well to note that no large state is concerned with freedom of the air, or, for that matter, of the seas. So far, Australian requests for joint use or free use of American Pacific naval bases have been coldly received. Even in wartime the Russians were not enthusiastic about free use of the air over their territory by their own Allies.

*III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.*

Whether Mr. Wilson qualified this point "as far as possible" because of his own beliefs or those of the Senate, he obviously knew that free trade would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

*IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.*

Japan and Germany are being disarmed, their "domestic safety" notwithstanding, but Russia is maintaining the largest army in the world and the United States is building up its atom bomb reserve. In a power politics world, both moves may be interpreted in long range terms as necessary to "domestic safety." This is a paramount difficulty in disarming under Mr. Wilson's program.

*V. A free open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.*

The U.S.S.R. and the United States, respectively, are each governing half of Korea. The United States intends to appropriate such Pacific islands as are necessary to her national defense. Where would Mr. Wilson have looked for the impartial adjuster in such controversies as these?

*VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia that will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world. . . .*

Perhaps the application of this point would have avoided much of the distrust between Russia and the western Allies. Yet Mr. Wilson was President of the United States when United States troops marched into Manchuria against the Bolsheviks. Practical politics, power politics, rules against general principles, even when the principles seem to show uncommon sense.

*VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored.*

Belgium was restored in 1920, because there was no political reason for preventing her restoration. When a small country, like Czechoslovakia, occupies a geographical position of importance to the Big Powers, her restoration is neither immediate nor certain. This reasoning applies also to point VIII.

*VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored.*

France is powerful enough to bring this about without too much delay, unlike smaller states. The question is not moral, but political.

*IX. A re-adjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.*

Look at Fiume, 1919, and Trieste, 1946. Nationality is not so important as geographical position in re the Big Powers (nor was it in 1919).

*X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.*

An indubitably fair statement—yet in the period between the two wars Austria was first forbidden by the Allies to take a “free opportunity of autonomous development” by economic alliance with Germany, then conquered by Germany and now, starved under the inept divided rule of the Allies.

*XI. Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro should be evacuated, occupied territories restored, Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea and the relations of the several Balkan States one to another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality. . . .*

This was not France's objective in her Balkan alliances, nor do Russia or Great Britain seem to be guided by “friendly counsel” to the Balkan



states. The geographic position of the Balkans now, as then, makes them important pawns in the game of power—to refuse to recognize that this is their historic role is to abandon them unrealistically to the struggles between the Big Powers.

*XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a strong sovereignty . . . and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.*

My opponent has pointed out the economic significance of the Dardanelles. International guarantees are well and good; the vital question is who is to enforce the guarantee. We must recognize that none of the Big Powers are disinterested, and only the Big Powers can make good a guarantee of any kind.

*XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations and which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea. . . .*

Geographic facts are indisputable—there was no way in 1918 nor in 1946 of giving Poland access to the sea without creating severe German-Polish tension. Thus far the “international covenants” of 1946, far from guaranteeing Poland’s “economic independence and territorial integrity,” have used Poland’s lands as prizes in territorial arrangements because of her unfortunate geographic position.

*XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.*

This fourteenth point, in the light of the League of Nations and the United Nations organization, seems to put too much faith in covenants and mutual guarantees as the way to maintain peace. True, Wilson’s League was weakened, perhaps fatally, by the failure of the United States to join. But there has never been an association of powers, including the U.N., which was not guided by the power politics of the Big Nations. “Territorial integrity” is guaranteed to small states only as it fits in with the plans of the powers; “political independence” is variously translated to suit the vocabulary of the dominant nations.

My opponent may claim that though the Fourteen Points have never been applied, they could be applied now in a modified form and made to work. Not so. The American concept is far easier to expound to a class in political theory than to apply, for example, to Poland’s “access to the sea,” Britain’s Indian policy or American claims on South Pacific islands. Wilson’s insistence on the principles of sovereignty and of self-determination necessarily give rise to conflicts and tensions among mixed populations. Plebiscites, weighted as they may be, and forced migrations, are at best dubious methods of insuring world peace.

The two-fold problem confronting us, as I see it (recognizing that power politics leads eventually to war) is: how to bring the most powerful nations to a realization that they would be better off abandoning the struggle for

power and, two: how to evolve practical machinery for the transition. But these questions have been ignored by my opponent. He himself, while maintaining that we should turn "voluntarily" from a peace based on force to a peace based on justice, asserts that "in the process we do not want to lose power only to find that the basis of peace is still power."

Only in the realm of theory can a solution to this dilemma be found. As my opponent points out: theoretically power politics is not the necessary diplomacy of international order. Justice, including justice to the people of India, including free migration of peoples, including universal suffrage, including the elimination of national and racial prejudices—would certainly more nearly approximate a peaceful international order. This even my opponent dares not advocate seriously!

Any "justice" less than this, any peaceful organization that falls short of this, is merely power politics by another name. My opponent, by refusing to defend Utopia, concedes the debate.

#### REBUTTAL — M. G. DILKE

My opponent seems to have two different threads of thought running through his argument. First, the world always has been organized on a power politics basis. Therefore it always will be. He concedes this leads to war. He is a United States citizen. He hopes the United States will be successful in the next and all future wars. In answer, first of all, I assumed that we were trying to organize the world for peace, not war. If war comes, I, too, like all Americans, hope that America will be on the right side and that the right side will win. There was a time when Stephen Decatur's toast: "My country—may she ever be right, but right or wrong, my country," was held in less repute than it is today.

The other and perhaps more serious criticism of my position is that since the world has always been organized on a power politics basis, and since my opponent cannot imagine a perfect basis for peace, I must expound my position. To make it harder, he even tells me the basis of the world organization I must advocate. It is "Justice, including justice to the people of India, including universal suffrage, including the elimination of racial and national prejudices," which, he maintains, "would more nearly approximate a peaceful international organization."

I shall advocate justice, including all the "includings" above. But I do not advocate saying that the British must get out of India forthwith. I suggest that we forget the "Four Freedoms," the Yalta Conference, Teheran and the power politics to which the United Nations are committed and give a little thought to the atom bomb. If the American and Japanese accounts of what one bomb did in Hiroshima and another in Nagasaki are correct, the realists, the power politicians, had better begin to figure out how anyone will win the next war. Do they advocate making as many bombs as fast as we can, telling our friends to go to one side of the international date line and our enemies to the other, then dropping enough bombs on our enemies to



eliminate them? Send a few bombs to Trieste, the Dardanelles, north Korea, and maybe even the Kremlin? If not, if Russia and the United States must fight and if the United States must win, why not?

Because the people of the United States would throw out any government that made such an attempt. This suggests the basis of my program, which is, that we extend and develop political liberty and try to develop what the Russians speak of as economic democracy without, in the process, throwing democracy out the window. This calls for a world organization based on a political constitution, withholding, for the individual, all the rights our Bill of Rights withheld for him from the grasp of the state. If economic liberty and political liberty are in conflict, I, at least, am sure that political liberty is more important and I would not give it up for economic gains. But I am not sure they are in conflict and I should suggest that as a practical matter the economic pattern of the world be extended so that areas of free trade are increased with the definite intention that they should eventually be world-wide.

This, given the intent, is a matter for experts. Perhaps the best way to accomplish it is to set up in each region, Europe for example, an economic unit similar to the United States. That is, a unit within which there is one medium of exchange and no tariffs, no quotas, no governmental restrictions of trade. Let French industries, as they are, compete in France or Sweden with the Swiss without any artificial handicaps.

Let all of South America be such a unit. Let India be another. Let Russia join the European unit if she wishes or remain outside. Let events decide whether western Europe will fight Russia to free the Poles or whether the Poles will be able to free themselves.

Let the United States look to its industrial efficiency rather than its industrial power as the source of its wealth. Let it face the fact that both Canada and the United States would be better off if all the economic barriers were set aside, but Mexico, at the moment, would be disrupted by the same process. Let the United States set out to make some adjustments up in Mexico and some down in the United States as the first step to extending our area of free trade.

Basically let the Western world remember the importance of the individual. Remember that all organizations set up to reform tend to create and perpetuate new evils. Extend the vote. Check organizations. Depend on technical excellence for military security.

In short, realize that the principle of one-man, one-vote, should it go across borders today, would disrupt economic relations of long standing.

Why should any American agree to this, or any Western European, for that matter? There is an old story about Lovejoy, the abolitionist. Before speaking, he used to put a Bible on the rostrum and a gun alongside it and introduce abolition by saying: "This is for those who believe in the Bible and this is for those who don't." We all have the same choice now. We can advocate peace with justice on idealistic grounds or on the grounds that crime does not pay under existing conditions.

## Good Old Summertime

By Michael J. Ogden

From his column "In Perspective" in the Providence Evening Bulletin

UNTIL the past weekend, the last time I had gone anywhere for an extended trip my gear, as I now remember it, consisted of the following:

Carbine (1); helmet (1); helmet liner (1); web belt (1); trench knife (1); gas mask (1); mess kit (1); field jacket (1); O.D. shirt (1); O.D. trousers (pr.); wool socks (pr.); G.I. shoes (pr.). This, with a duffel bag holding extra clothing, and a knapsack containing odds and ends, was the limit allowed by the Air Transport Command for the men going overseas. For all A.T.C. or I knew, it could have done us for 20 years to come.

Last weekend the family objective was a relaxing trip to the country. Into the auto I put or caused to be put, not necessarily in any rational order, the following articles (with family answers to my random protests):

Children (3), Adults (3).

6x6. Play pen, semi-collapsible (1)—"We just can't let the baby run around on the wet grass."

Baby carriage, (1)—"He'll have to nap."

Stroller (1)—"He'll get tired."

Sun suits (5)—"It might be hot."

Umbrella (1)—"It might rain."

Snow Suit (1)—"It might snow."

Rubbers, galoshes (5 pr.)—"All right, you don't have to wear yours."

Blankets (10)—"It gets cool at night."

Sun glasses (3 pr.)—"There's a terrible glare on the water."

Kindling (Asstd. sizes, 60 pcs.)—"You can't start a fire with only newspaper."

Newspaper (Previous two months' *Journals* and *Bulletins*)—"To fire the kindling."

Logs (bu. bskt.)—"You can't go around chopping trees."

Baby oil (3 oz. in gallon jug)—"It's easier to carry that way."

Baby's toilet articles (innumerable)—"You never can tell."

Crackers (animal, ginger, salted, sweet, with icing, without icing, with filling . . . )—"You have to have variety."

Carts, blocks, toy trains, rattles, horns, dolls, whistles, drum, bubble pipe, crayons, yo yo, ball, tennis racquets, scout knife, drawing book . . . —"The children get restless."

Suitcases (4)—"How else are you going to take dresses, shoes and the other little things?"

Potted plants (2)—"You can't leave them in the city without attention."

Bowl of gravy (1)—"I'll do no such thing."