

As is plain now, the mistake that the British government made in its desire to avert war did not consist in its more than conciliatory policy toward Germany, but in its total lack of adequate military preparations. England had many warnings of Germany's aggressive intentions, not only in a vast literature designating the British Empire as the barrier to Germany's legitimate development, but in the government's unmistakable actions. It showed but little insight into the existing military conditions not to realize that in a European war England would not only have to maintain her naval supremacy, but would have to engage as never before in a land war of unlimited liabilities if the British Empire was to survive intact. But the Liberal government confined itself merely to maintaining the relative superiority of the fleet, and treated with scorn all those who demanded adequate army preparations. Upon Lord Roberts's aged head was heaped constant contumely on account of his warnings as to the urgency of national military service.

It is easy to be wise after the event, whereas at the time a correct decision was exceedingly difficult. Adequate military preparations might have been deemed provocative in Germany. But such a conclusion could not legitimately have been drawn if, in the full view of the public eye, a policy of preparedness had been joined to the policy of conciliation. Both elements were necessary to preserve peace on an enduring basis of international goodwill. Preparedness alone might have maintained peace, but the ill-will would have remained. Conciliation without adequate military force could not but defeat its purpose.

This failure of English policy to prevent war illustrates admirably the fundamental fallacy of pacifist teaching. According to the current proverb, it takes two to fight, but it is equally true that it takes two to keep the peace, for if one is unalterably bent upon exercising his will, the other has no practical alternative but to fight in self-defence. England acted according to the approved pacifist program, but this only made the conflict more probable, since it convinced Germany that England might safely be ignored. To the extent that the Liberal government, despite the best of intentions, failed in time to prepare against Germany's onslaught on the freedom and liberties of Europe, England must bear a certain degree of negative responsibility for the war. It is a responsibility of an entirely different nature and extent from that of Germany, and may be compared to the culpability of the individual who thoughtlessly subjects those of self-confessed aggressive purposes to temptation.

GEORGE LOUIS BEER.

In Praise of Footbinding

A BARBAROUS custom, you call it. Barbarous it cannot be, since it has never prevailed among barbarians and only became established in the oldest and maturest civilization in the world. What you mean is that footbinding is painful, unnatural. It is indeed painful, exquisitely painful. But one of the measures of civilization is pain. Central Africa has no tortures so intense as those endured in New York or London. Footbinding is unnatural, true; but how much of civilization is natural? When the medical missionaries first exhibited by X-ray photographs the inside of a bound foot I was shocked, I admit. All those little bones distorted, twisted, run together in spongy masses—ugh! You would be shocked, too, if you could see X-ray photographs of the inside of some of your own women's minds. Soon, however, you would recover from the shock as I did. Civilization cares nothing for the inside, so the externals are fair. My lady's lily foot, your lady's lily mind: these are altogether lovely, so far as you and I can see. We shall leave it to the specialist to fret over what lies within.

A barbarous custom? Let us look to the real ways of the barbarians as they are recorded in the venerable Ghin texts, over two thousand years old. In those ancient days the wild Chô-su tribes roamed over the slopes of Altai. It is written that the Chô-su thought it sacrilege to add to the disabilities that God had imposed upon the female sex. Therefore men and women dressed alike, fared alike, joined equally in the chase, went side by side into battle, shared equally in deliberations and decisions even of greatest import. And sometimes the wife proved more skilful in the chase or more valiant in war than her husband, and often and often a woman's voice prevailed in the tribal councils. These were true barbarians.

Two thousand years ago your own ancestors were barbarians, very like the Chô-su. They too were content with the disabilities imposed upon women by God. But little by little you have become more civilized and have added steadily to the disabilities of woman. She may no longer dress like you, exercise freely like you. You do not let her say and hear many of the things you say and hear; many things you desire to know you seek to prevent her from knowing. From the chase, from war, from tribal councils, you exclude her altogether. You do not bind her feet; not yet. But you are new to civilization and inexperienced in science of means and ends. By your clumsy methods you have succeeded in improving a small fraction of your women in the degree appropriate to a high civilization. Bind their feet and you will succeed with all of them.

You shrink from the cruelty of footbinding. It is not cruel, since it is for the good of all, women as well as men. It is painful—for child and parents. You suppose that we in China do not love our daughters, but only our sons? It is not true. We are a tender-hearted people, and after the first chill of disappointment our hearts grow very warm to the wee pale sprites that have come to share our lives. I have a little daughter of my own, and, while I write this at my ease, somewhere in China my little girl sits mournfully on a mat, gripping her knees with her tiny hands as if this would stop the aching. The twinges reach me here, through ten thousand miles of space. "A barrel of tears for each pair of bound feet," says the proverb. That is an exaggeration. My little girl wept at first, bitterly, but soon she dropped into silent despair. It was an unusually difficult case because we began late. In my family we have always begun to bind at three. But my wife would plead, "A few days more for the little twinkling feet." "It will be all the harder," I would grumble. "This hopping about makes the feet big and sensitive." But she was such a merry bird-like little thing, and at our first attempts to put on the tight bandages she made such piteous gestures with her chubby arms, as if despairing of the world since we could be so cruel, that we put it off far too long. But the worst is over now. There has been little sleep under my roof for the last year. A barrel of tears? Yes, but they were the mother's.

Footbinding is a harsher duty now than it was a generation ago, for then it was never questioned. But now we have a great number of irresponsible young men of good family who have been abroad, or have read foreign books. They are like your parlor revolutionaries; their constant song is, "All this must go; requirement of offspring, reverence for parents, sound education, footbinding, all must go." No man of sense pays any attention to their paradoxes. Except when you have lain awake night after night listening to a sobbing child. Then the demon of doubt prompts you to ask yourself, "What if it is unnecessary? What if footbinding must go?" These new ideas are but a pest to afflict parents in the performance of their difficult duties. Footbinding cannot go. "The natural foot" that the reformers prate about, what is it but a fad? It will work its transitory mischief and disappear.

Superficial occidental writers assert that the bound foot is to be explained by a perverted aesthetic sense in the male sex. This is to miss its deep spiritual significance. The bound foot is the condition of a life of dignity for man, of a life of contentment for woman. Let me make this clear. I am a Chinese fairly typical of my class. I pored

too much over classic texts in my youth and dimmed my eyes, narrowed my chest, crooked my back. My memory is not strong, and in an old civilization there is a vast deal to learn before you can know anything. Accordingly among scholars I cut a poor figure. I am timid, and my voice plays me false in gatherings of men. But to my footbound wife, confined for life to her house except when I bear her in my arms to her palanquin, my stride is heroic, my voice is that of a roaring lion, my wisdom is of the sages. To her I am the world; I am life itself. As you see me I seem little and weak, but as my wife sees me I am colossally great. Therefore life seems good to me. I need not go forth to strive on the battlefield, nor to seek even more difficult glory in the arts of peace. Life seems good to my wife also. All the petty services she undertakes for me are satisfying to her because they are illuminated by my greatness. All her unending labors in caring for my children are agreeable to her because these children have the seed of greatness in them.

Every man in all the world desires to be a hero; every woman in the world desires to be the wife of a hero. In China, thanks to footbinding, these desires are realized. How is it with you? I have often sought light on this question. How is it possible for Americans and Europeans to seem great men in the eyes of their big, fine, active wives? As I find it the custom among you to discuss such subjects freely, I am wont to put the question directly: "Are you a great man in your wife's estimation?" "Of course," you reply, but your eyelids droop and I am puzzled. If I am questioning a lady I ask, "Does your husband really seem a great man to you?" "Of course," she replies, but she opens her eyes very wide and I am still more puzzled. To be great men to such wives as I have seen in western lands, that is what you call a big contract! It would be different if you were all so robust and eagle-eyed as some of the Rocky Mountain men, who, like the old Chô-su, believe it a sacrilege to add to the disabilities imposed upon the female sex by God. But you men of the cities look to me very much like Chinese. How are you able to play the superior part proper to the head of a civilized household?

I surmise that you realize your predicament and are taking active measures to strengthen your position against further weakening. You are beginning to see the necessity of standing for the civilized ideal of woman affected with more disabilities than God had intended. As a representative of a much riper civilization, I may assure you with authority that you are on the right track. I cannot give similarly unqualified approval to the means you employ. You deny woman the ballot, handicap her in pro-

fessional life, discriminate against her in industry, belittle her intellectual achievements, or, if these are too palpably solid, you cry down the value of her personality. So far, good. But the dangerous barbaric spirit of independence among women can-

not be held in check merely by throwing barriers across one and another avenue of expression. What you need for the civilizing of women is a simple and radical strategy. Bind their feet.

SUH-HO.

CORRESPONDENCE

In Praise of Strong Feeling

SIR: As one of those whose admiration for THE NEW REPUBLIC is qualified by an unwelcome sense of its "pro-Germanism," I cannot refrain from saying that your editorial of December 4th leaves me less satisfied than ever. That this feeling on the part of some of your readers has nothing to do with the journalistic peculiarities of the *Boston Transcript*, or with the provincialism of "comfortable Boston," you must know as well as I. The question, as I understand it, comes to this: Is there or is there not a moral issue involved in the present war? If there is not, then we in America may remain detached and dispassionate, and may confine our attention to what comes after it. If there is such a moral issue, then it is humanly impossible that our passions should not be aroused. In moral matters there is no judging without feeling. Those who judge that in the present war the cause of the Allies is also the cause of humanity and of justice will feel as they judge. And in proportion to their concern for humanity and justice they will feel strongly and deeply. It is unfortunate that one cannot love humanity and justice without hating inhumanity and injustice. But there is no escape from moral indignation save in apathy or in sentimentalism.

It may be that the act of war would be a less effective means of serving one's cause than some more indirect means. It may be that one cannot go to war even if one wished, since war is a matter of nations and not of individuals. When one's feelings and one's actions are so divided one cannot be happy, though one may be honest. I agree that it is ignominious. But if one has convictions and feelings and cannot deal blows for them, shall one then put away one's convictions and feelings?

Does not the editor of THE NEW REPUBLIC occasionally suffer from such ignominy? Has he perhaps allowed himself to feel resentment at Turkey's treatment of the Armenians, or at Georgia's treatment of Leo Frank, or at the reckless driver who kills a child for the joy of speeding, or at the rich who grind the poor, and found himself unable to do more than talk or write? If so he should be able to sympathize with the impotent emotion of those who resent the course of Germany in this war and pray for the victory of her enemies.

There is but one consolation for such ignominy. In the long run passion will get itself instruments of expression and make itself effective; whereas this easy tolerance, this "willingness to forget" which THE NEW REPUBLIC urges will never inspire anything but a shallow opportunism.

Those who suspect THE NEW REPUBLIC of "pro-Germanism" have not been able to convert their minds into "a clearing-house of fact and opinion." They do not merely hold the opinion that Germany deserves moral condemnation; they condemn Germany. And they have not reached the pitch of intellectualism and magnanimity which permits THE NEW REPUBLIC to regard moral condemnation as a "trivial attitude."

RALPH BARTON PERRY.

Boston.

Peace at Any Reasonable Price

SIR: Your editorial "War at Any Price" is a very interesting example of the essential unfairness that often arises from an overstrained impartiality. In demanding that the Allies and Germany define their aims with a view to a prompt peace, you ignore the essential fact that only Germany can readily define her aims. Her aims are material—military and commercial. They could easily be formulated. What her Chancellor has repeatedly called guarantees of security could be expressed in terms of armies, navies, and tariffs.

France and England are battling for the right to exist as independent nations. This right can be secured either by the success of their arms against German aggression, by a favorable change of the German mind, or by both. These are conditions which cannot readily be phrased as terms of peace. Let us examine them.

On the supposition that the German mind does not change, there is no safety for the Allies short of a crushing victory, and probably rather little in that. The more sensible Englishmen and Frenchmen who talk about crushing Germany do so in despair of her bettering her moral attitude. In this they are entirely lucid. They see that there is no real solution in a Germany merely checked. Here they and I take sharp issue with your article. I cannot believe that the relative failure of the German plan of conquest will work any radical change in the thinking of her ruling class. They will lay the ill chance to some technical defect which can be remedied another time. Of course if the Allies cannot do better, they will have to put up with a draw. But they will do so with the clear perception that such a peace belongs to the class which the greatest of German philosophers might characterize as mere truces. So certain is this that I feel that even were the Allies not headed, as they seem to be, toward eventual victory, but doomed to utter defeat, they would do well to go down fighting. They can never hope to fight on better terms, and there would be no point in dragging out the world tragedy of their downfall. In short, if the war is to be pressed to a military conclusion, the Allies must make root and branch work. Their leaders have formulated this aim into complete precision.

Of course the only morally satisfactory conclusion of the war would be a kind of conversion of Germany—a Germany penitent and ready to make amends. This is the devout hope of all idealists who have not wholly lost their heads. It has been expressed by many of the best of France and England. But the Allies cannot possibly forecast the conditions under which such a conversion will take place. They can only recognize it as a fact when it occurs. No reasonable person doubts that they would do so. The move must come from Germany. Obviously the only evidence that Germany had ceased to think in terms of mechanical *Weltmacht* would be the complete repudiation of the ruling class that has made the war. Some kind of a revolution is the only safety signal that Germany can present to the world she has outraged. The Allies, having no direct