

THE GOOD WAR

JOSEPH R. STROMBERG

The two world wars were essentially one war with an intermission. The first half, 1914-18, cost 19 million lives, destroyed the comity of Liberal Christian European civilization, and supplied reasons for another colossal bloodletting. The world of 1919 contained four great forces. The first was the status quo (imperial) powers—Britain, France, the Netherlands, who wanted no change. The second was the revisionist powers—Germany, Japan, Soviet Russia, and Italy—who wanted to overturn the 1919 settlement. The third was the anticolonialist movements all over the globe. Emboldened by the Europeans' suicidal conflict, these movements worked to throw out the foreign devils. The fourth force was the United States, whose ruling elite aspired to global mercantilist hegemony. Another war, or wars, involving these forces would have unpredictable consequences, but the Americans were likely to support the status-quo powers while pursuing global dominance.

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Senate rejection of the Treaty of Versailles reflected American disillusionment with Woodrow Wilson's oversold war. Three Republican presidents seconded this rejection. In this climate, writers took another look at the "Great War," questioned wartime mythology, and argued that America could have remained neutral. Such writings created an atmosphere favorable to nonintervention, lower military spending, and legislation to keep the U.S. neutral *in fact*. The famous Nye Committee suggested that arms manufacturers had involved America in war. "Isolationist" feeling pervaded the country.

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U.S. policy-makers, however, continued to think in terms of Open Door empire and saw foreign markets as crucial to American prosperity. Interventions took place in Latin America and the U.S. military roamed as wide as China, but Republican presidents pursued markets with moderation. President Hoover chose peace with Japan, and risked losing the "China Market," the eternal mirage of Open Door enthusiasts.

Meanwhile, the other global forces set the stage for new wars. Former Senator R.F. Pettigrew warned: "The Treaty of Versailles is merely an armistice." In addition, the World War had done incalculable harm to European morality and political life. It made possible the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in Russia.

In a murderous campaign against "civil society" Stalin's cadres killed millions "of their own people." Elsewhere, "integral nationalists" combined neopagan nationalism with leftism and invented "national socialism." The communist threat helped bring Italian Fascists and German National Socialists to power, where they posed—with some initial credibility—as bulwarks against Bolshevism. Both movements challenged the status quo. These regimes—and Russia—were "totalitarian" (Italy fell short), revisionist, and potentially difficult neighbors. Their demands threatened the status quo.

In 1929, postwar inflationism (against which Ludwig von Mises had warned since 1912) unleashed worldwide depression. Crackpots everywhere proclaimed the end of capitalism and the need for "planning" modeled on wartime commandism. Everywhere, leaders defied "mere" economics and sought to restore prosperity through statism. Two unfortunate consequences were the abandonment of the (semi)gold standard by the status-quo powers and their decision to surround their overseas empires with tariffs. This strengthened those Japanese leaders who wanted to use force to secure markets for Japan's growing industries. Rather than be the Americans' junior partner, Japan began acquiring markets by force, and promoted a Manchurian state detached from China (then undergoing revolution). The Japanese learned from Western example.

In the United States, the Great Depression brought corporatists and socialists to Washington to serve under FDR. When mass unemployment persisted despite New Deal quackery, policy-makers turned to foreign markets. By the late 1930s, German, Italian, and Japanese competition convinced the

administration that only war could sustain the Open Door policy. When World War II came, "the political lineup follow[ed] the economic lineup," as Secretary of State Cordell Hull observed, between 1933 and 1939, Adolf Hitler achieved what all Germans earnestly desired: destruction of the Versailles order. Largely through bluff (and limited rearmament for someone "planning" a world war), he remilitarized the Rhine, annexed a probably willing Austria, absorbed Czechoslovakia, and turned his attention to the Polish Corridor and Danzig. Mussolini acquiesced in the *Anschluss* and came into Hitler's orbit. The Soviets began shopping for security against Germany. England's much derided "appeasement" (Munich, 1938) aimed to adjust the Versailles settlement wherever the Germans had genuine grievances (while rearming just in case). If anything, appeasement was "pro-active." The British virtually gave Hitler Czechoslovakia at a time when his general staff doubted their readiness for even a minor war.

Hitler, improvising as he went, lost track of limits. Sensing this, the powers toyed with new arrangements. While the British temporized over cultivating Russia, Stalin struck a deal with Hitler, gaining temporary security and entree into Poland. This left Hitler free to fight the West, if necessary, over Polish issues. When the British and French drew a line in the sand, it was "heroism mainly at the expense of others" (A.J.P. Taylor).

In September 1939, German forces entered Poland, while the Soviets invaded from the east (and stationed troops in the Baltic states). In mid-1940, the Germans reduced Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. In the Pacific, the U.S. continued to oppose Japanese aspirations. This strengthened those who

saw Japan's only hope as a violent breakout from Western encirclement.

All this—just as the domestic failures of the New Deal became apparent. Once war broke out in Europe, Roosevelt moved cautiously to intervene on the side of Britain. Constrained by public opinion, Roosevelt ran—like Wilson—as a "peace" candidate in 1940. Once reelected, he unleashed "economic warfare" on Japan, cutting off scrap metal and oil, and freezing Japanese financial assets. From then on, negotiations were de-

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signed to buy time while putting a good face on U.S. motives. The original "China Lobby" (lobbyists for the Kuomintang regime) and aspirants to the China Market helped keep the U.S. on its anti-Japanese course.

Concerned citizens founded the America First Committee in September 1940. The AFC used print, radio, and mass rallies, to counter the propaganda of well-heeled administration "fronts," British agents, and Hollywood producers. America First, a coalition of anti-war liberals, conservatives and even socialists, was a mass movement (unlike pacifism) able to provoke substantial public debate over intervention. The AFC so deepened FDR's political dilemma that the administration evasively represented its initiatives as efforts to keep out of the war. The AFC alerted the public to the cumulative effect

of Lend-Lease, "neutrality patrols" (secret convoys), and the Draft Extension Bill by holding mass rallies in major cities.

Interventionist moves multiplied. FDR announced an "unlimited state of national emergency." Full-scale convoys began in July and U.S. forces occupied Iceland. Soon, undeclared naval war existed in the north Atlantic. Incidents involving the *Greer*, *Kearny*, and *Reuben James* failed to kindle pro-war fervor and German restraint denied FDR a *casus belli*. AFC leaders, more conservative than their supporters, took a weak stand on conscription which may have permitted draft extension in August 1941. This enabled the administration to pursue a collision course with Japan with greater confidence.

As debate continued, events altered the character of the war. Hitler's assault on Soviet Russia elated Churchill, but gave isolationists the argument that the totalitarians should be allowed to fight one another. (The German campaign stalled because of Russia's sheer size and backwardness and the Germans' ideology, which lost them millions of anti-Stalinist allies.) Choosing between the candidates for Central European supremacy seemed remote from actual American interests.

After December 7, many charged the administration with using Japan as a "back door" into the European war. They focused on Pearl Harbor, which is ultimately less important than the realization that the administration's entire outlook—Open Door empire and the Universal New Deal—made intervention inevitable. Hitler accelerated FDR's passage from one war to another by declaring war—in a generous interpretation of his understanding with Japan. The AFC closed down and supported the war, however reluctantly, while critiquing its origins.

(John T. Flynn wrote *As We Go Marching*, which described American welfare-warfare statism as "genteel fascism.") Wartime repression, hardest on Japanese-Americans, buried the antiwar forces for the duration.

I cannot summarize the war here. It is a monstrous tapestry of crime and mass murder, unequaled in the sorry annals of statism. It was a "conjuncture" of wars—the Anglo-German War, the American-Japanese War, the Russo-Finnish War—among the "four forces" identified earlier. Geography and Hitler's ambitions divided the revisionist powers. An odd coalition of revisionist Russians, British, and Americans, fought the revisionist Germans, Italians and Japanese. The war was not "one" until the Soviets entered the Pacific war at the very end.

Logic of the War and the White Hats' Motives

The war was fully formed and the outlines of its end were in view. Japanese statists strung their forces from Indo-China to New Guinea, leaving their main armies in northern China. However daring their tactics, their limited manpower and industries would yield soon enough to the American industrial colossus. Seemingly endless American supplies sustained Britain and contributed to the Soviets' rollback of the Wehrmacht. The titanic Normandy invasion helped end the European war before the Russians came further west, but had it faltered, the German position was still unsustainable. Hitler's mad dash into Russia had stretched German manpower, industrial capacity, and resources over a considerable part of Eurasia. (Casualties on the Russian front were enormous.)

This seems clear enough. But what about those who took the American people into a war they wished to avoid? Open Door empire was fundamental for them. William Appleman Williams writes that, effectively, "American entry into World War I began with a decision in 1938 to eliminate Axis economic penetration of the hemisphere." Murray N. Rothbard attributes the U.S. warpath to anger that the Germans "went their way successfully on their own, totally outside of Anglo-American control or...the cherished American Open Door." (Skeptics need to explain the policy-makers' frequent, obsessive references to the concept.)

U.S. economic goals were separate from any sudden discovery that the German state was viciously totalitarian. They were perfectly compatible with a strategic alliance with Russia, whose leaders had already murdered millions when Hitler's was in the thousands. The Open Door created tension with Britain as FDR's advisors ("anti-colonial imperialists") maneuvered U.S. corporations into British markets (especially oil). Government/business "planning" for the postwar world reflected the Open Door outlook.

The Ruthlessness of the White Hats

U.S. political-economic leaders were determined and able. Their *Weltanschauung* juxtaposed Wilsonian world-meddling and sordid mercantilist aims. They had long wanted to supplant the British empire. Now they proclaimed the American Century, the Age of the Common Man; but in reality, it was their world mission of neomercantilist empire.

Given this outlook—and because they were in a hurry—they

seemingly borrowed their scruples from the "fascist" enemy. The prime example is Terror Bombing, which deliberately targeted civilians. This was Total War—pioneered by General Sherman (and his boss). Richard Weaver comments: "Modern wars have tended increasingly to resemble lynching parties.... The object now is to pulverize the enemy completely, men, women, and children being lumped into one common target."

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About 600,000 civilians died from Allied air raids, including many non-Germans who were, presumably, being "liberated." Strategic bombing ravaged Tokyo with comparable results. *Time* magazine, perhaps taking up haiku, wrote that "properly kindled, Japanese cities will burn like autumn leaves." Allied bombing failed to slow German war production until the spring of 1944, and once on the continent, Allied armies found that "much of the most serious hindrance came from the heaps of rubble created by the excessive bombing efforts..., which had thereby blocked the routes of advance far more thoroughly than the enemy could." (B.H. Liddell-Hart)

The final step—the atom bomb, a device with no strategic or tactical use at all—came from bureaucratic Big Science. Diplomat George Kennan writes: "the nuclear bomb is the most useless weapon ever invented."

It can be employed to no rational purpose. It is not even an effective weapon against itself." But it was a wonderful way to incinerate hundreds of thousands of civilians at once. For Allied moral theorists, that was quite enough. (This product of Scientism is said to be the key to the "peace" we have enjoyed since 1945.)

There was never any doubt the bomb would be used against civilians. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not moral departures. (And who overlooked Nagasaki's role as the historic center of Japanese Christianity? Insensitive, doubtless, to suggest that distinctions be made.) The bomb's morality can be dealt with summarily: Can anyone imagine Robert E. Lee deploying this weapon? That the "thousand-plane raid launched after the Japanese surrender had been announced but, technically, before it was officially received" (Noam Chomsky) underscores the cynicism of Allied "strategy."

Another great idea was "Unconditional Surrender," which gave the enemy no hope and prolonged the war. Liddell-Hart says: "It was the greatest help to Hitler, in preserving his grip on the German people, and likewise to the War Party in Japan." This mangled historical notion of FDR's was evaded to achieve Italian surrender and modified slightly to speed up Japanese surrender. Had it never been announced, many lives might have been spared.

Costs of This Great Crusade

We are asked to believe that joining this exercise secured the safety and future of the American people. Let us look at some costs. At something over 400,000, U.S. casualties were the lightest of any participant (.8 percent of population). Nonetheless, to these men

and their families, the war was very costly indeed. Economic costs could be made up for later in the world's most productive economy. Other costs were less obvious: the general decline in morals,

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which wars entail, precedents for leaders craving foreign adventures, permanent controls, and bloated bureaucracies. William Henry Chamberlin called intervention a "short-cut to fascism" and, in truth, statepower made ten-league strides during the war (compounded by the Cold War's war-economy-in-permanence).

Mistakes of the White Hats

The U.S. political-economic elite seemed unconcerned about the destruction of Germany and Japan. Domestic political considerations led the administration to establish fewer than 100 divisions (military planners had wanted 400). This meant that Russians would do the most to defeat Germany. Their success would bring them westwards and recreate Russia's pre-1918 frontiers and influence. Even so, Eisenhower unaccountably allowed the Soviets to take Berlin. (I am not suggesting that more Americans should have been killed, only that the later Cold Warriors could not have it both ways.) The expulsion of millions of Germans from their homes followed (with an appalling death toll).

Liddell-Hart writes that Britain and France "slid into war at the moment most unfavorable to them, and then precipitated an avoidable disaster of far-reaching consequences." Dwight MacDonald was blunter: "it now looks like pure romanticism to have expected from the military defeat of Germany by the Allies anything more than the military defeat of Germany by the Allies." The so-called "failure to win the peace" was implicit in the whole enterprise.

Was It Really Worth It? The Morality of Staying Out

What would have happened with no U.S. role at all? The "worst case," apparently, is German victory in the East: another Brest-Litovsk. Alternatively, the Germans might hold the same territories, with Stalin's armies withdrawing eastward and the two totalitarianisms conducting an endless frontier war (or "no peace, no war," with minimal fighting along an informal frontier). Britain was in little danger after the Battle of Britain. Hitler's admiration for the British as fellow Aryan empire-builders is well-known, and the occasional peace feelers show that, as Churchill put it, Britain "could have made peace with Hitler at any time." This would have freed up the Germans, but Russian geography, the Red Army's ability to work with very little, Soviet ability to turn out large numbers of suitable tanks, and Russian manpower reserves, suggest that the Germans would have had no cakewalk. (And imagine them trying to control everything from Calais to Vladivostok if they "won"!)

So in the "worst case" a German Empire would misrule much of Eurasia for unknown years. In time, resistance movements might erode the empire's power; nor can one rule out changes in Germany. A sort

of alternate "Cold War" might have ensued, but I do not suppose that an overextended *German* empire would last longer than did the Soviet empire. As narrow racialists, the Germans made few friends and recruited fewer willing collaborators than the Soviets.

So we come back to the obvious: either Germany or Russia dominates Central Europe and rules in totalitarian fashion. I cannot find many reasons to prefer one solution to the other. The preceding scenario does not do much for the Eastern European Jews, but neither, on the record, did World War II. Any alternate form taken by the war involves some rearrangement of casualties and victims, but the question arises whether *this* was primarily the Americans' responsibility or whether it grew out of the First World War's destabilization of the European state system?

The Pacific war was avoidable, even well into 1941, had the American leadership given ground on the Open Door. America was virtually impregnable. Two oceans *were* a good defense perimeter. There were no intercontinental bombers; there were no nuclear "payloads." Any power that attacked America would face impossible problems of logistics. Thus, U.S. participation in World War II was unnecessary, no matter who prevailed over whom.

Absent the Pacific war, Americans would still have cared about events in Europe. But the administration had an overriding agenda: Open Door empire and a world run largely by themselves. [RRR]

LINCOLN HERBERT REVERSUS

PAUL GOTTFRIED

In May 1995, Lincoln Herbert, a law student at Temple University, was dismissed from the school at the insistence of Dean Robert Reinstein, for supposedly attacking a black panhandler. Herbert had argued that the panhandler, who pursued him into the law school building, could well have been armed. The pepper powder by which Herbert had driven him off had not produced real injury, and its use was appropriate for someone being pursued by a noisy, disheveled assailant in a high-crime area.

Herbert was readmitted (after almost two years) and after obligatory

visits to a therapist: Reinstein had contended that the expelled student was both mentally disturbed and physically dangerous and depicted him as "someone definitely with a therapeutic problem."

There is another side to this story, which explains why Herbert has pressed his counterattack down to the present day. An outspoken paleo, Herbert challenged the cult of multiculturalism and mocked what he saw as the time-serving liberalism of the Temple Law School administration.

He organized open debates about political issues to which paleo speakers (including me and Sam Francis) were invited and made sure these debates were conducted with civility and balance. Unfortunately he also unsettled the dean, who has made a career out of pushing affirmative action, lamenting the victimization of women and blacks, and, more recently, working to obtain a federal judgeship under Clinton. Reinstein came down hard on Herbert after the incident with the panhandler in an effort to get rid of someone he openly disliked and because, as usual, he was currying favor with minority leaders.

Since then Herbert, as an expelled and readmitted law student and now as an attorney, has pursued his grievances through the courts. In September an appellate judge in Philadelphia ruled against him on grounds of the statutes of limitation. The plaintiff had apparently filed his suit more than two years after the initial dismissal. Herbert maintained the relevant date was when the official expulsion was made public, early in 1996. The case will go forward, or so it is hoped, eventually to the Supreme Court. Herbert's legal position is that his dismissal had not been accompanied by the stipulated process. Reinstein had acted entirely on his own and humiliated the



Murray N. Rothbard (1926–1995) dean of the Austrian School of economics, historian of freedom, philosopher of libertarianism, and enemy of the state—was a one-man army of liberty. The *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*, which he cofounded, is inspired by his spirit, and dedicated to his vision.