

The Saturday Review *of Literature*

Danger Sign

EDGAR ANSEL MOWRER

THE war did not cost us enough. Not enough Americans got killed or maimed or blinded. Not enough American lives were wrecked. Otherwise we should not be ignoring the national calamity that lies just ahead.

What this country needs is more Isaiahs and Jeremiahs.

Dr. Harold Urey, Nobel Prize winner and co-author of the atom bomb, has publicly described himself as a "frightened man." Fright may help a little. But if we are going to prevent the catastrophe whose shadow is already gigantic on tomorrow's wall, we shall have to call on indignation.

The soldiers and sailors did their work and moved on, leaving the greatest job of all time to be finished by statesmen. Who moved in?

The money-changers, the hucksters, the chiselers, and the hogs. More goods, right away! More profits, higher wages, more buckets of swill! Favors, favors! "The world owes me . . ."

Talk about the Gadarene swine rushing down the steep place to destruction!

The war has not been definitely won; there is as yet no peace . . . and the self-styled "greatest people" in the world quits on the home stretch to scratch and pick up peanuts. . . .

Nothing for which we fought has yet been really attained. We are not yet secure.

Famine stretches a skinny finger across the world. Me-firsters at home urge us to close our bursting fists.

We know the danger of a new war and refuse—flatly—to take the first real step toward the only institution that could stop it.

Our demobilization breaks all records—seven million men in a few months. This was not a "relocation," it was a riot. In addition, it was a crime. For our armed forces were the scaffolding of the peace we intended to build. Without them the peace will not be built.

It seems easier to entice hungry dogs from meat than Americans from the national trough. In an electoral year it is easier to make heroes of jackrabbits than patriots of Congressmen. Feeble attempts by a few high-minded leaders to explain that school is not yet out beat vainly on the surface of our egoism.

Nearly a year after the completion of the first atomic scourge, we have still not agreed on a sensible plan of control.

Why should we when our motto is, rumba, bicker, and grab!

I say these things in the name of the group of American newspapermen who saw World War II coming and who might, if heeded, have prevented it.

All during those fateful thirties

when the Dope Sisters—Appeasement and Apathy—were lulling innocent Americans, we predicted the cacophonous finale. That finale—the war—cost the world about half a century of progress.

There was nothing mysterious about Italian vanity, Jap treachery, or Germany's attack on civilization. But when we yelled and pointed a finger, nobody heeded.

It's a hundred to one that nobody will listen now. But we have got to try.

The price of this war is monstrous. Measured in money, it is just too big to register. The loss in suffering and moral slump defies calculation. But maybe that loss was too low to create an awareness of continuing danger.

What else ought one expect? Haven't we Americans always done just what we are doing now? Isn't it idiotic to imagine that our people—or any people—will suddenly behave as fully responsible human beings?

Now just a minute. Thirty years of newspaper work have given me a reasonably low idea of the human animal. I have knocked around the planet. I have gone through two great wars—and some lesser ones. I have watched Nazis at their hellish pleasures, seen healthy Chinese going unconcernedly about their business while thousands of their fellows died of cholera, had my own friends shot beside me, eaten luncheon off a convenient corpse in a trench. A newspaperman comes in touch with every variety of perversity, crime, and folly, catalogued and uncatalogued.

BUT nothing in my experience convinces me that a whole people must rush into self-destruction.

One exception—Sicily back in the twenties. Mount Etna had just erupted. Prosperous villages, fertile fields and orchards, hundreds of people, lay under molten lava. Yet there were the survivors headed right back up the mountain—foreordained victims of the next eruption.

With the same frivolity, we Americans, having miraculously escaped Hitler and Hirohito, are closing our eyes to greater perils.

First of all, Germany. Despite the greatest battering of all times, German war potential is still enormous. The Germans can again become a menace to mankind.

During the fighting we swore that we would prevent this. The means we selected were (a) the military occupation of Germany, and (b) the reëducation of the German people themselves.

These were long-time measures. What are we doing? Pulling out. Quitting cold. Welshing!

We have weakened our police



forces and our corps of educators to the point where both are failing.

Our gutted divisions, our grounded planes, our immobile tanks no longer impress military-minded Germans with our power. Huckster-minded, "want-to-go-home" kid soldiers mooching around army centers encourage German comparison with their own stern, unbending military—not to our advantage. While they still fear the Russians, the Germans no longer have much respect for Americans. For they see us scampering and they have decided that we will "never fight in Europe again."

At heart they are unchanged. They regret not having started, but having lost, the war. If the Allied forces released their prisoners and withdrew tomorrow, the Nazis under some new name would come back.

Outwardly the Germans are servile. They grovel and lick the tails of their conquerors. But inwardly, as the daze of defeat wears off, they are beginning to plan their comeback. Give them another year or so and they will be ugly. They will start bumping off the decent Germans who want to make Germany democratic as they did after the last war.

Tenacious, aggressive, malevolent, they have not accepted their defeat.

Unless we Americans stiffen, toughen, and immunize our armed forces; unless we build up an able corps of civilian educators; unless we announce that *we are in Germany for as long as the job takes*, whether two years or fifty, the Germans may again become a world menace.

If they do, then minor foci of fascist infection, like Spain and Argentina, will blossom like peonies.

SECOND danger, the Soviet Union. Few Americans realize that American relations with the Soviets are uniformly bad.

By one means or another, the Soviet Union has, since the war started, extended its sway over at least 160 million more human beings.

Americans resent this one-sided exploitation of a common victory. Russians resent American resentment.

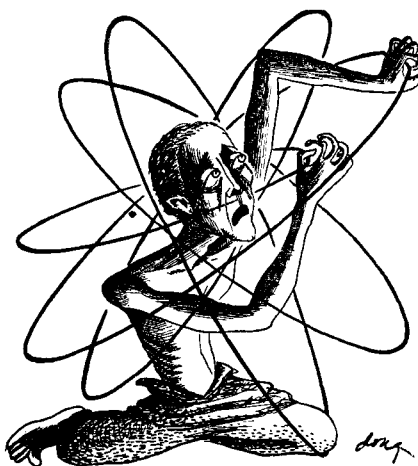
Despite its technical backwardness and the clumsiness of its political system, the Soviet Union possessed before 1939 potential resources superior to those of the United States. Its already more numerous population is increasing at a much greater rate. Add to the Soviet population those of the recently subjugated peoples and it is clear that the power relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, now overwhelmingly in our favor, has been cleverly shifted to our detriment.

Add the further item that in any sort of competition for the still independent peoples of Europe and Asia the Soviets are in a favored position. The inhabitants of Central and Western Europe form a large part of the world's technological and military elite. The inhabitants of Asia constitute a clear majority of the earth's inhabitants.

Lumped into a single political unit with the Russians, the two groups would be irresistible.

This is why, except among Communists and fellow travellers, *fear of the Soviets is the dominant political attitude in Europe today.*

Under these circumstances, a struggle is already going on for the allegiance of the German and of the Chinese peoples. Until very recently at least, some Americans were taking the part of their country's ad-



versary. For the Soviets and their friends are describing this struggle as one between Russia and Britain and not, as it really is, between the Soviets and the United States.

Soviet-American rivalry is *not primarily ideological or economic*. It is primarily *political*, and, as in all political disputes, the stake is power. In the absence of a higher central authority, the relations between great sovereign states are inevitably those of power politics. To become "secure," the Soviets seek to expand. To remain "secure," the United States must oppose them. By no stretch of the imagination can the population of the Americas, even plus that of the British Dominions, successfully oppose the organized will of the combined peoples of Europe and Asia.

Smart German Nazis are therefore seeking to retrieve their lost power by offering their services as mercenaries in a new war against the Russians. Brassy generals in Washington are advocating our partnership with Fascist Peron of Argentina in an effort to "protect the Americas against Russian influence." Salty

American admirals are offering specific jobs to high-power American scientists in direct anticipation of the "coming war." A book by a deep student of international affairs (Ely Culbertson) has appeared under the shocking but realistic title, "Must We Fight Russia?" Is this warning clear enough?

THE third danger to the peace is worldwide famine and distress. The American people are not ignorant of this. They are not hard-hearted. They are doing what they can *without serious inconvenience to themselves or to some powerful vested interest, big business, or labor union*. The trouble is that they consider this a matter of charity rather than a challenge to our American will to live.

The danger is not merely that, under the influence of prolonged misery, the masses of Europe and Asia will turn for relief to the Red Piper of Moscow. It is also that without world prosperity there can, in the long run, be no American prosperity. Without American prosperity, the entire free and democratic way of life can disappear. Faced with such a threat, the American Congress hems and haws about vital loans to friendly peoples.

The worst danger of all is the danger of atomic death. This is the ancient spectre of war now made a thousand times more dreadful by the discovery of new weapons of which the atomic bomb is merely one.

The scientists who discovered and manufactured the bomb have done their best to point out how under present circumstances major international war will become so homicidal and destructive that it cannot in any sense be won. Their views have been followed and popularized by intelligent public leaders in the United States. In the case of international control, the American Administration has taken the lead in proposing a scheme (the Lilienthal Report on the International Report of Atomic Energy) that could reduce if not altogether prevent the use of atomic energy in a new war.

But the American people as a whole still seem inert to the magnitude of the danger. They have not caught up with science. They are being fortified in their folly by the attitudes of important American groups. One attitude is that the amount of death and destruction does not count provided we ultimately win a new conflict (Major General Groves). Another is that our superiority in atomics can be maintained at such a level that (a) atomic bombs will never be used,

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F. D. R.'s Chief Recalls a War

THE WILSON ERA: YEARS OF WAR AND AFTER, 1917-1923. By Josephus Daniels. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1946. 654 pp. \$4.

Reviewed by HENRY F. PRINGLE

OUT of the rich store of his memories, the Secretary of the Navy under Woodrow Wilson has produced another bulging volume of behind-the-scenes disclosures, anecdotes, and trivia. As before, Mr. Daniels is as charming as he is loquacious. He worships President Wilson, of course, and admits no possibility that his hero could be wrong in act or judgment. But Mr. Daniels never pretended to anything else. Historians of the Wilson years, knowing this, will walk carefully through his pages.

Yet this second volume of reminiscences gives some illuminating glimpses of Woodrow Wilson. He had a keen sense of humor. His knowledge of naval strategy caused him to press for the convoying of ships at the height of the submarine offensive, although the British opposed it. He also favored, in the face of British skepticism, the mine barrage in the North Sea which, it is generally agreed, led ultimately to the mutinies of U-boat crews. The picture of a war President painted by Mr. Daniels is radically different from the timid, vacillating chief executive portrayed by hostile critics.

"Daniels," he kept demanding of his Secretary of the Navy, "why don't the British shut up the hornets in their nests?" The Admiralty, it appears, believed the barrage unfeasible. Admiral William S. Sims, on duty in London, shared their pessimism. Daniels, who had an extremely low opinion of Sims, believed that the American admiral was hopelessly influenced by the British. So, in all likelihood, did Mr. Wilson. On July 4, 1917, the President sent Sims a stiffly worded cable:

From the beginning of the war, I have been greatly surprised at the failure of the British Admiralty to use Great Britain's great naval superiority in an effective way. In the presence of the present submarine emergency, they are helpless to the point of panic. Every plan we suggest they reject for some reason of prudence. In my view this is not a time for prudence but for boldness, even at the cost of great losses.

This was strong stuff, strong enough even to satisfy the bellicose Theodore Roosevelt, who was smarting under

Wilson's refusal to let him win new glory at the cost of efficient prosecution of the war. Wilson's tragedy—shared by the nation and the world—was that he was outwardly aloof, that he appeared to be a coldly reasoning intellectual. The people never knew the man that Daniels and others among the intimates knew. Wilson could not so present himself. One reason for this was his inability to achieve harmonious relationships with the press.

On one occasion the President attended a press conference being held by the Secretary of the Navy. He listened without saying anything. But when it had ended he asked Daniels whether he had "to go through this ordeal every day."

As we look back on World War I from the vantage point of World War II, the struggle of 1917-18 seems small indeed. The Federal Government was still simple. The Secretaries of State, War, and Navy all had their offices in one building—now inadequate for the State Department alone. The President would frequently cross from the White House and confer with his Cabinet officers.

Mr. Daniels's book is discursive, badly arranged, opinionated, without documentation—and thoroughly entertaining. Like the Washington he writes about, it has an antique air. Men who had dwelt among the great nearly always used to write books like this, in their days of retirement and wistful looking backward. Joseph B. Foraker's "Notes of a Busy Life" was such a volume, although less honest and interesting than this. Henry L. Stoddard, the editor, offered another of the kind in his "As I Know Them."

Wilson's Secretary of the Navy is a very old gentleman, now, and he is



entitled to his convictions, prejudices, and over-statements. Association with Mr. Wilson was the greatest experience of his life and his outstanding privilege. So few will quarrel when he gives the impression that all the reforms of the New Deal were effected during Wilson's first term. The New Freedom, he writes, "gave labor its Magna Carta" whereas, of course, labor had to wait twenty years for that blessing.

"No line has been written in malice," Mr. Daniels explains in his preface. This was to be expected of those who know him and his kindly nature. But this does not mean that he approves of everybody. True, he refers to the late, grotesque Southern senator as "the dynamic Tom Heflin." Yet he detested others besides Admiral Sims and does not hide his convictions. Theodore Roosevelt was one. So was Cabot Lodge, who helped to kill the League of Nations.

His relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was warm and cordial. Mr. Daniels gives some illuminating sidelights on his chief assistant. "I get my fingers into about everything and there's no law against it," F.D.R. said, himself, in describing his job. He was active, ambitious, and radiant with charm. And he exhibited, on at least one occasion, the lack of respect for law which is, I'm afraid, a characteristic of all the Roosevelt clan.

Josephus Daniels, Jr., had enlisted in the Marine Corps as a private. The Assistant Secretary of the Navy told his chief he did not have any idea how hard this would be for the boy. It would be additionally difficult because of his father's position.

"Let me take charge of it and let him enroll as a lieutenant," he suggested.

But Daniels had a higher code of ethics. He could not possibly justify special favors for his son, he said. But Roosevelt did not seem to appreciate this.

"Leave it all to me and have nothing to do with it," he repeated. "If you appreciated what is in store for Josephus you would not think of letting him enter as a private."

Mr. Daniels can tell a good story well. He has not bothered to check the facts too carefully—often stories are ruined by such arid research. Thus in his notes on Roosevelt, he writes that the future President learned navigation as a boy and adds: "It stood him and Wilson in good stead when Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt were returning with them from Europe on the *George Washington* early in 1919. In the fog the captain had lost his reckoning. F.D.R. located the