

THE THREAT AND THE PROMISE

By JOHN F. WHARTON

RECENTLY I had the opportunity to ask T. S. Eliot to comment on nuclear war. His reply was simple and profound: "From now on, as long as mankind survives, it must live with that threat." This is the essence; the threat will be there as long as men know how to produce it. It will not go away. It will not go away if there is a revolution in the Soviet Union. It will not go away if Chiang Kai-shek reconquers China. It will remain. To paraphrase the poet: it will be part of your shadow at morning striding behind you; you will see it in your shadow at evening rising to meet you; mankind will live in fear of a handful of dust.

On the other hand, there is the concomitant promise: the promise of power, man's most valuable tool in his war against want. Unlimited power, not dependent on continuing supplies of coal, or oil, or gas. Power to turn salt water into fresh and to irrigate the wastelands. Power to produce disease-proof crops that will strike down forever the specter of famine. Power to course through the human body in search of disease. Power to take the race to another globe when this one becomes uninhabitable.

Threat and promise: it has always been man's fate to find these linked. He must learn to control the threat in order to fulfill the promise. The problem is eternal and increasing in scope. Some evolutionary force drives man, unlike any other species, to greater and greater heights of efficiency, achieved at greater and greater risk to his own kind. So long as the promise is there, the threat will not be eliminated. It must, as Mr. Eliot said, be lived with; this time, if we are to survive, it

must be controlled—and permanently.

Primordial man faced this problem when he discovered, for example, how to make fire. To the first men to use fire, the threat was great. We are still learning today how good a servant and how hard a master fire can be. Only by indoctrinating each generation of children, and by unceasing warnings to careless adults, was fire brought under any kind of control. The threat must still be lived with; it, too, will never go away.

Even today the control is, at best, limited. Millions of people are utterly careless with fire when they are unable to see an immediate threat to themselves; they throw lighted cigarettes on the highways and matches in the forests; they leave smoldering campfires in meadows. Then they betake themselves to other regions and seem to have no fear of the holocaust to come. Moreover, in a war neither side hesitates to drop fire bombs on enemy territory and fearlessly rejoice in the ensuing holocausts. There is a reason for this lack of fear, and from this a lesson may be learned.

IT seems likely that the fear, like the use of fire, began at an extremely early stage of man's development; the fear is deeply buried in our subconscious, even when the controls of civilization have allowed us to forget it. A retired general once informed me that many surveys have shown that of all manners of dying, death by fire is feared the most, which indicates how far back in the evolutionary scale it must go. In those prehistoric times, when human groups were small, the attempt to burn out an enemy group must have frequently ricocheted back

on the attacker and on other groups not concerned with the fight. We do not think of this today, for when two modern warring nations hurl fire and flames at each other's territories, the fire and destruction rarely spread to the territory of the attacker, or of neutral nations. There may be a "border incident," a sinking at sea, or a few stray bombs, but these are insignificant in the total effect.

Nuclear warfare changes that, and brings us back to the problem of primordial man, whose use of fire as a weapon might destroy not only the enemy but also himself and all neutrals around him. Early man solved the problem by extending geographically the territory in which the citizens were taught to be careful. The family plot was extended to the tribal land; the tribal land to the clan's domain; the clan's domain to the national territory. Within that territory fire was badly but sufficiently controlled. At that point the extension stopped; people were not concerned with the threat to other nations. Today we must be.

Every single individual on earth is involved with nuclear warfare, no matter how far from the scene of action he may be. A stray nuclear bomb may be of a size to devastate his country; an explosion in the sea may precipitate a tidal wave; and radiation knows no boundaries at all. The control of *this* threat is everybody's business, just as the control of fire became the business of everybody within a given territory. This time the given territory is the globe.

Since the threat will not go away, the situation clearly calls for methods and institutions which can provide *lasting* control. Over the years mankind *has*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Few articles in *Saturday Review* during recent years have produced greater response than John F. Wharton's "Diary of a Man Struggling with Reality," whose opening paragraphs contained the startling statement that "barring a miracle, the United States of America will be devastated by nuclear warfare not later than 1970." Readers by the thousands insisted that Mr. Wharton, New York lawyer and author of "The Theory and Practice of Earning a Living," write a companion piece stating specifically what the individual could do. Mr. Wharton then wrote the article "What You Can Do," making specific suggestions for the prevention of a nuclear war from which worldwide devastation would surely result. The response to Mr. Wharton's second article was so large that he has written this third article in the series.

developed such methods and institutions; they are well known today, but they are today, as always, at first resisted.

The general formula is simple and has been known since the first days when children began to quarrel with their parents, and families began to quarrel with each other. All parties concerned must agree that someone (or some group) shall make rules of conduct, someone see that the rules are carried out, someone act as arbiter in disputes, and that an impartial body be given the force to control those who cannot be controlled by persuasion. All four elements are necessary; that is why international courts, standing alone, or an international police force, by itself, would be of value only so long as no one challenged its authority.

These methods involve a risk—the risk that the rule-making body may lay down rules you will not like, just as children may not like their parents' rules. But if you want the threat to be controlled, you must accept the risks of the rules of control. If you don't accept them, you must face the present risk that you will find yourself involved in a nuclear holocaust about which you had no say at all.

Unhappily for mankind, almost all powerful political leaders are today preaching either defeatism or various forms of "eat-your-cake-and-have-it" doctrines; certainly no statesman of stature is advocating a trial of the methods and institutions which have proved effective for lasting control. When the weaknesses of the United Nations Charter become glaringly apparent, no official suggests that the remedy is to strengthen the Charter; instead, crocodile tears are shed over the fact that the same weaknesses which made our Articles of Confederation unworkable are threatening the United Nations, and therefore we had better give up.

ON another front, we make gestures of achieving arms control by the use of the old-fashioned treaty, despite the fact that history has proved again and again—and very recently—that such treaty agreements are kept only so long as the parties find it convenient; they have never effected lasting control. One would think our present State Department officials had never heard of Secretary Kellogg and his *twenty-one* peace treaties. Conferences on plans for disarmament by old-fashioned treaty may be helpful as exchanges of views (although the recent ones seem to have bred more suspicion than anything else), but they cannot bring about effective disarmament. Only a structured peace can do that, one based on the

methods and institutions of lasting control.

There is another, more curious, doctrine abroad in our land. It declares that nuclear arms should *not* be controlled until every government which does not support the institution of private property has been destroyed, and that when this is accomplished, somehow control will come of its own accord. The most violent form of this doctrine declares that the way to end war is for our country to fight wars until we rule the world; this assumes that such a consummation is devoutly desired by all other people except a few Communist leaders. A tangential doctrine is the old cry of winning the arms race, of being so strong that all your enemies will be afraid to attack you and so will give up and accept your way of life—a species of wishful thinking seldom surpassed, and an almost certain path to war.

It can hardly be assumed that our leaders are unaware of these inconsistencies. Why then do they advocate these doctrines and keep steadily silent on the subject of the tried and true methods? The excuse usually given in private is, I am told, that Congress would oppose them, that you can't lead the people too fast; look what happened to Woodrow Wilson! This last is, I think, the key to the real reason.

The advocates of a "strong stand," the men who assert that we must have our own way (although our policies today are clearly determined, *not* by our choice, but by the actions of others), the leaders who declare we must be so powerful militarily that no one can question our peaceful desires, the men who tell our "enemies" that we are ready to fight—these are the men who find cheering crowds watching their cars go by. One great test of popularity today is a politician's ability to "talk rough to the Russians," and politicians want popularity. The men of peace—Woodrow Wilson, Jan Smuts, Mahatma Gandhi—suffer a less attractive fate.

Seventeen years ago, our citizens and their leaders *were* genuinely interested in promoting world peace. Reread the first Presidential speeches of Harry S. Truman; they are fervent in their hopes for a better and more peaceful world. The Four Freedoms were then more than a phrase; they were an ideal. Times *have* changed. Can you, today, name the four freedoms, and state when they were first enunciated? Can you account for Harry Truman's recent assertion that he was sick and tired of tear-jerkers who saw any moral problem in the dropping of atomic bombs? What has happened?

The answer is that we are a volatile people; our ideals and actions swing



"We've Got Time for One More Hand"

like a pendulum. I recall vividly the fervent enthusiasm, in the First World War, to make the world safe for democracy—followed by a period of implacable isolationism. It is not surprising that the ideals of the Second World War fell into abeyance; the important question is whether they will return.

I am sure they will return, if given the time. For beneath the political tumult and shouting, and in spite of the inflammatory press, countless citizens are working to revivify those ideals and, in a democracy, eventually they will succeed. The astonishing thing about many of these people is their creativity and awareness, far superior to the Johnny-one-note trumpetings of the heirs of Senator Joe McCarthy. The response to my two previous articles in *SR* included a flood of creative ideas in the best traditions of Yankee know-how. Sooner or later they will take effect. One of them, or all of them together, could touch off the miracle I devoutly hope for—a worldwide desire to control nuclear power and a willingness to take some risks in order to have such control.

I HAVE never deviated from my belief that nuclear disaster will befall us unless a worldwide taboo miraculously grows up. But time is running out, and, as it does, two other things become necessary. First, there must grow up an understanding among all people that a taboo puts restraints upon them. You cannot have enduring peace and also have the right to break it when you, in your own wisdom, think other people are not behaving as you wish. You can't be free from the threat of nuclear arms while you retain the power to use them in an attempted conquest of the world. You can control the threat only by the methods and institutions developed by man for lasting control. When, and only when, the desire for this arises will "all things be possible."

Second, the more I studied and cogitated, the clearer it became that *desire for control is not alone enough*. When it arises, technicians must be ready with a plan, and they must be ready *at once*; delay could be fatal. The desire must be caught at its flood. When the desire for worldwide control arises we must be ready with a plan to call a world convention and submit proposals for discussion and reference back to the peoples.

For a moment, this requirement brought me up short. My faith in the power of the dedicated individual to arouse moral fervor had never wavered. However, all the dedication in the world, I suddenly realized, does not produce technical skill. Even the divine

injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount do not set up constitutional procedures. As I read and reread countless letters, and examined the programs of many fine organizations, I began to wonder if the necessary expertness did exist.

It does.

IF IT exists nowhere else, it does exist in one organization which embodies the result of one man's belief that the individual citizen is not powerless, and that he must not rely on elected officials to initiate progressive action but must stimulate it himself. The man is Grenville Clark, a distinguished lawyer whose accomplishments in public service have been as startling as they are unknown.

Mr. Clark was the principal organizer of the "Plattsburg Movement" of 1915-17; almost singlehandedly he initiated the Selective Service Act of 1940. After the war, he became convinced that the world must change its ways if civilization was to survive; he thereupon decided to devote his full time to creation of a plan for the day when people should really want peace. Working with Professor Louis B. Sohn, he produced a book entitled "World Peace Through World Law," which has now been translated in whole or in part into twelve languages and is in process of being translated into many more. This book sets forth a plan for general and complete disarmament, with adequate safeguards, which could be implemented inside or outside of the United Nations; it suggests a method of exploration which could not possibly bring harm to any living person and might save humanity from its worst disaster. If adopted, it would *preserve freedom* and avert a nuclear holocaust.

Aided by a few dedicated friends, he set up a project for education concerning "World Peace Through World Law." This project is now initiating what may become one of the more remarkable adult and youth educational campaigns in recent history. With the help of other experts, a plan has been developed whereby, through group discussion, this highly technical subject can

be made intelligible to anyone with a high school education, and whereby young people and adults in *any* community can have access to such discussion. If you sincerely want control of nuclear arms, then, *whatever else you are doing*, acquaint yourself with this project and *participate* in it.*

Hence, I still have faith. I still have hope. Faith that men and women can control the threat and utilize the promise. The necessary ideals are only dormant; the desire can arise; when it does, the expertness is ready, the techniques are available. We must hope that people will soon understand that to realize the ideal, and use the techniques, some sacrifice is necessary.

A little-known English moralist, Gerald Heard, once summed up the problem of war and peace by saying that governments and people wanted peace, but they also wanted, and intended to get, by force if necessary, their own way. This is the heart of the matter. The threat and the promise of nuclear power are with us and will stay with us. The two major countries in the nuclear race—Russia and ourselves—are trying to use the promise for their own benefit. Hence they must use the threat for what they think is their own benefit, meanwhile wondering naively why this attitude has made the two countries hated by hundreds of millions of people. Probably we will soon cease to be alone in this practice. The French, the Germans, and the Chinese will take the same tack, unless something is done. None has learned the historical lesson that you cannot lord it over other people and have peace and cooperation. None remembers the words of Jesus that those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword. The price of a little period of "glory" is ultimate destruction, for no brave people—white, black, or yellow—will ever give up their fight for freedom, and no one people has a monopoly on bravery. We won't submit to the Russians; the Russians won't submit to us; the Chinese and the emerging Africans won't submit to either of us. If we fight it out, any group may get a little period of glory; to the war parties in every land, this little period seems worth everything, even a disaster to humanity. Another English moralist who felt different expressed his feelings in words so simple that anyone can understand them.

"I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms, red,
Life that shall endless be."

*Send a postcard with your name and address to Institute for International Order, 11 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N.Y., asking for further information about this project.



Voyage of Life

By GRANVILLE HICKS

BY HER own account, Katherine Anne Porter began *"Ship of Fools"* (Little, Brown, \$6.50) in 1932, and soon after that it was announced for publication. Because of Miss Porter's high reputation as a short story writer, her first novel was awaited with curiosity and excitement, but it did not appear and it did not appear, though it was frequently listed in publishers' catalogues. Now, after this long delay, about which one can only speculate, it is in print.

It is hard not to judge the book in relation to the extended period of gestation; the temptation is to proclaim that it is either the fulfilment of a great hope or a sorry disappointment. But if it is certainly not the latter, neither is it quite the former. It shows that Miss Porter is one of the finest writers of prose in America. It also shows that she has mastered the form—or one of the forms—of the novel. On the other hand, it is something less than a masterpiece.

The novel describes a voyage from Veracruz to Bremerhaven in the summer of 1931. After superb descriptions of the city of Veracruz, of the sights and sounds of the harbor, of the arrival of the passengers, Miss Porter gets her voyage under way. At first the passengers are only names or faces or gestures or phrases, but slowly, in Miss Porter's own good time, they acquire substance. There are more than twenty with whom we are concerned, and Miss Porter presents each with great care and remarkable insight.

In the list that precedes the text Miss Porter arranges the characters by nationalities, and this is suitable, for the novel pays much attention to national differences. The ship being German-owned, the officers and most of the passengers are German; and a sorry lot, by and large, they are. There is the bumptious Herr Rieber, and there is the strident Lizzi, whom he ardently pursues. There is the snobbish, bitterly prejudiced Frau Rittersdorf, with a notebook devoted to banality and venom. There is Herr Professor Hutten, who tyrannizes over his wife and is full of solicitude for his white bulldog. There is Herr Freytag, who is ostracized when it is learned that his wife is Jewish. There is Herr Baumgartner, a



THE AUTHOR: "Ship of Fools" represents "a life work" for Katherine Anne Porter; it is the sum, she said last week, "of what I know about human nature, the fatalities of life and the perils of human relationships. Everything I was able to express I put in it." In response to a comment that the novel's outlook seemed rather bleak, Miss Porter protested, "I don't think that this is a pessimistic book at all. I am not trying to make anybody out a saint or a sinner, but just showing human beings with failings and prejudices or with burdens a little more than they can bear, burdens that have made them what they are and through which they are trying to struggle. Some of them make it and some of them don't."

As the wife of an official in the Foreign Service, Miss Porter saw in Europe the rise of Nazism, which figures in her book; yet she did not want to write a thesis or propaganda novel. "Ship of Fools" is, rather, "the story of the criminal collusion of good people—people who are harmless—with evil. It happens," she explained "through inertia, lack of seeing what is going on before their eyes. I watched that happen in Germany and in Spain. I saw it with Mussolini. I wanted to write about people in these predicaments—really old predicaments with slightly new political and religious aspects."

But what about today and our altered concept of the Germans? "Ship of Fools" was, after all, conceived and begun in the early Thirties. "I believe,"

Miss Porter said almost fiercely, "that they are just as dangerous as they were, and the moment they get back their power they are going to do it again. This complacency about Germany is simply horrifying. People change in some ways, but they don't change basically. The Germans have taken the Jews as a kind of symbol, but they are against anybody and everybody, and they haven't changed a bit!"

Inasmuch as they all have their frailties, with which of her characters, one wondered, did the pretty, vivacious author identify herself. "I am nowhere," she said, "and everywhere. I am the captain and the seasick bulldog and the man in the cherry-colored shirt who sings and the devilish children and all of the women and lots of the men. . . . You know, I got attached to my gang on the boat. I hated to give them up."

"Ship of Fools" was meant to be a short novel, but it developed like a "coral formation" during the intervals—sometimes four or five years at a time—that it was interrupted. Since she began it Miss Porter has published "The Leaning Tower and Other Stories," a volume of essays, "The Days Before," and "Katherine Anne Porter's French Song Book." To earn her living she has also lectured widely and translated many works from Spanish, French, and German.

That her novel took so long to complete is not uncharacteristic of her. "I ran my scales," she said, "for fifteen years before trying to sell a story." Born in Indian Creek, Texas, on May 15, 1894, the great-great-granddaughter of Daniel Boone, she started at the age of sixteen trying seriously to learn to write. She was past thirty when her first story, "Maria Concepción," was published. "I let a story rest in my mind," she said, "and grow, and when I start to write I am ready to go at top speed until the vein runs out." As a result, the majority of the stories in "Flowering Judas," "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," and other collections were finished in one sitting. "Most people," she said, "won't realize that writing is a craft. You have to take your apprenticeship in it like anything else."

—ROCHELLE GIBSON.