

WILL PEACE EVER COME TO OUR WORLD?

BY HAROLD BERMAN

MAN, say the apologists for War, has always been a fighting animal. Ever since his first appearance on earth, at some remote and unascertained pre-historic day, he has been fighting his fellow-humans. At all times there were the group and the clan, the tribal and the national feuds to enliven the monotony of an otherwise drear existence for a simple and crude aggregation of men, and not infrequently a means to furnish the only worth-while and honorable occupation for the healthy manhood of a tribe; or, later on, for a certain class within the particular ethnic group. From these premises many superficial observers, predisposed to the belief that a practice or an institution is right *because it is*, the mere fact of its existence proving it essential to our being as well as congenital to human nature, have come to the ready conclusion that war as an institution as well as a legitimate implement in human relationship was just, and was with us to stay for all time. It *was* and *is*: Ergo, it *will* be; blithely overlooking the poignant fact that slavery was and is with us no longer; that polygamy was and is no longer; that autocracy, and the stake and faggots for religious transgressors also were with us and are so no longer. These worshippers of the *Status Quo* have not studied the cultural history of the human race. If they had, they would know that this history represents a constant forward progression, and that the integrated Philistine respectability of today was the decried revolutionism and innovation of yesterday, and hadn't even been dreamt of the day before yesterday.

There is a fundamental difference however, between all the wars of history and those fought by the modern, industrialized democracies during the past fifty years or so; barring, of course, the Balkan Nations in the Sixties and Seventies of the past century, who fought

for their independence, and Czaristic Russia which was a purely Mediaeval State in every essential. Or, if you wish to state it thus, the difference between the wars waged before the advent of the Industrial Revolution—which includes practically the annals of the entire human race, up to the beginning of the Nineteenth Century in England, and considerably later in most other countries—, and those fought since by the Industrialized Nations of Europe and America. Primitive man, resembling in most attributes and essentials his four-footed fellow creatures, *fought for meat* pure and simple. His pastoral descendants fought for fat grazing lands for their flocks, while those who came upon the stage of history later on, men who, by some way or other, had acquired the mysterious and revolutionizing art of soil-cultivation as a means for increasing artificially the grudging and uncertain food supply of nature and the chase, fought for and invaded lands that proved more fertile than their own and assured them a more bountiful as well as a more dependable harvest. Of such origin was the migration of tribes and nations in all countries in historic and pre-historic times, traces of which migrations are found in all countries of the globe even at this late day. As the tribes were gradually welded into Nations, and these again came to be ruled over by Kings, Princes, Emperors or Dukes, possessed of the pride of place and power and obsessed by dynastic ambitions, these rulers decreed wars and made peace in accordance with these same ambitions, grudges and interests. These wars frequently were fought by Mercenaries, or by levies on the peasantry and the retainers of the various feudal lords, the people at large never being consulted at either occasion, it being assumed to be none of their business what their divinely-appointed rulers did or abstained from doing at any particular time and at their own sweet pleasure.

The World truly was a big place in those days. It held many mysterious, still unexplored, regions. The means of communication were no better, (if not much worse) than they had been in the days of the Romans, of Alexander of Macedon, or when Hannibal crossed the Alps to attack Rome in her stronghold. Napoleon had to wait for weeks for a favorable wind before he could set afoot his long-cherished invasion of Britain. Though his galleys were properly manned, provisioned and munitioned for the venture, yet when the winds refused to accommodate him and change

their course, he suffered his most ambitious project to go by the board, even as a warrior of an earlier millenium would have been obliged to do. There was no help for it. *Nature was the master.*

Each nation, in those simple and happy days, practically was self-sufficient, producing what it needed and getting along in the main without the product of the others. Imports were confined to luxuries, craved for and enjoyed by a small fraction of the populace, the nobility and the court circles mainly. The yeoman raised his crop of eatables, reared the animals that furnished the motive power for his labor, meat, milk and leather, his women folk spun the wool and wove the cloth out of which his garments were made, rendered the tallow for his candles and soap, and so on and so forth. He was a self-supporting and self-sufficient individual—the “sturdy” yeoman” of our early writers—whose fate, next to Nature’s vagaries, lay in his own hands, and in his own hands only. The townsman was not much more cosmopolitan than the peasant in his physical interests.

The conditions that held true in the realm of economics held true as well in the realm of ideas and beliefs. The average man knew next to nothing of the things that went on beyond the borders of his own country, and, frequently, not much of the transpirings in a neighboring province or district. Rumors, myths and all sorts of fairy-tales could easily spring up and be as readily believed, about the foreigner, his mode of living, his faith, his general conduct and his actions. For it is axiomatic in human life that the deeper the degree of ignorance about any given subject, the more fertile the crop of rumors, and the greater the room for the romancing fictioneer and for the wilfull libeler. It was, in brief, an ideal atmosphere for the breeding of mistrust and its offspring, hatred, for the hatching of all sorts of plots and counterplots. There was no need, then, for the *artificial stimulation* of hatred through the creation of “propaganda bureaus”, in charge of slick and prostituted press agents well versed in the manufacture of non-existent atrocities and horrors!

Now consider the world of today, since the advent of the machine and the mechanical means of communication and production. The globe has shrunk tremendously in size, while self-sufficiency has been *traclessly* lost to the human race, excepting perhaps to the most backward portion of it, which is negligible. Our stock of knowledge—in the physical realms, at any rate—has been im-

measurably increased, while our physical comforts have multiplied and our general well-being enhanced. But all these have been secured at the cost of our former self-sufficiency and sturdy independence. The farmer no longer produces things primarily for his own needs and barter, nor does the artisan produce any longer your cloak, your boot, your table or your bed in his cottage-work-room and to your demand. The Texan or Argentinian ranger grows a steer whose flesh is destined for consumption in New York, London or Berlin. Another man pastures a flock of sheep in Nevada, Australia or New Zealand, destined to nourish a Manchester spinning-mill employee, while their wool may find its way into the Far East or the furthest West. He doesn't know, and doesn't care. A man digs coal in Wales which is to furnish heat or motive power for an electric-generating station in Bulawayo or Syria. A hide is tanned into leather in Kansas City, is turned into shoes in Binghamton, N. Y., to be worn in Czecho-Slovakia or in Turkey. At your breakfast table each day you drink coffee grown in Brazil or Porto-Rico, sweeten it with sugar raised in Cuba or Haiti, cut yourself a slice of bread made of wheat raised in Minnesota, the Dakotas or perhaps in Argentina or Russia, and smear it with butter made out of the milk of an Iowa cow, or with jam made in England out of oranges grown in Spain or Italy. When you get ready to go out, and if it happens to be cloudy, you put on your feet rubber shoes made of the gum of a tree growing in the Jungles of the Congo or Malaysia, and you may also put on a coat made of the same foreign substance. A few hours later you may, if you so desire, lunch on fruits gathered in from a dozen South and Central American Countries, not counting the varied products of your own, far-flung, native land. And it is the same way with your means of livelihood, the tools and materials that you employ in the process and the product of your skill or effort. All these have ceased to be individual, but have become a composite of the human race. It is interlocked and intermingled with the product and the need of peoples scattered all over the face of the globe.

But do not think for a moment that these variegated boons are yours for the asking, a free-will offering from kind-hearted Mother Nature. You have paid for them, and paid dearly. You have paid for them with *your independence*, your self-sufficiency, your skill as a worker, creator or independent trader. You have given your

hostages to fortune, hostages most likely never to be accorded their liberty again. You have given them in exchange for these enhanced comforts and your lessened ignorance! You have become the Faustus of the legend. You have bartered away your calm of mind and repose for a brief taste of youth and ease!

Even the joy and the thrill of the early machine-days are gone. To-day man no longer feels like a conqueror, like the discoverer of some hidden power or force. Man no longer dominates the machine, but really is dominated by it whether he knows it or not, and I rather think that he does know it only too well now, in these days of technological unemployment and widespread misery due to this very domination of his life by the machine. While human energy is capable only of moderate increase, the power of the machine may be, and is, constantly increased in ways and in degrees without end. In the Malthusian dialectic it would perhaps be proper to say that while the one increases in an arithmetical, the other in a geometrical ratio. The machine lends itself to repeated improvements, to the almost endless enhancement of its productive abilities, and to its own supercession again and again by newer and better machines. Every day various plans are being tried out for the increase of the productive capacity of each unit, the Taylor System of an earlier day and the mass production of the present day, for example.

That machine or personnel whose capacity for producing commodities is increased, needs in turn a larger quantity of raw material to work with, as well as new and enlarged outlets for the things produced. This modern Homunculus—the machine produced and compounded in the modern Frankenstein laboratory—now came to dominate as well as to frighten its creator, keeping his nerves frayed and on edge day and night, as truly happened to his celebrated prototype in the story. The Homunculus is growing larger day by day. He keeps man in a state of fear. What is he to do with him? He can't kill him. He can't undo him, and perhaps doesn't want to; but where will he find the food day after day with which to appease his ever-increasing appetite? When the monster is hungry, as he now is, man, his feeder, too, is hungry, and with no prospect or outlook for appeasing *that* hunger. And what, again, will he do with his plethora of honey—goods—into which this monster transmutes the feed that we dole out to him? "I must hasten", says Frankenstein, "to find some more backs on which

to place these additional coats, heads to wear these hats, feet to put into these additional pairs of shoes! I must find people to drive these cars, to listen to these phonographs and radios, to smoke these million upon million packs of cigarettes and to chew these useless heaps of gum. *I must teach the people to want* these and more of their kind. I must inculcate in them new habits, make them desire the things that they have no normal craving for and would be better and happier without. I must do it, or be devoured by my Homunculus. And I must not only teach my own people to acquire these habits, but must also become a schoolmaster in other and distant lands. The Chinaman must be taught to smoke Virginia cigarettes, the Filipino must be made to chew gum made in Chicago, the Malays must be taught to use the phonograph and the radio, while the Kaffir in his *Kraal* must be told to carry a Kodak and eat American pork, as otherwise I'd be overwhelmed by my Homunculus, there'll be a panic and misery in the land, and the monster's erstwhile servitors will stand shivering in the bread-line, waiting for a dole of charity soup". Parenthetically, and by way of concrete illustration, the rampages of this angry Homunculus are all too evident in the world-wide crisis we are even now experiencing, and the misery that it brought to untold and bewildered millions.

In plain and simple language, industrial civilization has really reduced itself to the simplest essentials: to the double-edged formula of raw materials for production, and ever-increasing markets for the ever-increasing amount of produced things. And this is the sum total of all foreign policies, of all diplomacy, of our modern imperialism and "economic penetrations", of war and peace as waged and signed today.

We no longer wage war for fertile fields and pastures. It is no longer a fight of hungry men for loaves and fishes. The world today suffers from a plethora of commodities that the machine could, and does, produce. There are no hungry tribes in our midst waiting to descend on their neighbors and despoil them in their own desperate hunger, as all lands now are equally fertile and equally barren by the *fiat* of the new economic order and the ready means of transportation. Nor are there any longer any innate tribal hates or jealousies. During the World War the various nations engaged in the silly and wasteful struggle had *to create* and maintain their

propaganda bureaus in order to *foster hatred artificially*, and had to stimulate it day by day, for fear that it would die a natural death if let alone for any length of time. And it is the testimony of these men and women who mingled with the soldiers, or were soldiers in the late war themselves, that these fighters were singularly passionless and free from all hatred towards the enemy, but fraternized with him whenever the opportunity offered, and when not expressly forbidden to do so by their panicky officers; while as for dynastic rivalries, they have become almost negligible, conspicuous mainly by their total absence among the masses of people, who fight the modern bloody wars and are called on to make the supreme sacrifice in them.

Now as to the specific causes of this new tension in post-war Europe. They are traceable indirectly to our machine civilization and more directly to the division of the spoils following the great war. Of all the nations that participated in the World War on the allied side, Britain gained the most, in a territorial sense, at the time when the small group of aging buccancers carved up the World between them. She annexed, under the guise of the newly-invented "Mandate" system that deceived no one except a certain elderly and unsophisticated American autocrat, all the former German Colonies in Africa, "took" Palestine, Mesopotamia and Trans-Jordania, and tightened still further her death-grip on Egypt. She almost "walked off" with Turkey, and would have if she had only succeeded in capturing betimes the person of Kemal Pasha. Then she would most unhesitatingly have put a noose around his neck—as she so unceremoniously did to so many other Turkish and Egyptian patriots in 1921—or would have transported him to some Island prison to pine away and languish for the remaining few years of his life—as she also had done to some others—, and, presto! "the Empire on which the sun never sets" would have become enriched by another rich province or colony. That she didn't succeed wasn't really her fault. She was willing enough to become the strangler of one more nation, but was denied the chance by the mere flip of the dice in Fate's ironic hands.

At the present time, and as a result of this too liberal appropriation of the spoils, her prestige in the World is considerably enhanced, the fear of her among the subject and non-white races greatly increased. She now rules over territories, and exerts an influence

through her "Diplomatic Agents", "Commissioners" and "High Commissioners" and what not, over ever so many more territories and lands as to cause Rome in her most flourishing period to look like some tiny Principality alongside of her.

But for all that, she has become the Midas of these Post-War days. Midas had more gold than anyone else in creation. The Gods had granted his prayer to turn everything he touched into gold, including most maliciously, his bread and water, so that he starved to death in the midst of the greatest wealth ever brought together by man. Britain, which before the War had been "the workshop of the World" now is so no longer. Two to three millions of her young and vigorous sons are chronically idle—not because they want to be, but because they have to—drawing a weekly "dole" to keep body and soul together. Her one million or so of coal miners in South Wales are unemployed and unemployable, because the demand for the coal that they used to dig is gone, its place having been taken by the coal dug in the Ruhr and Upper Silesia. These later mines were there before the War too, it is true, and their coal was not exactly allowed to stay hidden away in their bowels; but it is now being dug more feverishly, in greater abundance and with half-starved labor. Why is this so? Because, as regards the Ruhr, Germany has become the galley slave of the World. She must work not only to support herself, but to support France, England, Belgium, Italy, Japan, the U. S. A., and a few other nations. She must produce so many millions of tons annually to give away as a free-will offering to her late open, and at present secret, enemies. She must produce some more to meet her own domestic needs, and still some more for export, so that she have the wherewithal to pay for her imports as well as to find the money with which to satisfy the International Sheriff standing guard at her door. All in all, she is obliged to drive her workers to the very last ounce of their strength and to the fullest capacity of the machinery, and at a wage reckoned at the barest subsistence level,¹ in order to provide for all these natural and artificial needs. The result of this German super-efficiency in production, and the semi-starvation of her serfs, is

¹Wages in the Ruhr a few months ago were; 60 Pfennigs per hour for unskilled labor and 78 Pfennigs (19 cents) for skilled labor. 40 per cent work 57 hours weekly, while 60 per cent work 60 hours weekly. The production of iron ore has increased 27 per cent, of steel 42 per cent over 1913! Two million draw the "dole".

that the miner in South Wales, and to a certain lesser extent in some other countries, finds his calling slipping away from him!

Or take the case of Upper Silesia, as an example: This territory has been awarded to Poland after the so-called and trickily-manipulated Plebiscite of 1921. Poland, a new and inexperienced country fighting hard against threatened bankruptcy, is working her mines day and night—under the efficient tutelage of the Americans and the French—in order to produce wealth for the American bondholders of her many loans, aside from finding the means wherewith to run her own government. And her laborers receive about one-half the wage of their English confrères, so that she could easily undersell them in the World market.

What is true of the mines is true also of the factory and workshop. Germany, for example, must produce not only for the needs of her own sixty-five million people, but for the use of a dozen more, major or lesser, Powers.²

Add to the above the fact that the source of raw materials—her colonies—have been taken from Germany, and that she is obliged to buy all her raw supplies in the competitive open market, and you have a very pretty picture indeed of the present situation. The German Homunculus—the machine—is geared up to a feverish and neck-breaking state of efficiency, with the result that the British *Golem* finds his own strong arms dropping limply to his side, and the entire International economy—an artificial economy at best—is put out of joint. For, while it was entirely possible in ancient and mediaeval days for the conqueror nation to enslave the vanquished nation, keeping it at work while it lolled in idleness itself, it could no longer be done to-day after man has been displaced by the machine, and his skill, individuality as well as his self-sufficiency have been taken from him!

And even Britain, victorious Britain, is not entirely free from war-time obligations. She has to pay back her borrowings to Uncle Sam ("Uncle Shyllock" some of her sons have dubbed him); and she has her war pensions and indemnities, and the rehabilitation of her disabled ones among her own subjects to pay for!

There is Middle Europe. Austria and Hungary have been plucked and dismembered, and their neighbors given unduly large portions

²The interest payments on her loans for her Dawes Plan payments amounted to One Billion Marks yearly! A little less under the Young Plan. Despite of long hours and steady work, 791,000 families are homeless!

of the bleeding carcass. The former can't live, and they nurse their resentment, while the others are bloated and misgovern themselves and others. More recently the new Russian menace—not in the revolutionary sense, but in the recovered economic field—has appeared like a spectre on the World's horizon. She is producing goods in great quantities, is selling them to other nations at reduced rates. For these blessings she is roundly abused and cursed, abused and cursed as the menace to all fellow-nations! A generation ago—previous to the coming of the machine age—she would have been blessed by all for it!

And here is where Russia comes into the picture. If either or both of these rich Anglo-Saxon nations had not continued to play the Pecksniffian role, had agreed to abandon the holier-than-thou attitude towards the Soviet Government, recognized the *fait accompli* and adopted the simple shop-keeper's attitude towards her (and they have that opprobrious term thrown at them all the time, anyhow!) then they could both appease their hunger to a considerable extent by trading with her, reduce their own unemployment and restore their respective sets of nerves to a less frayed state. But they won't do it. As a result of it, we have about six million people unemployed now in the United States; two to three million drawing the dole in the United Kingdom, while there is no ghost of a chance for any of the Welsh miners to be absorbed in any other industry, when there is no room in it for the old workers!

And so chaos continues and will continue to predominate over the affairs of the helpless and enmeshed man, with no other prospect but war to disentangle them for a while, preparatory to their re-entanglement the moment actual hostilities are ended and the Homunculus set to normal working again.