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On the Waging Of Peace

*The Danger Is Not
From the Military but
From Peace-Mongers*

By HENRY PAOLUCCI

To the historically trained ear, the most ominous drums of war have always been those pounded in the name of peace.

Those drums are rolling today with a mounting intensity unparalleled in American history. They are telling us (in the rhythms of Adlai Stevenson's eloquence): "We must abolish war to save our collective skins. For so long as this nuclear death-dance continues, tens of millions—perhaps hundreds of millions—are living on borrowed time." Or in the accents of Norman Cousins's frenzied appeal for a world federation of peace-lovers: "At a time when the fingertip of a desperate man can activate a whole switchboard of annihilation, and when defense is represented by retaliatory holocaust, the historical social contract between man and the state has ceased to exist."

The intention of such talk is peace; but its emotional intensity is unquestionably such stuff as wars are made of. When peace is proclaimed as a sovereign value, when its lovers declare themselves disposed to sacrifice all things else for its attainment—even their pledged national allegiance—we can be sure that ignorant armies, terrible with self-righteous banners, are about to clash. For it is not at college teach-ins or on the Op-Ed page of The Times, but in the arena of war that the supreme national sacrifices for peace are ultimately made.

Peace is, like liberty, one of those Janus-faced ideals that look two ways. The Road to Peace remains a peaceful road only so long as no serious obstacles are encountered. According to some wise men, the fiercest wars have been fought to remove man-made obstacles to peace. Hitler was such an obstacle. While the rest of us were plodding down a depressed stretch of the Road to Peace, he mobilized an entire people for war. Yet, what he was ultimately after with his talk of a "New Order" was surely an arrangement of enforceable peace—under which the entire world would indeed be living now, had our physicists not outstripped him in that first great arms race of the nuclear age. Those who finally crushed him in war openly acknowledged that his goal was peace in their branding as "appeasers" all who sought to prevent our military intervention against him.

Wars result from the desire to impose one's will upon others and to resist being imposed upon. Peace is the condition of having one's willful way, whether actively or passively. Even a bawling infant knows the difference between being resisted and being pacified.

The maturity of the Western nations has consisted in their mutual recognition that the desire to establish a regime of enforceable peace over a vast multitude is itself the greatest provocation of war. That fact first impressed itself on Western statesmen during the three decades of war that preceded the so-called Peace of Westphalia, in 1648—which was peaceful only in the sense that, by its arrangements, the age-old longing for an enforceable world peace, such as animates so many educated people today, was at least temporarily laid to rest.

Napoleon resurrected that longing. He marched his armies back and forth across the Continent to remove the many national obstacles to its attainment. Later it was the turn of Imperial Germany, whose Kaiser, like Russia's Czar, celebrated in his very name the august aspiration of Imperial Rome to impose its peace everywhere, by uplifting the lowly and putting down the proud.

Vying to establish an enforceable world peace today are the Marxist-Leninists, who are as tough as the toughest old Romans, and that motley band of American social scientists, English teachers, journalists, Sanskrit-reading physicists, existentialist philosophers, playwrights, film-makers, etc., aptly characterized by Joseph Schumpeter as "ethical imperialists." The Marxist-Leninists have an obvious advantage, for they are realists. They can be deterred by a nuclear policy of assured destruction, strictly adhered to by the United States. But, if American policy insists on an enforceable world peace, the tough men of Moscow are not about to let themselves be "Pugwashed" into accepting the petulant rule of a Western intelligentsia that thinks it can gain the world by a "great act of persuasion" conducted on the pattern of a Harvard seminar on international affairs.

The irony is that, with all their drum-beating for "peace now," the men, women, and children who lead today's peace crusade are making it impossible for serious counsels to be heard in the halls of government. Even the Commander in Chief of our armed forces has been reduced to gibbering that he's a "devoted pacifist."

Our great danger today comes not from American military arrogance, which is nonexistent, but from the arrogance of our peace-mongering, which intoxicates and must eventually paralyze the will to act prudently.

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