AMERICAN POLICY:
POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

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THE world yearns for peace, but all too often talk about peace tends not to promote it but to manifest merely a flight from reality. Three such manifestations can be very briefly stated.

The first is the emphasis upon peace as something to be made in the future, “at the end of the war.” That idea lulls the public to sleep when it needs to be vigilantly awake. Peace is not the product of the untrammeled thought of men at a conference table; it is a reflection of the habits of mind which have become dominant before and during the course of the war. The Treaty of Versailles, now so heartily condemned, was the product of aims, purposes, and habits of thought nurtured during four years of war. Similarly the recent peace imposed upon Finland represents only the specific act of realizing a policy long matured in Moscow. Just as the Constitutional Convention of 1787 crystallized out of habit and tradition and experience the substance of our governmental form and the structure of its powers, so the coming peace is now really in the making; its form is more plastic at this moment than it will be subsequently, but the elements of that peace are already being shaped. That is why it is a flight into unreality to suppose that the problem of peace may safely be left to the future. Our actions from day to day help shape it.

The second manifestation of unreality in thinking about peace consists in assigning responsibility for the peace exclusively to nations abroad. Men say “Europe and Asia are fighting; let Europe and Asia make the peace.” But that is not the whole truth. Without taking up arms we assert our force in certain war areas, and deliberately refrain from such assertions of force in others. We are definitely working to shape peace in important respects, and neglecting to do so in others. It is transparent, for example, that the United States seeks to maintain the Chinese in a position to continue the
struggle with the object of preventing an unfavorable peace. We have refused to recognize Manchukuo; that is a positive act, the importance of which is recognized elsewhere more fully than here. In an oblique way the United States sought to stiffen and support Finnish resistance. The abdication of our neutral rights under international law profoundly affects the conduct of the war in Europe. The fact is that American interests are deeply involved in the existence of strife anywhere, and in the measures taken to end that strife. By direction and by indirectness, sometimes more importantly and sometimes less importantly, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively, we participate in shaping both war and peace.

Neither Europe nor Asia can long maintain a peace of which the United States does not approve. The Treaty of Versailles furnishes all the evidence we need on that point. If we look at the history of the Far East during the last thirty years, we have another clear-cut illustration. So great is our weight in the balance of the world that we upset the balance not alone by throwing it toward one side or the other; jumping off the teeter board has an effect just as profound. This war is being fought in Europe, but those who say we have no responsibility for its inception, its course, and its consequences simply deceive themselves.

In the third place, unreality creeps in not only when we think of peace as remote in time and distant in space, but when we think of it as something on a piece of paper written by statesmen. This simply confuses form with substance. The leadership of statesmen is partly real, and partly an optical delusion by which we are persuaded that in following us they actually lead. They reflect our temper even more than they control it. Therefore, as individuals we cannot escape responsibility. We have no right to talk of peace unless we first ask what our own responsibility may be, whether we are in favor of policies that make for the kind of world in which peace is possible.

I start, therefore, with the premise that peace is being shaped here and now, and to some extent by us—not alone by us, of course, but none the less importantly. In the light of that premise I want to examine briefly the central paradox in the world’s search for peace: the attempt of nations to pursue simultaneously utterly contradictory policies.
We are advised in Scripture, when giving alms, not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth. Often we act as though that were an admonition quite different—to have the left hand find out what the right is doing and checkmate it. When that happens in an individual, we speak of a split personality and recognize it as a dreadful calamity. Indeed, it often leads to suicide. The nations of the earth (including our own) exhibit that fatal defect—and war is in fact suicide.

Let us put this paradox in plainest terms: we do everything by engineering and invention, by ingenuity and technology, by courage and treasure to make commerce not only possible, but inevitable—to give it the greatest volume, the greatest mobility, the greatest freedom. Simultaneously we set up political barriers to hamper and defeat it. Is it any wonder that it is said we live in "a dark hour of a great age", or that Ortega y Gasset with acid clarity said: This is an epoch "superior to other times, [but] inferior to itself"; an age "strong, indeed, and at the same time uncertain of its destiny; proud of its strength and at the same time fearing it."

Let us look for a moment at this tragic paradox through historical perspective. The *De Monarchia* of Dante, written at the opening of the fourteenth century, is a magnificent summation of the medieval concept of the human race as a single, universal community founded and governed by God. "Man-kind ", he said, "is a whole with relation to certain parts, and is a part with relation to a certain whole. It is a whole, of course, with relation to particular kingdoms and nations . . . and it is a part with relation to the whole universe." In passionate language he poured out the yearning for that unity. But his words were uttered in an age when physical obstacles made the longed-for unity impossible. Science had not yet unleashed its miracles, engineering had not yet improved upon the skill of the ancients so that means of communication, methods of travel, and agencies of exchange could realize that unity.

Now the situation is reversed. Since it is possible to fly in eighteen hours from New York to San Francisco, we would expect the feat to be recognized as a manifestation of the unity of this nation, of its compactness, of the reality of a national market and a national ideal.
But remember the paradox! Do the states accept the implications of that magnificent achievement? Quite the contrary. Interstate barriers have been raised to the highest point in the history of this nation under the Constitution. A determined effort is being made to establish the equivalent of interstate tariffs. Having for a century and a half enjoyed the blessings of an enormous free trade area, having seen that policy and that practice weld together the interests of this nation, in the name of local patriotism men seek to destroy it.

We read in our histories of nullification in 1832 and thrill to Andrew Jackson's stirring toast, "Our Federal Union, it must be preserved." We know the poignant tragedy of Robert E. Lee who found himself in a dilemma of patriotism between his state and the United States. We had thought the war between the states had resolved for all time that dilemma, and effectively preserved the Union. Abraham Lincoln fulfilled the promise of Andrew Jackson. Yet today new nullificationists, not so frank, not so bold, stealthily, by devious devices, seek to destroy the constitutional guarantees against interstate barriers. Those guarantees were established when trade between the states was limited by distance, before means of communication and transportation made free interstate trade possible. But now that we have fulfilled the dream of making those boundaries meaningless by taking to the air, New York taxes the income of a flier who crosses the country for that portion of his flight which is over the soil of New York. Eight states of the Union have set armed guards along their boundaries and have established ports of entry like customs houses upon the borders of foreign countries. Some states have set up embargoes against the products of other states. No state has failed to pass some law calculated to destroy the national unity. An attempt is made to obey the letter of the Constitution but to defeat its purpose, destroy its meaning, and impoverish us all.

Similarly, in the international world, we are proud of the fact that it is possible to fly from this country to Europe in something under twenty-four hours, and we rejoiced only last week in the triumphant round trip of the Clipper in less than forty-eight hours. But we deny the implications of that magnificent act. International trade, facilitated by the miracles of transport, is obstructed by political action which has raised
the highest barriers ever established by nations to destroy their own prosperity. Autarchy is the strongest illustration.

During the centuries when men yearned for unity and developed a magnificent theory of a united world, the facts ran counter to their dreams. Now that there is the substance of a united world, we find ourselves with no theory, no instrumentality, and no faith that either can be created. Now that we have made the world a physical unity, now that we have made it literally a community of people, we reject any spiritual unity. We insist upon a supernationalism which does not permit us to love our own nation as a father and other nations as brothers and sisters, but demands that we love our nation to the exclusion of all others. The implication is that if we do not hate them, we cannot love our own. In human experience and in ethics, nothing is clearer than that a person cannot actually love anyone while he hates another. Yet that is precisely the demand implicit in the attitudes of many people in this country. Goethe's echo of Dante's great generalization, "above all nations is humanity", would today be regarded as a manifestation of active disloyalty not only in totalitarian states, but in many quarters in the United States.

Those who refuse to face the facts as to the kind of world we ourselves have helped to build, disguised as patriots, try to bully those who would discuss our obligations. They seek to inhibit the expression of moral judgments about the war, asserting that those who make such judgments are dragging the United States into active participation. The narrower and more provincial the nationalism, the more patriotic it conceives itself to be.

Those who would take care of themselves and let the rest of the world go hang yield to an impulse which has always been fatal to those who obeyed it. When Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?", it was a dishonest question. No one has ever been deceived by Cain's question, unless he succeeded for a moment in deceiving himself. It is easy and specious to paraphrase Cain and say, "Let Europe solve its problems and we will solve ours." But that is also a dishonest effort to confuse the mind. For we helped make the modern world and cannot claim immunity from responsibility.

When Robert Fulton built the Clermont to ply the waters that wash the shores of this city, he launched a revolution in
transportation, which made it possible for America to send a million men to France and for the nations of the earth to burden the seas with their traffic. When Americans built the Merrimac and the Monitor, they altered the structure of sea power and laid upon the nations of the earth a tax for the building of navies beyond the wildest dreams of the imagination.

When the first message went over the Morse telegraph, "What hath God wrought?", its inventor might well have added, "And what have I wrought?" Similarly, when Alexander Graham Bell spoke for the first time over his telephone, he also altered the habits of the world and made it possible for men at a distance to confer as though they were in one room.

When Cyrus Field laid the Atlantic cable amidst the laughter of the skeptics, he created a tie between Europe and America that no wishful thinking can destroy. By that cable an American changed the future of Europe; the structure of the world was altered and we cannot slough off the responsibility.

A self-confident nation took over an abandoned ditch in the jungles of Central America and built the Panama Canal. Theodore Roosevelt had no doubt of the scope of its influence, for he said, "This . . . will, in its great and far-reaching effect, stand as among the very great conquests . . . won by any of the peoples of mankind." He was right, for it re-oriented the trade routes of the world; it gave a new framework to naval strategy.

When Americans speeded up the industrial and the agricultural revolutions and developed the processes of mass production by automatic machinery, they profoundly altered the character of trade, reshaped the problem of raw material, affected the cost of goods, and revolutionized the distribution of benefits. They cannot now deny those achievements.

When Edison and his successors turned loose upon the world a flood of brilliance, and engineering caught the forces of electricity to harness them, power reenergized the implements of mankind in Europe as well as America.

When America took Marconi's invention and developed the technique of world-wide broadcasting, it gave to the spoken word the very speed of thought itself and language flashes
about the earth faster than a beam of light can be bent over its surface. The fact that it was done without appreciating all its consequences does not purge us of responsibility. Americans created an almost insoluble problem for the dictators and the censors of the world. For example, in the two weeks between the first and fifteenth of February, there were 131 radio programs received in one place in America from London, Paris, Berlin and Rome—58 from Berlin, 41 from London, 17 from Rome, and 15 from Paris. Twenty-seven programs were in languages other than English. They penetrated censorship as though it did not exist. Despite drastic penalties many of these broadcasts were heard by thousands in areas of Europe where listening is forbidden.

When the Wright brothers lifted their fragile power kite from the sands of Kitty Hawk, they changed the face of war, they changed the face of communication and of transport, they altered the habits of the earth. Now commerce is borne literally upon the wings of the wind. Their triumphs, exploited by their successors, have brought unforeseen but no less real and inescapable consequences for Europe and Asia, the islands of the seas, as well as for America. To pretend that our relationships are the same as they were before is to shut one's eyes to reality.

We have been, I am contending, the pioneers and the most effective single agency in the world for shrinking the earth upon which we live. Our forefathers were glad to flee Europe, but they were sorry that the barrier of the ocean was so great and sought to reduce it. They were glad to occupy this vast land, but they knew its political union depended upon physical union. Therefore, they turned their youthful energies with fierce zeal and rich ingenuity and magnificent courage to those tasks. No wonder Walt Whitman cried:

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march, my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I am not arguing that our achievements stand alone. We have traded not only in goods but in ideas. It is announced, for example, that synthetic rubber will be made in this coun-
try under German patents. Indeed many of the chemical marvels of our age are under German patents. No embargo, no blockade, no economic warfare can prevent the flight of that knowledge and its exploitation within our borders. As with synthetic rubber, so also plastics and thousands of other products have been worked out in the laboratories of the world and fly from one country to another with extraordinary speed.

Likewise, in the fight against disease, we do not and cannot stand alone. All are familiar with the miracles of sulfanilamide and its various derivatives. The fundamental work was done in Germany, but it was developed in France and England and its clinical use in America began at Johns Hopkins. Today many people are living who, without international scientific collaboration, would now be in their graves. I ask whether it is rational, whether it is intelligent for us to say that Europe be allowed to fall into such a state of decline as to set back its cooperation with us in the great battle against disease; in the exchange of ideas for scientific developments, in the promotion of the distribution of goods to the people of this earth.

Yet in the face of the triumphs of science and engineering, what is the temper of politics? Does it accept the responsibilities of these achievements? Does it implement intercommunication? Its temper can perhaps be illustrated by an amazing bill recently presented to the Senate of the United States. A statesman who has had the special benefits of heading the Temporary National Economic Committee introduced a bill designed to check the use of machinery, to put a premium upon hand labor, to penalize the one and subsidize the other. It was calculated to undo the industrial revolution, to withdraw from the workingman his radio, his car, his plumbing. It might better have come from someone sitting in a loin cloth, drinking goat's milk and spinning cotton. The Federal Communications Commission lays the dead hand of bureaucracy upon a scientific and commercial development, lest the product come to obsolescence. Must we now expect an edict from some government bureau against women's hats on the ground that they will be out of style next season, and must the costume jewelry business stagger into a decline because a beneficent government would permit us only those things which endure, like the pile of gold in Fort Knox?
The United States was not always in this timid mood in the face of its own achievements or before the world at large. Jefferson was thought to be a pacifist, and he had a dogma of "peace, commerce, honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none," but he had no illusions about isolation. Although the Barbary pirates were Europe's problem and Europe was ready to pay tribute to them, he none the less sent our ships to the Mediterranean and cleaned up a nasty mess on behalf of the world, and freed commerce of shackles.

When we were weak and were told that events in Europe were of no concern to us, Daniel Webster wrote to Hülsemann, the Austrian Minister: "The power of this republic, at the present moment, is spread over a region, one of the richest and most fertile upon the globe, and of an extent in comparison with which the possessions of the House of Hapsburg are but a patch upon the earth's surface." The United States, he said, cannot "fail to cherish always a lively interest in the fortunes of nations struggling for institutions like our own." Words too bold for today!

It was a dramatic moment in history when a minor naval power sent an expedition half way round the earth to demand the opening of Japan. Commodore Perry changed the status of Asia, altered the balance of the world—and gave to trade fresh opportunities.

Despite the fact that the Kattegat and the Skagerrak were within the orbit of Europe in a very intimate and particular way (as the events of the last few days have illustrated), the United States did not hesitate to exert its influence for the abolition of the Sound dues in 1857—and helped break down another barrier to trade.

When the Far East was in a process of partition, at the end of the nineteenth century, it was an American Secretary of State who announced the policy of the "open door" and of the integrity of China with no squeamish hesitations because it was over the water. That was a reflection of our determination to keep open the channels of commerce.

If America had no hesitation in holding open the trade of the world at a time when trade had to surmount so many natural barriers, and before we could provide the physical facilities for it to surmount those barriers, how much more should we accept responsibility today when we are the most
powerful nation in the world and, more than any other nation, have made the world compact? Why should we run away from this reality? For reality it is. I am not suggesting we should assume the responsibility of others, but I insist we should accept the responsibilities we ourselves have created. Is it to be said that the United States is the first casualty in the "war of nerves"? Is it to be said that having been the most effective agent in destroying our isolation, we now cower in the presence of our own achievement? Is that the path to a peaceful world?

The bold, the vigorous, the decisive activities of the United States, both in science and technology and in commercial diplomacy, have not brought us to war, but to greater influence, a higher standard of living, and firmer prosperity. They have contributed to well-being and peace in the world. Whatever we may do by trade agreements or other political means to open the channels of trade is simply fulfilling our own destiny and contributing to peace upon earth. It will not do to have the right hand of science and technology pursue a positive course while the left hand of politics checkmates it by a negative course. Why not let the two hands work together to build a better world?