A positive idea can never be beaten by a negative one, even if the positive idea is weak and the negative one is potentially stronger, but the upholders of the positive idea must seize the initiative in order to be the masters of their fate. The world is now suffering because the democracies yielded the initiative to the dictatorships. The democracies took defensive positions and, operating under a philosophy symbolized in the military sphere by Liddell Hart, applied the doctrine of limited liability not only to military operations but also to political strategy.

The false sense of security which persisted while the military initiative was abandoned and the Allies rested behind the Maginot line has now been shown to have been folly. The military mistake, however, was preceded by an identical, but even more serious, error in moral and political strategy. This consisted in a like abandonment of initiative to the totalitarians. It is now being followed in Europe and in America by an error of similar character and dimensions in still another field — the abandonment of the peace strategy to the totalitarians.

The Versailles Treaty was not a good treaty, but it was probably as good a one as is likely to be made at the close of a long, bitter, and exhausting war, by statesmen whose first preoccupation is certain to be continuance in office. Though it was not a good treaty, it was, nonetheless, a better treaty than it is now given credit for having been.

Through the years the treaty became progressively less viable. Its evolution in action was degenerative, partly because of the negative philosophy and action of the United States. The failure of the United States to participate in the tripartite treaty of guarantee destroyed one of the presuppositions of the Versailles Treaty. The failure of the United States to participate in the Reparations Commission (though twice later we had to intervene "unofficially," with the Dawes Commission and the Young Commission) impaired its value as an instrument of flexible peace. The failure of the United States to participate in the World Court deprived the treaty of a third of its potentialities for peaceful change. The failure of the United States, which had launched the League of Nations, to take a positive attitude toward it contributed to its ineffectiveness as an agency for peaceful political reorientation.

Instead of developing into an instrument of positive action, which it might have done, the treaty by this negative policy became a kind of Maginot line, strongly defended toward the front but open to a flanking movement which made its defenses useless. The way for a German flanking movement was prepared by many in Britain and many more in America whose destructive criticisms of the treaty were not balanced by positive alternative proposals. The criticisms by which the moral position of the treaty was destroyed were the same in the three countries — but with this difference: The Germans had a positive substitute for the treaty, whereas the United States and Britain paved the way for the substitute by participating in the moral abandonment of what already existed without offering any substitute of their own. We participated, that is to say, only in the work of destruction. The unworthy positive idea of the totalitarians — reform of the treaty by force — prevailed over a negative attitude. The available positive ideal of a flexible peace, inherent in the treaty as drafted, was lost because of failure to retain the political and moral initiative.

When the moral position of the treaty had been destroyed, the Maginot line of peace was turned, and mobile forces of political intelligence were not available for effective resistance to the German program. Once the moral initiative with regard to the structure of peace was conceded, the overthrow of peace was only a matter of time.

In the same way the moral initiative has been abandoned to the totalitarians in discussions of democracy. The "failure" of democracy, at least its failures, have been scarcely less the theme of public figures in France, Britain, and America than in the totalitarian countries. We have had over ten years of emphasis upon the pathology of democracy, with some evidence of consequent hypochondria. The "failure" of democracy to provide security, the "failure" of democracy to solve the unemployment problem, the "failure" of democracy to redistribute wealth, "failure" in a hundred other ways have been exploited by Americans and British as much as by Germans.

One recent British author, who is much and widely admired in America, in writing on the strategy of peace makes the flat statement that "the character of our political institutions contradicts the possibilities of our economic achievement." That statement is characteristic of the defeatist point of view, which goes a long way toward admitting the strictures of the totalitarians. The criticisms of the last decade have been so completely negative that when the physical assault upon democracy was made, whole areas of the ideal were already in process of being abandoned; they had already been conceded to the aggressors, and needlessly conceded.

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The critics of democracy have proceeded on the fallacious assumption that specific failures were due to inherent weaknesses of the democratic process rather than to ineffective instrumentalities and leadership. They have measured the achievements of democracy against Utopian perfection, not against standards applicable to a real world. Instead of taking the initiative and driving home the weaknesses of totalitarianism and exploiting the positive aspects of democracy, the "defenders" of democracy have admitted its weaknesses and confined themselves to defensive gestures against the totalitarians. Statesmanship, which had become defensive about democracy, attempted to intrench itself behind the moral equivalent of the Maginot line, then watched helplessly while that line was outflanked and overwhelmed.

In the same manner the initiative has been conceded to the totalitarians in discussions about capitalism. Capitalism has not been discussed from a positive point of view during the last decade by statesmen anywhere in the world. It has not been aggressive in its assaults upon the theory of exchange control, upon the theory of barter, upon the theory of state socialism. The initiative has been left to Russia, to Italy, and to Germany, and their assaults upon the plutocracies, their sneers at alleged outworn aspects of capitalism, have been merely the echoes of negative domestic criticisms in the nations where capitalism has thus far survived. Even there its ultimate modification out of all recognition is conceded not only without a struggle but virtually without effective argument.

Characteristic of this defeatist point of view is the British writer previously quoted, who speaks of "the central contradiction within itself between capitalism and democracy. . . . Their relationship is satisfactory in periods of economic expansion; it becomes difficult in periods of economic contraction." That statement, typical of the luminous and arrogant simplicity with which the alleged breakdown of democracy and capitalism is described, says in elaborate words that trouble is trouble — and unpleasant. One can read his whole argument through, however, without encountering any hint that Russian communism has been anything other than a glad, sweet economic song — except as its capitalist neighbors have abused it! His is the kind of mind which shuts itself resolutely to any manifestation of privilege except that of wealth. The whole Hitlerian arraignment of plutodemocracy is tacitly accepted. Denouncing, as do most of us, the special privileges that often come with money, he closes his eyes to the special privileges that come with political power in a communist bureaucracy. Denouncing, as all of us would, the economic authority of any little group of capitalists over the welfare of masses of men, he resolutely closes his eyes to the power of life and death exercised over the masses by the dictator head of the totalitarian communist state. He blandly insists that democracy, to be effective in the current crisis, must "take large steps toward the transformation of the capitalist basis of its economic foundations to a Socialist basis." This widely acclaimed book, describing where we are to go from here toward peace, surrenders one whole area to the totalitarians without firing an intellectual shot.

The same author, who is characteristic of many more, closes his eyes resolutely to the development of dictatorship in Russia and has relatively mild words of condemnation for the manner in which Stalin has played the game of power politics. He assumes a fundamental difference in orientation between dictatorship in Moscow and dictatorship in Berlin and Rome. He assigns to the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini the characteristics of an outlaw but attributes to the dictatorship of Stalin the implementation of the dynamic of the masses. As he describes, step by step, the terror an tyranny by which the Nazi and Fascist masters mad their wills dominant over their states, he is blind to the precise parallelism of means and method that marks the rise of tyranny in Russia.

Despite the suave phrases of such apologists, socialist or communist totalitarianism makes democracy impossible. Bureaucracy never submits even to phantasm elections; bureaucracy never takes on the mortal release of death, which even the dictator can never escape. Bureaucracy, which is the essential instrument of totalitarianism in its socialist, communist, or any other form, is of all forces the least responsive to the popular will.

Let us repudiate the defeatists. Compared with totalitarianism, democracy has no need to be defensive. The inherent weaknesses of the totalitarian state are decisive. I shall mention only four and shall offer but word on each.

(1) Totalitarianism means physical impoverishment. There are no vitamins in guns, and when guns are put before butter long enough, such a policy must exact inevitable physical toll. But propaganda screams the word "equality," and the pretense is made that if the sacrifice be common, then there is no sacrifice at all.

(2) Totalitarianism means economic impoverishment. A nation's main productive forces cannot be turned into destructive channels over a long period of years, energies cannot be put into fashioning things which produce no dividends in goods, money cannot be spent upon a scale which taxation can never meet without resultant economic impoverishment. But again the emphasis in propaganda is upon "equality," an by a strong assault upon alleged plutocracy, it agai makes the false pretense that common sacrifice means no sacrifice at all.

(3) Totalitarianism means intellectual impoverishment. Bureaucratic control is necessarily hostile to intellectual freedom. There is no mind that betrays less evidence of imagination, there is no mind less inventive and in the long run less sympathetic, than the official mind. When the mind of science and the mind of art are harnessed in tandem with the official mind, they inevitably lose that freedom that swept, that reach which have brought science its untold number of triumphs, which have brought richness and beauty and meaning and power to letters and the arts.

(4) Totalitarianism means spiritual impoverishment. For if the state is made one's god, the result is no better than if an idol were fashioned of gold or of clay. Even power were not the inevitable objective, the baser lie would be substituted for the fuller and richer lif
If control over others is substituted for mastery of oneself, the result is a loss for which nothing can compensate.

But, having crushed minorities, having purged dissidents, the totalitarian state insists it has achieved "unity." By inhibiting creative power outside official channels, by controlling every aspect of life, and by substituting a false enthusiasm for the state in place of reverence for God, the totalitarian state tries to make the world believe that the minds and hearts of men are one. If we are so inert in our defensive position that we do not seize the initiative, tear those pretenses away, and show all the forms of physical, economic, political, intellectual, and spiritual poverty which lie behind them, then our superior democratic ideal will never conquer the inferior totalitarian ideal which flaunts its bold claims.

The soundness of the military aphorism that the best defense is a strong offense is now obvious. It should have been clear from the beginning — at least after the German annexation of Austria had turned the Czech fortress line — that a defensive military position is untenable. If the immovable body does not crumble before the irresistible force, the force flows around it and achieves the same result.

It should be equally clear by now that a negative attitude cannot resist a positive idea, and that when the moral initiative, the intellectual initiative, and the physical initiative are surrendered, and trust is reposed in defensive positions, those positions will be lost. One after another, either from the front or, more likely, from the flank and the rear.

That is why it is so serious a matter to have abandoned thus far the initiative regarding the shape of the coming peace. There are current in the democratic world no theory of the peace, no aggressive principles which the peace is designed to implement, no clear picture of the kind of world in which we are ready to participate, no definition of the responsibilities we are ready to assume, no intimation of the structure of our own hopes. American pessimists have been as quick as the Germans to open the pathway through the flanking forest of the Ardennes by saying that free exchange is a thing of the past; by asserting that the gold standard, or anything like it, is a thing of the past; by declaring that free enterprise in the international sphere is a thing of the past; by admitting that small nations probably cannot maintain themselves; by anticipating in the future some hegemony within spheres of influence, such as is involved in the conception of hemispheric defense and hemispheric economy, or a partition of the world between the democracies and the totalitarians.

All these concessions mean that even if the totalitarians lose the war, they are likely to win the peace. Aid to Britain is no substitute for clear thinking.

The hope of peace is an old hope. In our greatest work of literature, the Bible, peace as an ideal appears again and again, always with yearning and sometimes with magnificent faith. The periods when the world has moved toward peace have been those when hope was reinforced by faith. Today, when even hope is dimmed and faith is all but absent, the totalitarian faith in conquest is for the moment triumphant and the totalitarians can define their "new order" while we flounder without a program. Our absence of faith in any contrary process gives them the victory. If we are ever to have peace, then more vital than guns, more vital than butter, is a reawakening of faith in the validity of our ideals — a resurgence of faith in the democratic process, a readiness to see those ideals and that process operate upon an international scale.

One of the ironies of life is the inability to have peace without being ready to run the risk of war. For peace is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. It is the opportunity to fulfill some mission, to realize some
great dream, to organize life in accordance with some dominating principle. Accomplishment of such aims means taking a positive line, not merely making a defensive stand: it means taking the risks that go with a positive line, not seeking the security deemed to lie in a defensive position.

If you take risks, among them must assuredly be the risk of war. But if you make your will firm to realize your principle, if you mobilize your power to achieve your dream, you will be so strong that men will hesitate to issue the final challenge that involves war. And if they be so mad, you may live in confidence that the power you have generated, the force you represent, the ideas and the ideals which move you are stronger than those of the challenger. Recent years have shown again that the weak foreign policy of appeasement brings war, whereas the strong foreign policy of fulfillment may avoid it. Consequently, peace is seen at last to rest upon strength, courage, faith, upon clarity of mind and firmness of will; but never upon doubt or defeat, hesitation or fumbling, the defensive spirit.

The central task for Americans is an objective definition of our interests and our responsibilities, of a shape of things to come which would enlist our energies and our resources. Then, if war comes, we would fight not to "defend" something but to achieve something. Of course, by influence and strength we might without war achieve that positive goal, imposing it upon an exhausted world by moral and economic and intellectual force. Statesmanship consists in dealing with events at hand with the means available in order to achieve long-matured, positive goals.