

REVIEWS

THE TIME FOR DECISION. By Sumner Welles. New York: Harper & Bros., 1944. Pp. vii, 431. \$3.00.

U. S. WAR AIMS. By Walter Lippmann. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1944. Pp. viii, 235. \$1.50.

WOODROW WILSON AND THE LOST PEACE. By Thomas A. Bailey. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1944. Pp. viii, 381. \$3.00.

THESE three books about recent diplomatic history are part of the great public debate which will help to settle the immediate controversies of our foreign policy. Each attempts to draw lessons for the future from what it treats as the mistakes, and successes, of the last thirty years of our behavior in the international community. Each is primarily concerned with certain of the large decisions which the government of the United States will have to make: whether to help build, and then join, a new League of Nations; whether to maintain our wartime alliances and associations; and how to treat Germany, Japan and our other enemies. These are the first questions of our times. Their resolution will fix the course of our foreign policy for a generation, and establish the framework within which we can pursue domestic social, political and economic goals. How they are met will determine the fate of the Republic. In that sense these are desperately popular books, and it may not be altogether inappropriate for them to be reviewed by a lay reader, rather than a professional historian.

One striking quality of our thinking about the problems of war and peace marks all three of these books. To an extraordinary extent, the issues have been framed for us by the experience of the last war. In a sense, we have been reliving the years between 1914 and 1921, Allies and Germans alike. For some purposes, this has been a useful psychological fact. Fortified with the thought of history repeating itself, the British did not despair in 1940; nor did the Germans ever quite escape an uneasy sense of their doom. Even in the middle of 1942, we never seriously contemplated the possibility of losing the war. Now, facing the peace, we find that the debate of Wilson and Lodge, of President Taft and the elder La Follette, is still going on. We are greatly concerned, perhaps too greatly concerned, with Wilson's tactics and Wilson's points—his failure to consult the Senate in advance, his offer of a military alliance to France, the constitutional problem he provoked about the President's power to use the armed forces, whether the new League should or should not be part of the Peace Treaty, and so on.

Wilson was a very great prophet, but a poor negotiator and political leader. Wilson's eloquence, his religious ardor, his legend, and above all his forceful and misleading formulation of the issues, are proving on the whole to be a handicap to serious thinking about the problems of our foreign policy. Wilson should be taken as the heroic symbol of a basic axiom of our foreign policy, not the spokesman of a detailed program. The doctrine for which he stands, broadly speaking, in the public mind today,—and on this point our people are now disposed to agree that he was right—is the doctrine that in the modern world peace is indivisible, and that the United States has a continuing and responsible national interest in preserving it. This Doctrine should be considered with the Monroe Doctrine as an enduring cornerstone of our foreign policy, and it might well become known, by analogy, as the Wilson Doctrine. Beyond that broad proposition, however, it is unnecessary and even dangerous to follow Wilson too closely. Times, forces, and problems have changed. And even for his own times Wilson was not by any means a leader without blemish.

The incubus of Wilsonism is the main subject matter of these three books.

Mr. Welles' important tract is in part a memoir of his experience as Under-Secretary of State, in part a program for the development of a continuous and consistent American foreign policy. Written with color and passion, it strongly presents the case for a Wilsonian approach to the problems of peace. It digresses at some points, notably in its extended treatment of Pan-American problems, and it pays off some personal and professional scores, with compound interest. But in the main it is an essay on the problems of Versailles, reviewed and brought up to date in the light of our subsequent experience. Starting with a balanced and concise analysis of the issues before the 1919 peacemakers, it considers the diplomacy of the period between wars, reports on Mr. Welles' 1940 mission to Europe, and, in a useful last chapter, lists the main elements and objectives of an enduring American foreign policy. Mr. Welles urges an immediate beginning on the task of organizing a new League, and the creation of our ultimate security arrangements through it. This association, however, must not "come suddenly into being as a completed and detailed international charter." It must be rather a gradual growth, based on experience, and sustained in its earlier period of life by the vigorous continuance in peacetime of our present alliance for carrying on the war.¹

Unlike many commentators on the problem of our security, Mr. Welles does not evade the essential condition precedent to the success of a new League—the question of how German territory shall be politically organized. He dismisses the casual and superficial plan of restoring the *status quo ante* 1939. He strongly supports the policy of undoing the German union of 1871, and of partitioning Germany into separate states. Through these states the German people could quickly resume a profitable participation in the political

1. WELLES, THE TIME FOR DECISION (1944) 370.

and economic life of Europe, without constituting a military threat to anybody. This approach to the German problem offers the United States a maximum chance for its security during the next fifty years.² In this and other important particulars—notably on the maintenance of international staff arrangements—Mr. Welles differs from Wilson, but the conception of policy he advocates is Wilsonian in its broadest and best sense.

Mr. Lippmann, the most useful and responsible of our war-time journalists, has written a cogent pamphlet which in many ways complements Mr. Welles' book. In broad strokes, and with admirable balance and perspective, Mr. Lippmann sets out the political and strategic factors which twice in this century have led us to fight for the system of power on which our safety as a nation depends. From this analysis, he develops a program through which our foreign policy might well hope to consolidate and secure the peace—a program of close association with Britain, France and the other nations of the West, in an "Atlantic Community" which would remain closely linked, both through direct coalition and through a new League of Nations, with like regional communities centering in the Soviet Union, China, and ultimately in the Moslem world. The new League would not have primary responsibility for keeping the peace. Such a view of the League's functions "will fix the responsibility where alone it can be discharged—upon the governments of the great powers and their neighbors with whom they are allied. There will be no pretense, and no escape by means of the pretense, that the responsibility for preventing war is anywhere else than where it really is: in the great military states themselves."³ Mr. Lippmann professes to be anti-Wilsonian in outlook, and his prescription of what should be done to keep the peace purports to differ profoundly, in procedure at least, from the course of action proposed by Mr. Welles. When compared in detail, however, the differences seem illusory. The actual programs of the two men are not far apart.

Professor Bailey has written a clear, if academic, analysis of what Wilson did at Paris, with a view to instructing us as to Wilson's errors, and those of other men. It is a convenient review of what happened, and an interesting case study in why American youth has been so badly educated on the basic problems of American security. Careful and workmanlike in detail, the book never considers, nor even presents, the fundamental system of ideas which dominates it, and gives it shape. These ideas emerge in asides, and in the

2. It is a paradox that Mr. Lippmann's book, so clear in its perception of the power foundations of political order, is weak in its prescription for Germany. His program would leave a vengeful, strong Germany a good fighting chance to divide the Russians from Britain, France and the United States, and permit Germans again to dream of achieving the condition of 1939—Russian neutrality during a German war against the west. One may assume that even German militarism has learned that war in the East cannot pay. See also *HOW TO END THE GERMAN MENACE, A POLITICAL PROPOSAL, BY FIVE HOLLANDERS* (1944).

3. LIPPMANN, *U. S. WAR AIMS* (1944) 168-169.

interstices of the chapters. Together, the asides constitute the most dangerous of all the Wilson legends: the Ray Stannard Baker thesis, recently revived by Mr. William Bullitt and others, that Wilson was forced by "power politics" in Paris to compromise with his principles, with the result that the Treaty became an unjust instrument for oppressing Germany, and therefore "caused" the present war. If Professor Bailey devoted one quarter of the attention to the fallacies of this thesis that he gives, for example, to the controversies at Versailles over Fiume or Shantung, his book would have been a great deal more intelligible, and useful.

In essence, all three books grapple with this same general issue, which is perhaps the worst single aspect of our Wilsonian legacy. The issue is variously defined as a supposed choice between "power politics" and "idealism," between "domination of the Big Four" and "equality for small nations," between American virtue and European vice. The words and ideas get almost hopelessly enmeshed with American insularity, smugness and xenophobia. They become the crocodile tears of our isolationists, who urged us to ignore the fall of France, and now weep over the fate of Estonia. They provide one of the last arguments of the isolationists, in the form of the doctrine that we should be too proud, as we are too pure, to become entangled in the dirty power politics of the world—a curious and extraordinary idea to prevail among Americans, whose domestic politics have always been human, not to say earthy, in their practical compromises and adjustments. It is an extraordinary idea in another sense as well. The course of world politics has always involved the United States in general world wars, and presumably always will. It is hard to understand how we can be expected to look after our vital national interest in controlling this phenomenon by ignoring the political events which govern it.

However, the issue is planted deep in the public mind. Mr. Welles and Mr. Lippmann, as well as Professor Bailey, have hard words about "power politics" scattered through their books. The phrase is hard to define, because the supposed choice between power and other kinds of politics doesn't exist. What alternative basis is there for political action, short of natural or canonical law? How can the rules, customs and legal norms which govern the use of power conceal the fact that power is the final constituent of social organization, and that the main preoccupation of law, municipal and international, is to control the exercise of authority in ways which fulfill accepted social and ethical purposes? The uses of power are governed in each case by the whole content of the culture in which men assert their authority. However much the exercise of power is circumscribed by history, courts, elections, or other mechanisms of control, there is no evading the fact it is power we are talking about, and power which has the last word. Nothing can alter the fact that there are large and small states, states with and without military power. Power is exercised differently by different countries, according to their cultural habits, just as the ultimate police power within a state is differently used in Switzer-

land, say, and Roumania, in Georgia and in Vermont. Canada, the small neighbor of a great power, faces different military risks than Belgium. The imaginary alternative between power and another basis for political action is false, and the prevalence of the idea conceals and confuses real issues.

Nonetheless, the idea does exist and must be dealt with. It makes two main appearances in the books under review: one in considering what was done at Versailles, the other in discussing how a new League should be organized at a new Versailles.

What people generally mean when they talk about "power politics" at Versailles in 1919 is quite specific, and generally speaking quite mistaken. The phrase is used broadly to characterize the view that Wilson's error at Versailles was his undue concession to European "power politics," which chiefly means European fear of renewed German aggression. It assumes that the enduring weakness of Versailles was the abstract injustice of the settlement with Germany, in violating the principle of self-determination, rather than our failure to build on, enforce and modify the settlement in the light of events. As Mr. Lippmann points out, it is a great mystery why Americans feel so deeply about self-determination in Europe, since we fought a bloody war, and imposed a harsh and punitive peace after it, to stamp out the doctrine among ourselves. Yet such a view of the Versailles conference is widely held in this country. It accepts the main argument of twenty years of German propaganda, and assumes that the "injustices" of Versailles were an important factor in Hitler's rise to power. It leads to the conclusion that the way to prevent another Hitler from coming along is for us once more to fight bitterly with our Allies at the peace conference, as Germany's advocate, to obtain a soft peace. Mr. Welles, though he repudiates this tendency at one point,⁴ is not altogether free of the conviction that the chief sinners at Versailles were British and French, and that we must be on guard against their successors. Professor Bailey, of course, supports this doctrine with uncritical faith.

It is one of the greatest merits of Mr. Lippmann's book that he tackles the myth head on. Looking back, it seems perfectly plain that what turned out to be the disastrous difficulties of Versailles were not Wilson's concessions to Clemenceau, but Clemenceau's concessions to Wilson. The size of the reparations bill, which Professor Bailey calls the greatest of Wilson's errors, proved to be a nuisance, and caused bitter hard feeling among the Allies, since Wilson and his successors refused to link the war debts' question to that of reparations. But Germany received four times as much in loans as she ever paid in reparations—and then defaulted on the loans. In any event, reparations were abolished for good in 1930, three years before Hitler came to power. They can hardly count as a substantial cause of Hitlerism and the war, except in helping to weaken the coalition which might have prevented war.

4. WELLES, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 11, 17.

No, the 1919 decisions which turned out to be catastrophic were quite different: our failure to support some form of international military staff organization; our failure to ratify the treaty of alliance with France, with which Wilson horn-swoggled Clemenceau out of a Rhenish republic; our resistance to all serious proposals for partitioning Germany, or even encouraging German separatism in Bavaria and elsewhere. Nothing is more striking in the literature about the peace than reiterated British and American complaints about the tiresome and long-winded French delegates. Poor Frenchmen! They went on and on, with their orderly speeches and their eloquent perorations, because they knew they were right, and knew that they were not persuading their Allies. They thought we would see the point if exposed to enough logic. Fortunately or unfortunately, logic is not the life of our foreign policy. Bonsal's rueful note is the best comment on the phenomenon: . . . "whenever the French plan of putting force behind the League was projected into the discussions it was warmly, if but briefly, supported by Dmowski (Poland), Vesnitch (Serbia), Kramár (Czechoslovakia), and Hyman (Belgium) When the meager sop of consolation (Article IX) was handed out Dmowski said sadly: 'I had hoped that our distinguished and most welcome visitors from across the seas, broad as well as narrow, would carefully weigh the unanimous opinion of those unfortunate peoples who dwell so near the cave where the wolf pack lowers.'" Bonsal appends this footnote: "It is sad to admit that these five countries were the first to suffer from the failure of the conference to take the precautionary measures which they so repeatedly advocated."⁵

Beyond the detailed issues of the 1919 Peace Conference, however, there is a general proposition, put by Professor Bailey in this form: "There are two ways of dealing with a fallen foe. The one is to make a peace so generous that he may forgive and forget. Whether Germany would have responded favorably to such treatment is still a matter of speculation, but there was a possibility that it might have worked. The second method is to impose a victor's peace, with the purpose of keeping the conqueror's heel on the enemy's neck as long as physically possible. This method is certain to breed another war."⁶ Apart from its extraordinary suggestion that we owed Germany an apology for winning the last war, the notion is so unhistorical, so contrary to common sense, and so plausible as to deserve special comment. The early annexations of Prussia, including those ratified in the victor's peace of 1871, did not give rise to wars of revenge. The French in 1914 mourned Alsace and Lorraine, but hadn't the faintest idea of risking war with the German army to retake them. So do the Danes regret Schleswig-Holstein, and so did the France of the Bourbon restoration look back nostalgically at Belgium. The settlement of 1865 in the United States was harsh and was resented, but it has prevented a renewal of civil war, and in all probability has buried the

5. BONSAI, *UNFINISHED BUSINESS* (1944) 188 and n. 9.

6. BAILEY, *WOODROW WILSON AND THE LOST PEACE* (1944) 312-313.

secession issue in the United States forever. This was not a foreordained result, for secessionism and self-determination had flourished in New England and elsewhere in many forms before 1865. We might well have taken the uneasy and unstable course, now accepted by the British, of trying to build a constitution on the principle of voluntary association. The harsh peace of 1865 has worked, as have other harsh as well as mild peace arrangements, when circumstances of power and interest favored peace. The resentment of the Germans against Versailles was one of the latent forces in German life which Hitler exploited, when the depression and the social disorganization of Germany after 1929 gave him his opportunity. That resentment, however, had very little to do with the merits or demerits of the Treaty itself. It was the consequence of defeat, which can be studied in our South, among the Boers of South Africa, the Hungarians, and many other peoples. The same spirit will exist in Germany for several generations after this war, whether the new peace be mild or harsh. Defeat is a traumatic experience with painful consequences, especially for Germans.

The second area in which we are much confused with talk of power politics is that of plans for the organization of a new League. How can we reconcile the principle of the sovereign equality of nations with the fact that states are not equal in power, and that great wars are the affair of great powers, not little ones? Shall we use the rule of unanimity in large decisions, or a simple majority, or the rule of unanimity among the great powers alone? Shall the keeping of the peace be a function of the new League, or of the great Powers through a committee of the League, or of the great Powers apart from the League? Certainly the rule of unanimity was one of the profound weaknesses of the old League, paralyzing its capacity to act. Yet, just as certainly there seems to be something undemocratic or even dictatorial about an arrangement which doesn't give each sovereign nation a voice, and a vote, in the important affairs of community life.

It is on this series of issues that Mr. Welles and Mr. Lippmann seem to be furthest apart, and actually are closest together. Both men agree that regional systems exist, and should be accepted in some form within the framework of a general system of security. Regional systems will permit the solution of most conflicts by the neighbors, large and small, directly concerned. Mr. Welles says that the new League must have responsibility for keeping the peace. Mr. Lippmann says it should be concerned in the first instance with the important order of international problems not directly concerned with maintaining the peace—with colonial problems, the advance of science, technology, labor standards, and the like. In his view, keeping the peace is for some time—perhaps a generation—the primary responsibility of the great powers. But Mr. Welles concedes that “the four major powers primarily responsible for winning the war and for preventing renewed outbreaks after the armistice must necessarily assume the basic responsibility for making and

carrying out all military decisions.”⁷ He proposes that they should create a Provisional United Nations Executive Council of eleven, which could act only on a two-thirds vote, including the votes of all four great powers. This council would be a first step towards reconciling two basic problems—the need of the great powers for freedom of military action, and the need for giving full representation and protection to the smaller powers. Mr. Lippmann says what Mr. Welles is too much a Wilsonian to emphasize, although in effect he admits it: that for some time, perhaps a long time to come, keeping the peace, like fighting the war, will be the job primarily of the great military powers. Only the diplomacy and good sense of the great powers can prevent Germany or Japan, or a new aggressor, from gaining military freedom by playing the Allies against each other. “The organized power which wins the war must be used to win the peace. It can bring to an end the frightful wars of our age. If it cannot, then nothing can, certainly not some pale, thin, abstract, generalized blueprint of a mechanism.”⁸ The new League, in Mr. Lippmann’s view, should build its strength and influence as an instrument of consultation and conciliation, first on the essentially non-political issues, later as its powers may grow with success. “We have to reverse the Wilsonian pattern of collective security. We cannot build a universal society from the top downwards. We must build up to it from the existing national states and historic communities. That, I think, is what we must learn from the great experiment at Geneva and from its failure. We have, I am convinced, to learn it thoroughly. For we cannot afford to fail again.”⁹

Mr. Welles’ view is not substantially different:

“I have long felt that a major reason for the failure of the League was the fact that the Covenant came suddenly into being as a completed and detailed international charter. It was not a carrying-over into the time of peace of the alliance which had been created during the war. It did not grow gradually as a result of actual experience. Furthermore, because the Covenant came full-grown into being, peoples everywhere were apt to persuade themselves that a final and real peace already existed. It was impossible for their governments to arouse them to the truth that the Covenant was but paper, and would remain so unless each of the major powers was willing to use, if necessary, sufficient armed strength to carry out the provisions both of the Covenant and of the peace treaty itself, especially during the first turbulent postwar years.

“After this war a wholly different approach seems indispensable. It is essential that, before the war ends, the United Nations agree to a transition period to follow the surrender of their enemies. Its length would be fixed later by common agreement and would depend on their progress in laying the foundations for a world of peace.

7 WELLES, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 372.

8. LIPPMANN, *op. cit. supra* note 3, at 164-165.

9. *Ibid.* at 195.

During this transition period the United Nations would have a chance to complete the first and most urgent military steps required; to correct the cardinal territorial errors of the past; to carry out such transfers of populations as may be necessary; to conclude the more immediate programs for rehabilitation and reconstruction; and to pave the way for their ultimate assumption of international trusteeship over such dependent peoples as are not yet ready to enjoy the rights of self-government. During this period, as the hatreds and bitternesses engendered by the war years gradually burn themselves out, the United Nations can, little by little, determine the specific machinery needed for a permanent and effective international organization."¹⁰

Only by facing these facts can we progress towards a system of security in which the luxuries of demobilization, trade, and social progress can be pursued. Slogans about "power politics" and "dictatorship of the great powers" only divert attention from the fact that there are great powers, which must meet their responsibility for peace by using their power. Power must be used wisely, in concert, and after consultation with all concerned; but it must be used, or the peace will turn into an uneasy armistice. If our close association with the Soviet Union, the British Commonwealth, France and China is maintained after the war, as an enduring and living reality, spreading from the military realm to the realms of commerce, cultural interchange, and human association, then the constitutional problems of League-making will be easy matters of draftsmanship and detail. It will not be easy to maintain the alliance. As in 1919, strong forces are at work, playing on irrational and ideological prejudices, to divide the Allies. It will take energy, imagination and statesmanship of a high order to preserve the concert of the Powers. That concert can be preserved, for there are no conflicts of actual interest among the Allies which cannot be peacefully harmonized. All have a common stake in the restoration and maintenance of peace, and in the establishment of effective peaceful methods for reconciling and settling international disputes. In reorganizing the system of world power after the collapse of Germany, ticklish political issues will arise, as was the case after the collapse and partitioning of the Turkish and Austro-Hungarian empires earlier in this century. It will necessarily be difficult to resolve these and the other basic political and economic problems of the world community through the procedure of agreed action. Without that procedure, however, solution would be impossible. Unless a real coalition of the great powers is maintained, as the nucleus of a larger association of nations, League-making will be an empty and sterile exercise, as it was in 1919, and there will be no peace.

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10. WELLES, *op. cit. supra* note 1, at 370-371.

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