

Text of Hoover's 'New Proposal for American Action'

SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES.

CLEVELAND, July 6.—Following is the text of the address by Herbert Hoover tonight before the international convention of Christian Endeavor Societies:

I

Last night I spoke on the American Magazine hour against sending our youth to war in foreign countries again. I stated, however, that America can be of service to peace and humanity. Among other things I suggested that we can build up the standards of decency in the world. We can take action which will lessen both the causes and the barbarities of war. We can do it without involving ourselves in foreign wars. I shall make a concrete proposal for such constructive action tonight.

You represent the youth of many nations. And you are profoundly interested in peace. You are profoundly interested in the growth of humane spirit in this world. And if war should come you are interested in all possible protection of humanity in that war.

Last night I referred to the suffering of women and children in the great war. I know. For years it was my sole occupation to care for the homeless, the foodless, the frightened and the helpless. I have witnessed their sufferings in twenty nations.

And when one speaks to me of war, I do not see the glorious parade of troops marching to the tunes of gay music. I do not think of great statesmen planning and worrying in their chancelleries. Nor do I think of those dazzling chambers where the peacemakers of the world meet to settle the affairs of mankind. I see the faces of hungry, despairing and terrorized women and children. These are the real victims of modern war.

The violence of war is year by year falling more and more horribly upon the civilian populations. Starvation by blockade and killing from the air have become weapons of attack in modern war. At least they have become methods of reprisals. Put bluntly, that means wholesale killing of women and children.

The Food Blockade

Industrial civilization has increased the numbers of people in many countries far beyond their domestic food supplies. They must import food from overseas.

In the last war both sides struggled to bring victory by starvation of the whole enemy people. The food blockade by the Allied Governments on one side and the ruthless submarine warfare by the Central Powers on the other had starvation as a purpose. In the last war both sides professed that it was not their purpose to starve women and children.

But it is only hypocrisy to say that the blockade is directed to starvation of soldiers, munition workers, or government officials. They levy a first call on all food. It is only the deluded who think that these ever starve. Armies and munition workers were not short of food in blockaded Germany in the last war.

All over Europe it was the women and children who, weakened from scanty food supplies, died not in hundreds of thousands but in millions. It was the children who grew up stunted in mind and body. Who can say that the confusion in Europe today is not partly the result of the horrible lives of the children of those years?

Death From the Air

And in equally dreadful sense I saw a newer method of war develop. The bombing of civilian populations from the air first appeared as a part of war strategy during the great war. The bombing plane was then scarcely developed. It was a weakling when the Germans used it against British and French cities. But even then I have seen with my own eyes a score of war raids where terrorized women and children flocked to cellars uselessly and frantically to escape a rain of explosives.

No country then possessed great numbers of these planes built purposely for bombing. Today each nation numbers its fleet in thousands. And today each plane will carry ten times the death-dealing explosives. In terror every European nation is equipping everybody, even the babies, with gas

masks. Every country is preparing to evacuate women and children from the cities. One of the dreads of Europe today is that these great fleets of planes will be used to destroy whole cities.

Again it is hypocrisy to say that the sole purpose of bombing planes is to destroy soldiers, communications and munition works. That is not the full intention. The purpose is terror and weakening of the morale of the civil population. That means the killing of women, children. The experience in China and Spain in the last two years only confirms our worst fears.

II

The Strategy of Modern War

The ancient chivalry for the protection of women and children has departed in the violence of the times. But why these pressures and terrors against women and children?

To break down the morale and resistance of the civil population at home has become a part of the methods of war. There was a time when wars were carried on exclusively by soldiers and sailors. The civil populations went about their routine daily tasks.

Today war is a battle of whole peoples. They must be mobilized to the last atom of their economic and emotional strength. All fit young men and boys are conscripted and thrust into the battlefields. The pressure on their women and children by the enemy is supposed to react upon the conscripts at the front. It is supposed to weaken their courage and the resolution of these huge armies. Or it is presumed to make the enemy people supplicate its own government for peace.

III

The Menace of Increasing Armaments

Whether the intention is deliberate direct attack or only a threat of reprisals this fear for their women and children is one of the driving forces of increased armament by every nation.

One impelling reason for increasing naval fleets given by every country in Europe and Asia is not only to blockade the enemy's food but to keep open the lanes of their own food supplies. Up to the last war the strength in the starvation battle rested with the country which possessed the battleships.

But during the war the German submarines demonstrated a capacity to destroy the food supplies destined to England and France, even against their super-

rior fleets. It brought British and French food supplies into extreme jeopardy. Since then the submarine has been greatly improved and its numbers vastly increased.

One of the impelling reasons for unceasing building of bombing planes is to prepare reprisals for blockade starving of women and children or reprisals for air attacks.

This killing of women and children haunts every council table and affects every move of power politics. It drives not alone to armaments. It drives to more and more military alliances that breed war.

Until this menace of killing women and children by food blockade and from the air is removed, there will be little relief from increasing navies and air fleets. There will be little decrease in the fear that is driving the world to its own destruction.

The standard of living, the comfort of all men is today being steadily lowered by this race of armaments. It is the backs of the men and women who toll that carry this load of war preparedness during peace. It is nonsense to say this is paid for by the rich. The pay comes from the productivity of the people. It is breaking the backs of nations today.

And the United States builds correspondingly to meet the menace of these swelling navies and air fleets.

IV

Objections to Limitation of War Methods

Surely the time has come when men should renounce the starvation and massacre of women and children as methods of war.

I am well aware that any protest or any proposal to limit these horrors in future wars will be derided by the militarists as futile. They will say that the world has

tried to do this sort of thing and failed. Civilian authorities in these desperate times may deride it as impractical. It will be said that war itself is immoral and to suggest moral restraint in conducting war is a hopeless contradiction.

Even if nations subscribe to it in peace it will be said there can be no dependable enforcement after war begins. Long reasons will be adduced to support its unenforceability.

It will be said that in modern war national existence is at stake. National institutions will be destroyed by the inevitable revolutions that follow to the defeated country. Long years of indemnities and oppression are the penalty of defeat to the vanquished.

Therefore, it will be said that, despite any agreement to protect women and children, every nation when once engaged in war, will justify every weapon as a part of its defense, no matter what their humanitarian agreements may be. I shall comment upon some teeth that could be put into enforcement in a moment.

The old fallacy will be produced that the prospect of war becoming more terrible frightens nations into keeping the peace. But the fact is nations go to war out of desperation at these very threats. The fear of frightfulness does not make for peace. It creates fear, hate and desperation which drive nations to war. The prospect of killing of women and children makes war more likely.

Another old fallacy will be produced. That is, the more terrible war is, the quicker the sickened

nations will make peace. But war has become more terrible every year since the invention of gunpowder. Every half century has seen more and more men sacrificed on the battlefield. It has seen more and more women and children sacrificed at home. Human courage rises far above any terror yet invented.

This same fallacy pretends that putting the screws on the civil population gets war over quicker. Such a policy is thus said to be more humane. The last war proved that starvation and bombing only sharpened hate and hardened resolution to continue.

Even supposing all these arguments are true, are we to accept defeat of international decency? Are we not to try every method, explore every channel that might allay these causes of war and armament and that might lead to protection of the lives and minds of innocent women and children? Must we accept such a collapse of Western civilization? Must we accept the despair of return to barbarism?

V

A Proposal

I am going to risk a proposal that might end the worst of it.

My proposal is that all nations who are willing to do so should enter an agreement.

1. That vessels laden solely with food supplies should be placed upon the same basis of immunity as hospital ships. They should go freely. Blockade should not apply to them. There should be no attack upon their passage by either warships or submarines.

2. That there shall be no bombing of civil populations and no bombing anywhere except in the field of actual fighting men on land or sea, and at works devoted strictly to munitions.

Nations who are not willing to enter such obligation will have at least declared their shameful devotion to barbarism. They will be proved outcasts from civilization.

There is humanity in the peoples of all combatant nationalities. Their own public opinion is shocked by barbarities. That is evidenced by the fact that all statesmen in the last war sought to justify such acts to their people as reprisals for the barbarities of the enemy. And through all discussion of preparedness today they find justification in their fears of this frightfulness against themselves.

VI

Enforcement

Now for the moral teeth that I propose for enforcement. That is the definite participation of neutrals of the world in protection against these barbarities. As a part of such agreement the neutral nations should become the

referees announcing in authoritative way any fouls that take place.

To effect this, such agreement should provide further:

3. That the shipment of food supplies in war to any blockaded nation may be in full cargoes under the management and jurisdiction of a commission of the neutral nations.

4. That neutral observers should be continuously in session within every belligerent country to determine the facts of any killing of civilians from the air.

The whole of this enforcement by neutrals must be based upon moral forces and not on military force or entanglement in the controversy. Should any belligerent be convicted of deliberate violations, then neutrals should withdraw. Awful as it may be, no doubt the hell of reprisals from the injured side would then be turned loose.

The real teeth behind this enforcement is public opinion among neutrals. That is one of the most

potent forces in modern war. If it be pointed up by definite conviction beyond all the whitewashing of propaganda it can be far-reaching in its consequences.

In the strategy of modern war one of the utmost anxieties of both sides is to hold the good will of neutrals. Or at least to prevent their indignation forcing them to aid or to join the enemy. The ill will of neutrals or their citizens at once induces informal boycotts of credit and supplies, even so they go no further. To influence neutral public opinion in the last war every combatant spent millions in gigantic propaganda. And they are spending it again today.

Public opinion in neutral nations does not react much to the legalistic question of whether cotton is contraband or non-contraband. It does not react much to imperial ambitions of combatants. It does not react much to specious circumventions of such instruments as the Kellogg Pact. But it does react to the horror of killing women and children.

It is asserted that public opinion of neutrals had no effect in the last war. Contrary to that, when the final verdict of history is given it will be found that the losers lost not by lack of valor or courage. They lost not by lack of efficiency or even from starvation. They lost by failure to heed the public opinion of what were originally neutral nations.

Had the American sense of humanities not been outraged over years there is little likelihood that we would have joined in that war. And with us half a dozen hitherto neutral nations joined also.

The emotional reaction of the American people upon a conviction of wholesale killing of women and children in another great war would come nearer to driving our people to intervention than all the other arguments in the world.

If this moral standard of protection to women and children were once erected in the world the violators could confidently expect that the indignation of neutrals would bring them to disaster.

VII

Some Experience

Incidentally on Armistice Day in 1929 I made the part of this proposal relating to the immunity of food ships. It was approved by the leaders in a score of nations. Those nations who did not regard it with favor thought it one-sided. But they now find themselves hideously menaced from the air. The double proposal should now commend itself to those who then thought it one-sided.

In 1932 I proposed to the World Conference on Land Disarmament a limitation on the use of bombing planes which was accepted by the representatives of many nations. I did not then propose enforcement through organized neutral action as I now do.

To those who doubt the practicability of the idea of ships moving through blockades, I may point out that the Belgian Relief Commission delivered more than 2,000 full cargoes of food through two rings of blockade. It was done by international agreement under neutral management operating continuously for more than four years. It proved that this could be done.

Moreover, the conventions as to

the Red Cross were fairly well held to in the civilized countries during 1914 to 1919. The agreements as to protection of prisoners were also fairly well held. At least some agreements to mitigate barbarity have been kept in war. These growths away from barbarism lend hope for further progress toward protection to women and children.

If we wish to lower our vision from the transcendent questions of humanity involved, we can find an impelling interest to neutrals in these proposals.

In the last war the blockade initially reduced demand and every farmer in the world suffered. Then as the long lanes of food from the Southern Hemisphere could not be used because of diminished shipping and the submarines, the demand was concentrated on North America. And the farmers of the Southern Hemisphere went bankrupt during the war.

Perhaps some one thinks our farmer benefited. He did not. He has for years and is today still suffering from the expansion of submarginal lands and the inflation of land values due to the high prices of the war.

VIII

Conclusion

Today's is perhaps a poor atmosphere to make any proposal to mitigate the barbarities of war. So many are desperate with fear, so many have learned to hate. So much hatred and fear are being stimulated by the artifices of propaganda.

It is true the processes which lessened the causes of war and made for peace have been greatly weakened. It is a tragic fact that in six years the treaties limiting the navies have been abandoned. The hopeful negotiations to limit land arms have died away. Encouraging international action by the world conference to restore prosperity of the world was suppressed. Nations have lawlessly violated their pledges never to use war as an instrument of national policies. Every large nation is arming to the teeth. The standards of living all over the world are being lowered to pay for increasing arms.

Fear is rampant. The only methods of peace today seem to be military alliances, threats of force, and delicate balances of armed power.

All this may seem discouraging. But there are times when to relift the banner of moral standards is essential. For unless it is raised there will be no morals. Because hate and violence have risen in men is no excuse that we shall forsake reason and humanity.

For America to voice these ideas on behalf of women and children requires no use of force. It needs no military alliances, no leagues, no sanctions. It requires no politics. But that voice when raised on behalf of humanity can be a most potent force in the world today.

We possess a great moral power and we should use it to save mankind from the barbarities of war. Thereby we will promote peace. In this we will be right at all times.