

Who Makes Wars?

The Makers of War. By Francis Neilson. Appleton, Wis.: C. C. Nelson Publishing Co., 1950, 240 pp., biblio., index, \$4.

Dr. Neilson has been a student of the process of war-making (and of the other side of the coin, the means by which peace can be maintained) since the beginning of the Boer War. After it, as a leading member of the Constitutional Radical wing of the British Liberal party and as a member of Parliament, he fought indefatigably against the chain of circumstances that led to the first world war.

When the war was declared, he wrote "How Diplomats Make War." This set off the "literature of the Great Disillusionment," that notable series of investigations and analyses of the causes of World War I. In the course of a decade this body of works countered the criminal hate propaganda of the governments during the war and the popular ignorance of foreign affairs exploited by the propagandists. Between the months of August and December, 1914, he produced this work, a classic now in its fifth printing in English and available in the chief languages of the world.

His book written, he gave testimony to the sincerity of his convictions by resigning in protest from parliament. Ending his political career in his native England, he returned to America. But his career as a democratic reformer was not ended. His effort to press the basic issues of war and peace has been one of the chief interests of his lifetime. To explode the Satanic Theory of war. To revive among the people consciousness of their responsibility to maintain the peace and of their ability to block the blunders, conspiracies and machinations through which nations drift into war. To end for all time the secret diplomacy by which politicians and privileged interests, sometimes unwittingly, set the stage for the booming of the cannon and the blasting of the bombs. These have been the goals of his effort, and no higher aims could command so talented a pen.

When Germany invaded Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, he began his diary of the second world war, "The Tragedy of Europe." In its five volumes, continued until the last shot was fired, he presented not only a day-by-day analysis of the development of the conflict but a report on his life-long studies in the origins of international carnage. That war was followed by a period without even the illusion of international peace. With the nations moving toward a third world war, the writings of virtually all the contemporary commentators on the late conflict, like the decisions of the western statesmen, have been exposed by iconoclastic history as banal and shallow stuff.

But not those of Dr. Neilson, who warned against the dark menace of Stalinism as early as October, 1939. That the political decisions of the great-power coalition against the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo alliance would destroy the *modus vivendi* on which the war-time coalition was based is a recurring theme in his five volumes. Nothing that is taking place today can surprise him, for he appraised correctly the consequences of the policies that, in time, produced the events.

Now, in "The Makers of War," he has built on the solid foundations of these empirical studies a logical structure which traces the development of the second world war through a chain of significant but little known circumstances. The first links consist of the slackness of trade in the English and continental dockyards in the Eighties and Nineties, the exchange of visits by the French and Russian fleets in 1892 and 1893 which did much to provoke the armaments race, and the beginning of the race in 1897. Further links are concerned with the Boer War and the fight to preserve Britain's gold and diamond interests, which left Britain without a friend in Europe. The Boer War and Britain's decline in industrial supremacy are followed further on in the chain by the Treaty of Algeciras, through which Britain, France and Spain sought in 1906 to entrench their interests in the Middle East and Africa and expand them at the expense of German interests. From Algeciras to Sarajevo and from Versailles to the Polish Corridor the trail is torturous; but for the discerning student of history, Dr. Neilson shows, the blazes are plain.

War is a phase, the climactic phase, of the politics of imperialism. Imperialism is the system by which the quasi-monopolies of the States with advanced economies assure themselves raw materials sources, investment opportunities and protected markets in the less developed States. The instruments of assurance in the days of open sterling, franc, mark, ruble and dollar imperialism were concession agreements. More recently they consist of treaties, agreements and declarations of policy with the force of national and international law.

Thus the history of peace and war is bound up with the negotiation of such instruments. Dr. Neilson emphasized this; but, unlike John A. Hobson, he is no economic determinist. (Hobson, indeed, considered war a "by-product" of imperialism and believed that in the present period, that of 'inter-imperialism,' war-making would be suspended by agreement; see especially his "Rationalization and Unemployment," (1930) pp. 114-7). The process by which peace is lost also includes sociological and political elements, Dr. Neilson demonstrates. The failure of the advanced States

to solve the problem of the business cycle, which produces mass unemployment, a phenomenon for which the only known antidote is war, is one of these forces, he argues. The key rôles that munitions industries play in those economies is another of these forces. Their influence is on the public subconscious; they temper the winds of opinion.

More, in scrapping the Great Man Theory of history, we have discarded with it a vital key to the understanding of history, the recognition that impersonal forces can operate only through human instruments whom they influence but cannot control. Thus, for the analysis of the process, Dr. Neilson shows, there are vital materials in the intrigues, conspiracies and blunderings of men high in the bureaucracies of politics, business, finance and journalism.

Dr. Neilson's analysis is an important contribution, and one of the purposes of his new book is to present an orderly exposition of it. But even more important is the companion purpose: to show the people how they lost control over the direction of foreign policy and how they can regain it. The book is addressed directly to the taxpayer and the elector. Dr. Neilson believes they will never get out of the present international political mess until they know how they got into it. They have to be provoked into finding out for themselves. No more provocative book has been written on the subject, and no more convenient guide to the primary materials for the inquiry.

"The Makers of War" is not a substitute for "How Diplomats Make War." It is a fitting companion volume to the established classic. The earlier book was written in the white heat of controversy; its pages sparkle with moral indignation, enlisting the citizen in the crusade for democratic control over the conduct of foreign policy. The present one, written thirty-five years after, brings the inquiry up to the invasion of Poland and demonstrates how the crusade can still be won. History has vindicated many of Dr. Neilson's judgments. His new book deserves to be read widely and considered carefully by intelligent citizens, who alone can end the repeated blundering which threatens to wreak havoc upon western civilization.

W. L.

Book and Monograph Notices

The Keys to Prosperity. By Willford I. King. New York 17: Committee for Constitutional Government, 1948, 242 pp., index, \$4.

Professor King sets forth what he believes to be the essential measures to assure continuance of prosperity without sacrifice of liberty.