

# Moralism Versus The Market

By Raymond V. McNally

About a year ago hysterical war propaganda, suddenly emanating from Washington, was regarded by thoughtful people as the vaporings of irresponsible government leaders. The totalitarian nations were violently and bitterly denounced, apparently for the purpose of working the people into a frenzy against these nations.

Now that a general European conflict is developing, this propaganda is already bearing fruit; for a wave of resentment, born of moral indignation, is beginning to sweep America. The sinking of a British liner, allegedly by a submarine, has added fuel to the fire. The press, while prating of neutrality, is attempting to mould public opinion against one of the combatants. But to insist upon neutrality while at the same time encouraging and even invoking sympathy for one or the other of the combatants amounts to a contradictory action. Strict neutrality on the part of Americans demands not only physical aloofness but also mental and emotional impartiality.

There is no fundamental difference in the economies of the dictatorships and the so-called democracies. Therefore, before people in this country permit themselves to be influenced on a wholesale scale by this insidious propaganda and to fall into the sickening bog of moralism, it might be wise for them to try to understand the true nature of their own government.

Every government in the world is essentially warlike, and ours is no exception. Each finances its operations by means of a war technique, for that is exactly what taxation is, involving restrictions, depredations and persecutions of private citizens. It follows that a moralistic fever must be immanent in such a technique, for those who do not conform are either jailed, fined or otherwise persecuted. In order to solve the economic problem, which is bound to arise from this crude and brutal

method of financing both its services and disservices, the government extends this war technique by further taxing and persecuting what it chooses to regard as evil or recalcitrant groups.

A moralist always makes everybody else's business his own business. It was not very long, therefore, before our government assumed the role of censor of other governments. Censorship soon leads to action. Our wars with puny Mexico and decadent Spain, and our entrance into the World War are cases in point. It is an historical fact that moralists are destroyers, not creators. The non-moralist does not condemn the actions of others. He first learns the causes of those actions and then tries to create conditions that will remove them. The moralist, on the other hand, prefers to denounce rather than to understand. And so the government, having made no attempt to understand the problem that is threatening to tear Europe asunder, preferred to denounce and to destroy those nations of whom it did not approve. It threatened to employ a war technique—economic sanctions, which would inevitably lead to armed conflict, against what it chose to regard as its potential enemies.

Now the government has suddenly reversed its warlike attitude, probably in deference to public opinion, and is professing to be strictly neutral. How long this neutral attitude will last it is impossible to say. Our past history and the very nature of our moralistic government would indicate that sooner or later, if the European war endures long enough, provocations of one kind or another will be sought to project us right into the middle of it. And the public then will be subjected to a barrage of propaganda until it capitulates and accepts our participation as the only moral thing to do. And in the name of patriotism and righteousness all of the malcontents—restless schoolboys and those sick of their jobs, bored husbands, unemployed fa-

thers, young men disappointed in love or in their careers, in fact, everyone unsuccessful in one way or another—will dash off to "save the world for democracy." What democracy? Whose?

The war technique has failed to solve the economic problem in this country, and it will fail to solve the war problem. The greatest menace to the security of the world is the moralist. Let us shun him as we would the plague. Propaganda emanating from moralists should be regarded with extreme suspicion.

P. D. Ouspensky, the Russian philosopher, in his book, "Tertium Organum," wrote: "Delusions are now where more easily created than in the region of morality. Allured by his own particular morality and moral gospel, a man forgets the aim of moral perfection, forgets that this aim consists in knowledge. He begins to see an aim in morality itself. Then appears delight in morality for morality's sake. A man under these circumstances begins to be afraid of everything. Everywhere, in all manifestations of life, something 'immoral' begins to appear to him, threatening to dethrone him or others from that height to which they have risen or may rise. This develops a preternaturally suspicious attitude toward the morality of others. In an ardor of proselytism, desiring to popularize his moral views, he begins quite definitely to regard everything which is not in accord with his morality as hostile to it. Starting with the idea of utter freedom, by argument, by compromises, he very easily convinces himself that it is necessary to fight freedom. He already begins to admit a censure of thought. The free expression of opinion contrary to his own seems to him inadmissible. There is no tyranny more ferocious than the tyranny of morality. Everything is sacrificed to it. And of course there is nothing so blind as such tyranny, as such 'morality.' Nevertheless humanity needs morality, but a different kind—such as is founded on the

real data of superior knowledge."

The morality that is based on knowledge requires no propaganda. It speaks for itself through this knowledge. No responsible person who relies on the market for his livelihood, can afford to be moralistic; but there is nothing to deter unsupervised and irresponsible leaders of government from indulging in moralism except their own consciences. To claim that these leaders are responsible to the electorate is meaningless, for the average person enjoys no real representation. His financial support of the government is in no way proportionate to the value of the services he receives from government. Only pressure-groups enjoy representation and among them

it is a matter of dog-eat-dog. The average vote carries no weight.

There is no room for moralism in the market, where men are compelled by self-interest to treat each other fairly and squarely, without coercion. Services are rendered through the impersonal mechanism of exchange for value received. Everyone is represented in the market when privilege plays no part. The "voting" is expressed through supply and demand.

If moralism is to be taken out of government so that both national and international peace may prevail, the war technique of financing public services and disservices by means of taxes must be abolished and the tech-

nique of the market substituted. In other words, government must be brought into the market through the medium of rent, which is merely another way of saying that all taxes must be abolished and rent used to finance public services. Then government leaders would really be responsible to the public, for everyone would enjoy equal representation in government through the mechanism of exchange.

This is the basic problem of civilization to which all serious students should devote their earnest attention. If we moralized less and thought more, this world would be a better place in which to live. Our moral standards then would rise automatically through greater knowledge.