

Yet Another Great 'Disillusionment'

ALMOST immediately after November 11, 1918, a period of national disillusionment set in. It lasted for about twenty years. During that time an avalanche of reportorial and analytical books, articles, lectures, plays, stories and moving pictures stressed the futility of war in general, the stupidity of the World War in particular. Researchers concluded that the war was not waged for the purpose of "saving democracy" but was caused by economic forces and was instigated by financial interests. Beginning with the senatorial debate on the League of Nations Covenant came a continuous torrent of logic based upon telling facts to prove that the "war to end all wars" was but a prelude to another, more destructive conflict.

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All these arguments, all those facts, all these appeals to reason have been completely wiped from our minds in recent months by a wave of emotionalism that is identical with that which swept us into the World War. The one who said that all we learn from history is that history teaches us nothing was a keen observer. So analogous are present appeals to fear and hate to such appeals made in 1916-1917 (later definitely proved to be purely propagandistic) that one is inclined, in spite of the seriousness of the situation, to cynicism. Even the same phraseology is being used.

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"After the Ball", a popular song of several decades ago, memorialized the heartaches that accompany the inevitable period of reflection that follows an emotional subsidence. Although we know how keen the heartaches will be, it is too early to indicate the line of thought that will prevail during the era of disillusionment. For the "Ball" has hardly started, the invitations are only now being mailed. The propaganda fiddlers are merely tuning up. The ball-room floor is yet to be lit up with the bright lights of hell. The dance of death may last for years. Only when the whirligig is over and the dancers have

gone home to rest will the investigators and the commentators reveal (again) why the whole affair was staged.

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But certain headlined events of the past few weeks may indicate the line of thought which future historians will take. For months now we have been whipped into a white heat on the menace of Hitlerism. Suddenly the force of events turns our attention to the Far East. A new bete noir, Japan, appears on the horizon. An embargo is put on scrap iron and steel by the United States; then an alliance is consummated between Japan, Germany and Italy, and something is said about the United States Navy using the British base at Singapore. And all through the news accounts ring the prosaic words "tin" and "rubber."

Can it be that we are going to war over these products—and not because of any world-wide "moral duty"? Is it possible that American "interests" in the British-controlled cartels which own the sources of these products are at the bottom of the recrudescing incentive to war? Cartels! That may be the magic word our future historians and economists will discover when they open the Pandora box of this war. Perhaps their books will tell how the struggle was not between totalitarianism and democracy, but between German, Japanese, Dutch, American and British groups seeking to retain or wrest control of these world monopolies.

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And perhaps if their investigations do not stop at superficialities, they may point out that no matter who controls these cartels the workers who use tin and rubber pay the same monopoly price. The cartel owners, of all nationalities, are not concerned with merely owning the sources of supply, but also with the profits derived from selling the products. And all cartel owners are alike in this: they exact all the traffic will bear. They cannot get more. That is why they will doubtless share in the next Great Disillusionment.