

World War Ace Writes Splendid Article On "Let's Keep Out"

Last week the Sentinel presented Herbert Hoover's splendid article entitled, "Two Great Reasons Why We Must Keep Out of the War," which has been commented upon most favorably by any number of people who read it in the Sentinel last week.

Today we present another article along the same line by a famous aviator-fighter in the last world war—Captain Eddie Rickenbacker. The caption of his message is "Let's Keep Out," and it appeared in the June issue of the American Legion magazine.

Events have moved swiftly since he wrote his article a few months ago, before Belgium and Holland were raped by the Nazis, and many of his suggested possibilities are already coming to pass.

The article is well worth reading and cogitating, not from the viewpoint of a pacifist, but as illustrating the duty of the United States in bringing the war-torn world back to sanity and stability when one side has to quit because it was bled white. We hope and pray it will not be the allies who are exterminated, although things look most dark for them as this is written.

Following is Capt. Rickenbacker's article in full:

With Denmark and Norway drawn into the spreading European war, which as I write seems also likely to engulf Belgium, Holland, Sweden, as well as other countries, there looms before us Americans the greatest question we, as a people, have faced since 1917.

Shall we go in?

Taking into account every known angle of the confused and complex situation in which the world finds itself today, we must still refuse, as we refused last September, to be dragged into this war—unless our national safety is imperiled.

Only twenty-three years ago, we Americans entered the World War with a profound conviction that we were fighting for the preservation of Democracy.

The close of the World War and subsequent events during these past twenty-three years, have brought about the disillusionment and realization that the winner and the loser of such a conflict must suffer the consequences alike.

Our penalty, the same as that of other nations, was the complete disruption of our economic machinery, bringing about ten years of depression—correctly named, but grossly misunderstood.

There are millions still unemployed—billions of dollars are being paid in additional taxes—hospitals are still filled with thousands of veterans, wrecked mentally and physically, all of them once the flower of American manhood—someone's father, brother or sweetheart, but each one of them some mother's son.

The cost to the world approximated two hundred and fifty billion dollars. With this staggering sum we could have built homes, costing twenty-five hundred dollars each, on five acre plots of ground, costing one hundred dollars an acre.

We could have equipped each of these homes with a thousand dollars worth of furniture, and given such a home to every family in Russia, Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, England, Australia, Holland and the United States of America.

In those lands we could have given to every community of forty thousand people or more, a two-million-dollar library, a three-million-dollar hospital, and a ten-million-dollar university.

And if we could invested the balance that would have been left in a way that would have brought a rate of five per cent annually, there would have been sufficient to pay an annual salary, of one thousand dollars each, to one hundred and twenty-five thousand school teachers, and one hundred and twenty-five thousand nurses.

The cost to these United States—direct and indirect, continued up to date—has totaled approximately forty-seven billion dollars.

If we had placed this staggering sum into peacetime circulation—we would not now have millions of unemployed, plus the direct loss of fifty thousand men, and approximately two hundred and fifty thousand casualties.

Well could we rid ourselves, with this vast sum, of the slums of our great cities—the misery and poverty that go with them.

Well could we multiply our opportunities of education and culture,

through additional, better and larger institutions of learning.

Well could we afford, not one, but several airports in every large city.

Well we could rid ourselves of the inadequate highways, narrow streets and the constant congestion in every city—large or small.

Well could we multiply our airways, expediting the transportation of mail, people, and merchandise to and from every hamlet in this country.

Well may we remember the forgotten statistics of the World War.

Seventy-four million men mobilized; ten million killed; three million maimed; nineteen million wounded; ten million disabled or incapacitated for the balance of their lives; nine million orphans; five million widows.

In view of these startling facts, who could wish for our participation in another World War?

Certainly, it could not be the mothers with babes in their arms—not the fathers, wrinkled and withered with age. Certainly, it could not be the middle-aged men and women with their vivid memories of 1914 to 1918. No, but it can be the lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of our youth, coupled with the selfishness and greed of a few.

Let us not permit our boys and girls to be regimented into uniforms, carrying wooden guns, almost from the time they leave the cradle, but preserve for them the game of marbles on the street corner.

Preserve for them the baseball game on the commons after school hours.

Preserve for them the opportunity for developing model airplanes and other happy pursuits.

Then, and then alone, need we never fear for men and women of character to carry on.

Let us realize a few more pertinent facts that have been forgotten or smothered by insidious propaganda, from those people in the old world and their agents in our land. There is no difference in the lack of reason for the war of today in the old world, than that which caused wars of past centuries.

The same selfish reasons of greed and hate are responsible for the present catastrophe. These same reasons—selfishness, hate greed—can well be responsible for our being involved again, in a war of destruction of property and mankind.

Certainly I feel no ill will toward the people of any of the belligerent countries, and my heart bleeds with sympathy for all of them. But this can be no justification to me for our involvement again, with its horrible consequences of the probable loss of millions of our young men and billions of our wealth.

In view of my record during the World War, such a statement may well be questioned.

But it was the very nature of my experiences that has brought to me the realization that American soldiers and billions of American dollars have no place on foreign soil. However, should this country ever be threatened with invasion by a foreign nation, or nations, I shall gladly offer my services, my two sons, and any worldly goods I may possess, to protect and guard our institutions.

It must further be remembered that, if this nation becomes involved in the present European conflict, we should go into it with the full understanding that to be of any benefit it will mean keeping a standing army in the old world for the next hundred years, as a military police force, to prevent a repetition of the 1914-1918 war and the present one.

I am convinced, with this further understanding, that the people of the United States would never consent to such an additional penalty for their participation.

I am not a pacifist in any sense of the word. I believe in preparedness to insure against foreign invasion, by having, primarily, a peacetime service, that will give us an adequate military aviation reserve, for defensive purposes only.

Regardless of who proves to be the victor in the present war overseas—remember always, both victor and vanquished will have completed their economic ruin for years to come. Consequently, we need never fear an early attack on our shores. In the meantime, it behooves the United States to establish her home defense.

With a strong Navy and an air force of fifty thousand pilots, and one hundred thousand planes, no foreign government dare even think in terms of war against us, and if they should

be so foolish, our people need have no fear of invasion.

With the moral fabric of the people of the old world having collapsed, there can be only one result from this present conflict at its conclusion—no matter who wins.

With millions of the flower of their lands having been blown to bits or wrecked for life; with billions of dollars worth of their property having been destroyed, revolution and revolution alone will follow.

Wars are the stamping grounds for revolutions, and revolutions are the stamping grounds of communism. Let us guard against that happening here. With the vast improvement in destructive weapons, men, women, and children are being, and will be, destroyed ten times as fast as during the World War. We, in America, in view of these prospects, may well recognize that our frontiers lie in the western hemisphere.

Let us develop our social, political and commercial intercourse between our neighbors of the twenty-one republics to the south of us, for the best interest of all concerned.

Let us guard against our economic structure being keyed up through promises of false prosperity.

Let us recognize that selfishness, greed and hate might well develop an unsound economic structure—the collapse of which no democracy can survive.

Let those who profit through the development of such unsound economic structures, and at the expense of other people's misery and mistakes—be they capitalists, politicians, or wage-earners—bear in mind, that they are in a minority.

Let us maintain a sense of balance, in thought and activity, even though it may mean for the moment, less in worldly belongings.

Or, even, let us keep in mind that we can well afford, through the maintenance of our absolute neutrality, to suffer even the consequences of lowering our standard of living, for a short short period of time, to prevent happening here what is happening in the old world.

Let us realize that the obligation of our leadership, be it capitalistic, political, or social, rests heavily on our shoulders in these trying times.

We, who live in the land of abundance and liberty, should be willing, through peacetime services and accomplishments, to maintain these liberties and independence—to prevent bankruptcy and starvation here.

Today this country stands united with few exceptions on the major issue that is before us, namely—

Keep us out of this war

Our true obligation is not only the destiny of our own children, but all the children of America, who will be set back a hundred years in their opportunities, as well as the growth of American life, if we participate in this war in Europe.

And, we of the general public, have a right to call upon our statesmen—regardless of party or creed—to hold this country resolute to the one great issue, of keeping us out of this war.

Some ask, "Why this war of words and nerves?" as compared with the war of 1914-1918. It must be remembered that for years prior to 1914 both sides knew whose side who was on, with very few exceptions. In other words, both sides had their duplicate ducks in a row. That was not true in September, 1939, and it is not true today, but it probably will be soon. The war may well see mankind and property destroyed on a scale unknown in history.

For years past the totalitarian states have thought only in terms of building up their military and economic reserves to be prepared for the day. This is evidenced by the fact that all belligerents are limiting their purchases throughout the world to a degree that makes them insignificant by comparison with the squandering of billions during 1914-1918 for military supplies.

How fortunate are we that this is true, for it has prevented the mushrooming of our industries and commerce on a foundation of stilts and sand.

Blessed are we that this nation still has most of the generation of industrialists, financial and business men living and in business, who suffered the penalty of greed and selfishness during the early days of the last war.

They have not forgotten the price they paid during 1920-1921, and particularly from 1929 to date for that greed and selfishness.

This fact, I implore the leaders of this nation—financial, industrial and commercial, as well as political—to well remember. It is the most practical asset we have in keeping out of this war.

Fortunate are we to have most of that generation of mothers, wives, sweethearts and sisters still with us

who suffered the heartaches and headaches of seeing their men—the flower of youth—torn from their bosoms—never expecting to see them again.

May I implore them to remember those deadly days of 1916, 1917 and 1918? Here, too, we have a great asset—an emotional asset—of untold value that must help to keep us out of this war.

To you leaders of finance and industry, well may you remember that this country's national debt was only one billion dollars at the start of the World War, and well may you remember that today we have a national debt of approximately fifty billions of dollars.

The war of 1914-1918 cost this nation forty-seven billions of dollars, and due to the improved deadliness of methods and weapons since the world war, the rapidity of destruction of both mankind and property will be many times greater—meaning that should this nation be forced into this war it would cost us another hundred billions of dollars.

This will leave us with a national debt of one hundred and fifty billion dollars when peace is declared, all of which means the dollar will be worth very little and the clothes on your back may be your only assets. Particularly will this be true in view of the fact that all the belligerents were financially stable at the start of the World War, whereas by comparison they are bankrupt today.

Bear in mind when peace is declared (and that day is as sure as death and taxes), with forty to fifty millions of men being thrown back into productive effort, and their countries' treasuries and pantries being empty, men will become serfs and slaves for the sake of three meals a day, and a place to rest their weary bodies at night.

This will mean one simple fact—that their ability to produce commodities and products for export at prices so low, it will eliminate the possibility of this nation having even a semblance of our present export trade left.

It will bring about a depression in this country that will jar our teeth loose and make the depression of 1929 to date, a mimic affair by comparison.

Who dare say with a debt of one hundred and fifty billion dollars that the youth of this nation will accept such obligations in the future for the mistakes of the past?

Inflation, and inflation alone, will follow as it did in Germany during those disastrous years from 1921 to 1926.

We have heard some of our experts—in spite of the facts—still belittle the deadliness and the possibilities of aviation in war time. The facts

should make all of us cringe with horror, even though this new weapon of destruction has only been experimented with to date.

Realize, that, in spite of the Polish air force, which was considered relatively good, the superior air force of Germany was able to ruin it within forty-eight hours after hostilities started in the undeclared war.

Wave after wave of German bombers destroyed airdromes, hangars and reserves, and blotted out the eyes of their army in the trenches. Then it was a simple matter for the Germans to cut the arteries of supplies and communications behind the armies at the front by destroying highways, railroads and bridges, shutting off reserve troops—ammunition, food and medical supplies for those at the front. Warsaw and many other cities have been ruined for years to come.

Witness what has happened to that gallant little nation of Finland by those hordes of Russian eagles. Cities were wiped out for all time to come and today, what was a little land of happy people is a nation of misery.

When war in the air is started in reality between the major belligerents, I doubt whether you and I, who have seen Paris, Berlin, London and many other centers of interest and culture in the old world, will be able to recognize them the next time we see them.

The startling fact is, that even though this new weapon has been used only experimentally as a feeler of each other's defenses, that so many of those trying have reached their objectives.

With waves of one hundred to two hundred bombers protected by high speed pursuit planes attacking their objectives every hour of the day and night, the carnage and destruction will be horrible.

With high explosive bombs, incendiary bombs and gas bombs being dropped on those large centers by the hundreds of thousands, those cities may well be destroyed and burnt up.

With the destruction of the water system of large cities, the heat, light,

power, gas, and sewerage systems, disease and pestilence will cause plagues beyond our imagination.

With thousands of planes and pilots on both sides by comparison with a few hundred during the World War, and three to four times as deadly and effective—with hundreds by comparison with a few hundred and many times more accurate than those used during the World War, the mortality rate in aerial warfare will be terrific.

And in my opinion, within ninety days after warfare in the air truly starts, the reserve of planes and pilots on both sides will be exhausted, meaning that the belligerents, whose productive capacity of planes and, primarily, of pilots is the best, eventually will be the victor.

But, in the meantime, they will revert to the trench and dugout warfare resulting in a war of attrition.

So I say to you, no matter what the price may be that this nation has to pay to stay out of this war, it can never be too big, because no matter how large it may be, in economic, social and political welfare, to say nothing of our so-called national honor, it would be only an infinitesimal part of the price we would have to pay if we should participate.

In closing, may I utter this fervent prayer—that this generation, in its wisdom and mature consideration of this question of absolute neutrality, will prevent posterity or future generations, from condemning or indicting us, as having legalized wholesale slaughter, murdered the flower of our youth, and massacred democracy.

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