

Arnold Mats article, "What Should Americans
Do about the War?" 1939 September 28

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For Release
After THURSDAY NOON
Sept. 28, 1939

WHAT SHOULD AMERICA DO ABOUT THE WAR?

by Arnaud C. Marts, President.

Bucknell University,
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

First Chapel Service, *of this*
September 28, 1939
new college year

A few evenings ago you heard over your radio the voice of a brave young man, the hero of American youth, start a short speech with these words:

"In times of great emergency, men of the same belief must gather together for mutual counsel and action. If they fail to do this, all that they stand for will be lost."

I agree with Colonel Charles Lindbergh, (for it was he who spoke these words) and at this first Chapel session of the new college year, I am going to try to help you think your way through this great emergency into which we have been suddenly plunged by the outbreak of the war in Europe.

You and I are already torn by the emotions of sympathy and of hate, of horror, and of anger, and we are being pulled this way and that by the expressions of conflicting opinions of vehement men. Certain terribly important questions have suddenly taken possession of the center of our stage and demand answering.

1. What should America do now, if anything, to help those nations in Europe which are fighting for freedom?
2. Will we be drawn into this war as a belligerent?
3. Is there no hope that we can create a better world, in which the youths of all nations can live together in peace and decency, without being influenced periodically to kill one another?

These are not academic questions. They are stark realities which have been thrust into our happy life on this campus and throughout America by the ruthless decisions of scheming men thousands of miles away. The answer which America makes to these questions will

can turn their hearts and their faces, and which may serve to find the means to end the conflict in their behalf.

Those are my answers to these three supremely important questions. I have given them to you for what they may or may not be worth. I am sure you have been aware as I have been speaking that I have not been speaking simply to you. I have been trying to speak also for you. I agree with Colonel Lindbergh that we must speak out promptly now, before a tide of hysteria and emotion sets in that may draw your priceless minds and bodies and souls down into the mire of war.

I shall continue to speak out. Every ounce of my devotion and energy is pledged to you to do what I can to preserve the blessings of peace and democracy and decent civilized life for you. May God grant it.

profoundly affect all the rest of the personal lives of all of us, and as your leader, I feel it is my duty to help find the right answers. I claim no infallibility of judgment, but present you these thoughts, simply and briefly, for what they may or may not be worth.

I hope none of you will have any false notion of romance about this war. The romance of war as it was fought in the days of "Gone with the Wind" has gone with the wind. War has become mechanized, just as industry has. You have seen industry install machines and throw men out. A general was reported recently to have said that too many men might be as much in the way of the 1939 model of warfare as of the 1939 model of industry. The romance of physical, personal combat is gone. It is as though football were played by teams hiding in caves behind each goal-post, with the ball being carried in armored tanks. Do not be misled by false concepts of romance or glory or idealism. The members of the American Legion who served in France will bear witness to the grisly nature of mechanized war of twenty years ago and it is still more mechanical today. The recent novel by John Des Passos tells us of the bitter disappointments and frustrations of high-minded American boys who went to Spain last year in an endeavor to serve a great cause. Modern war is not a field for romance; it is the grim deadly clank of machines in which the fine spirit and body of youth is ground into the mud and slime.

Now, for the questions and my effort to answer them,

1. What should America do now, if anything, to help those nations in Europe which are fighting for freedom? There is no doubt on which side of this war our sympathies lie. The Gallup poll reports that 82% of the American people hope to see England and France and Poland victorious. Personally, my sympathy is 100% on that side. What should we do, if anything, to help them?

I believe we should do everything which a truly neutral nation can do properly, I am willing to leave the exact nature of our neutrality to our government to define. Whether our neutrality should take the present form of an embargo, or the age-old form of neutrality, or the half-way cash and carry plan, our government will soon decide. This is a question involving so many conflicting view-points and so many definitions of international law, that the final correct answer can be determined only by the democratic American process now in operation. The President has stated his views, and now the Congress will debate it fully. Out of this free discussion will come a decision that will not be any one person's plan, but will be the composite opinion of a free people.

When our specific plan of trading shall be thus defined then let us provide England and France with everything which they need and which the new laws will permit us to sell them, and let us sell such supplies at fair prices. If we repeat our extortionate prices of 1915 and 1916, we will bankrupt the nations we want to help, and we will again corrupt our own souls with a silk-shirt era of false prosperity.

Fortunately our three great business organizations have already gone on record against profiteering. Says the president of the United States Chamber of Commerce, "We business men wish no profit advantage through the wrecking of great cultural and spiritual values. We want peace in the world."

And says the National Association of Manufacturers, "Industry opposes profiteering - the utilization of war psychology to boost prices for the purpose of making excess profits."

The President of the American Bankers Association says, "It is more important to keep out of war than to make profits."

As far as I am concerned, I would be glad to give England and France a billion dollars worth of supplies, put our unemployed men at work producing them, and call it a W P A project. That is facetious, of course, but I am deadly serious when I say we should provide these nations who are facing the onslaught of Nazism and Communism with all the supplies which our neutrality laws will permit and at prices that are fair.

2. And now I come to my answer of the second question: Will we be drawn into this war again as a belligerent?

There are few in America as yet who say we should send troops to France, but there are too many who are saying we will probably have to later. This fatalistic attitude will drag us in, almost inevitably, unless we chart our course otherwise now. What happens to the poor chap who is trying to resist temptation by saying, "I think I can hold out against another spree for a while, but I'm afraid I may have to get drunk by December first." You know that he will probably be on his spree not later than November 15.

Those who believe that we should stay out under all circumstances must say so now, as has the President of the United States, as has the American Legion, and the United States Chamber of Commerce, *and* as has Colonel Lindbergh, and the National Association of Manufacturers, and as have a vast number of our senators and congressmen. Let those who believe it, say it now, and keep repeating it, and meaning it, and somehow we will find the way of peace and honor, regardless of emotions and provocation.

It is going to be dreadfully hard for us to resist the impulse to jump into the war. Our chief temptations will be these: the revulsion which the insolence and the cruelty of Nazi and Communist leaders will stir in us; the pity and the shame at seeing the destruction of life and property of those with whom we sympathize; the threat to democracy; and the fear that if these two great systems of

despotism conquer Europe, they will then attempt to conquer us. We must prepare ourselves for the onslaught of these emotions, and weigh values now while we can still think, rather than just feel.

As for me, I have weighed all these possibilities, and I cannot conceive of any circumstances arising in which I believe we should send American boys to Europe or to Asia to fight.

If we are attacked here, then we must all fight, and must give everything we possess of life and property to defend the America we love. We will meet any or all on our home grounds. Then you all must go, and I too (if the army is equipped with wheel chairs), but until then, I believe we must not enter the war as belligerents.

Soon there will be many voices saying, "It is smarter to fight over in France, than here. Let us go over there now, and thus save the destruction of our own land."

I do not think we have any right to assume that the dictators could or would bring the fight to America, or to gamble the lives of our boys that they will do so, in case they are victorious in Europe. I believe that if they are victorious, which I doubt they will be, they will be so weakened that it will be another generation before they could gather the man power or the money power to attack us. It's a long row across the Atlantic Ocean, and it would be an inhospitable shore on arrival. It would take at least twenty years for the dictator to summon strength to make that effort, I believe, and lots can happen in twenty years. Mr. Hitler and Mr. Stalin, for instance should, in the natural course of life expectancy tables, be summoned to their fathers within that period of time, to a welcome on the other side which we all trust will not fail them in its warmth.

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Or, by that time, Nazism and Communism may have perished by their own sheer inner rottenism, as did Ku Klux Klanism, and Al

Caponism in this nation. There are millions of fine men and women in Germany who may again emerge in control of their great nation, before it could gain strength to attack us here. And as for Russia, I doubt they will attack any nation, save a weak one with its back turned. No, I think it is unfair to gamble the lives of our youths in France on the assumption that Hitler and Stalin will attack us here if victorious over there. Let us rather deal with them here if and when they should come over.

Nor can we save democracy by sending soldiers to France. Colonel Lindbergh said, "If we enter fighting for democracy abroad, we may end by losing it at home." I wonder if you realize how quickly we would lose it, right here on the Bucknell campus. Upon our entry into war, Bucknell would immediately become a military training school, and would be put in charge of a Lieutenant. The faculty and the students and the trustees and I would take our instructions for the day each morning from the lieutenant. This sacred place, established here to promote truth and brotherhood, would have to close all the windows of its mind and soul except the one single window of a united national purpose to win the war. If any of you believe that America and England and France are as responsible for the creation of Hitlerism as Germany was herself because of our actions after the last war, it will be extremely dangerous for you to say so, for in wartime that is classified as "giving aid and comfort to the enemy", and the penalty for that would be to transfer you to the educational institution at the other end of Lewisburg, the Northeastern Federal Penitentiary. In the last war, a young lady of my acquaintance was awakened one night by agents of the government and taken into custody on the charge of signaling to enemy submarines which were suspected of lying out in Long Island Sound. She was so amazed at the charge that she could scarcely defend herself. She was told that she had hung a strange looking banner in the window of her apartment that

faced the Sound. A neighbor had so reported. Upon investigation, the banner proved to be a service flag which she had hung in loving honor of her brother who was serving in the American army in France.

No, we will not save democracy by going to war. On the contrary, that will be the surest way to lose every element of freedom that we hold dear in America.

We have been deeply moved by the barbarous attacks in recent years on Ethiopia, on China, on Czechoslovakia, and on Poland, but we have not sent our armies there. We are going to be horrified in the months ahead by the war in western Europe, but neither should we send our armies there. This is a fight that has its roots in a thousand years of past fights, hatreds, and sins, which we can only dimly understand. Let us keep out of it, and let us say now that hereafter we will do all our fighting, if any, on our home grounds.

3. I come to the last question: Is there no hope that we can create a better world, in which the youths of all nations can live together in peace and decency, without being inflamed periodically to kill one another?

Yes, there is, a very active hope, the leadership of which rests more definitely upon us than ever before.

I daresay the historians of this tragic, exciting era through which you and I are privileged to live, will record that on September 1, 1939, the day on which the present war burst out, the center of modern civilization was shifted permanently to the Western Hemisphere. The mother countries in Europe, from which we derived our peoples and our culture and our modes of life, are stricken again with the plague of war, crippled at least for the present, and perhaps weakened for all time. It is the duty of the younger, stronger nations on this hemisphere to pick up the torch of civilization and to keep the flame alive.

Let us go vigorously and promptly about the business of creating on this Hemisphere the kind of world for which the decent people of all nations long, and which has been denied to the people of Europe and Asia. The present war is a challenge to us to create here in our own nation, a democracy of which we can be prouder than we now are. There is too much hatred and conflict between classes and groups and parties and interests here to warrant our going far afield to solve like problems elsewhere. Let us begin to create the better world in which men can live together as civilized beings in cooperation with each other right here in our United States.

And let us cooperate with the other twenty-two sovereign nations of the Western Hemisphere in the creation of international friendship and peaceful living. We make a sad mistake in thinking that the United States is America. There are three Americas and twenty-three nations. At least one of these nations has achieved a higher state of democracy than have we in the United States. I refer to the little republic of Costa Rica in Central America.

Let us create a new Federation of Peaceful Nations, starting with the nations of the Western Hemisphere, and open to all other nations anywhere which may be able to follow the pathway of peace and cooperation. Let us have the headquarters of this new Federation somewhere on this Hemisphere where we can guard it against the intrigue of national selfishness and the old hatreds and vengeance and balance of power concept which destroyed the late League at Geneva. Let us establish a new Federation here on the Western World, where the air is freer from the older traditions of warfare. Yes, we can build a better world where youths will not be called upon in each generation to kill one another. We can start by building here in the West. And such a structure may serve as a beacon of hope to which the fine-grained peoples of Europe who are going through the present agony of suffering

can turn their hearts and their faces, and which may serve to find the means to end the conflict in their behalf.

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