

Less Complicated than Bridge

MUST WE FIGHT RUSSIA? By Ely Culbertson. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company. 1946. 62 pp. \$1.

Reviewed by THOMAS FINLETTER

THE title of this book is misleading. It is not an analysis of our relations with Russia; it is a violent attack on the political organization of the world, followed by detailed suggestions for a new international order. Mr. Culbertson believes that war is inevitable in the international anarchy of sovereign nation-states in which we live, that the United Nations Organization lacks the necessary elements of law and government to stop war, and that amendments to the UN Charter must be made immediately. The emphasis on Russia comes from the author's belief that the United States and Russia are the next most likely contestants in the sequence of wars which is the natural and inevitable product of international anarchy. But the disease is the anarchy. The Russo-American war would be only the symptom.

Mr. Culbertson denounces savagely our present national policies and the men who direct them. The most appalling fact in American history, he says, is that our politicians drifted planlessly through 1945 and are still drifting, playing the old game of power politics which can mean only that millions of Americans may be buried in the rubble of their own cities in a few years from now. "I wish," he says, "that I could inscribe this awful truth with letters of fire in the heart of every American: *We are losing the atomic peace.* Never before in history has there been such a suicidal waste of time and power by a great state in the face of such obvious and implacable dangers."

We cannot win the atomic peace, Mr. Culbertson says, by trying to outdo Russia in the game of power politics, for the rules of that game all lead to war. And when that inevitable point is reached, Russia, Mr. Culbertson says, will be prepared. "Those who know Soviet Russia have little doubt that she is spending far more on atomic research and production than the two billion dollars spent by the United States. Her rulers do not have to account to a Congress bent on the 'economy of peace.' The Communist fanatics and fellow travellers all over the world have probably put Russia in possession of all the pertinent information long ago. It is very likely that Russia will have a sizeable

pile of atomic bombs some time in 1948, perhaps even earlier."

This sounds like Russophobia, but in fact Mr. Culbertson does not believe that Russia is the villain of the piece or that an arrangement with her which will avoid war is impossible. The real villain is nation-state anarchy, the irresistible force which compels nations to fight even against their will, just as the elimination of the police force in New York City would create anarchy, disorder, and crime. If Russia is singled out as a probable disturber of the peace, it is because of her position as the only power now capable of challenging the United States and as the leader of an expanding Eurasian civilization which, unless governed by law, must inevitably collide with the already expanded Anglo-American society. "The coming conflict between Russia and America rises from one cause alone—the anarchy of sovereign states, the grim rules of power politics."

But when Mr. Culbertson comes to his solution, he stops shaking his fist and wags his finger. His premise in effect is that the world does not want to stop war because it does not want to give up its national sovereignties and the armaments on which those sovereignties depend. The nation-states would like to have peace, provided that they do not have to pay the cost of getting it. Mr. Culbertson's solution is therefore not a solution at all because he bases it on the proposition that the cause of war—this nation-state anarchy which he attacks brilliantly—cannot now be eliminated. Nor is his plan a practical stepping-stone to further development of international order.

Mr. Culbertson's plan is briefly this: The veto in the Security Council of the United Nations Organization would be eliminated. Some rearrangement of the representation on the Security Council would be made. A quota system of heavy weapons (warships, warplanes, tanks, heavy guns, and other weapons of great destructive power) would be set up. These quotas would be: U. S., twenty percent; Great Britain, twenty percent; Russia, twenty percent; France, ten percent; China, ten percent; all the rest, acting through an armament trust, twenty percent. This latter twenty percent of the armament trust would be the International Force. The International Force would see to it that the fundamental law—that there shall be no aggression—was maintained. It would not be strong enough to do this by itself and would there-



—Robin Carson

Ely Culbertson: "*We are losing the atomic peace. Never has there been such a suicidal waste of time and power . . .*"

fore have to call on the national quotas—which are to be regarded as reserves—if it found that it had a big job on its hands. Germany and Japan would be compelled to stay permanently disarmed. And, while we would try to eliminate atomic weapons, we would probably have to apply a quota limitation, too.

Now the fact that all this is very complicated is not a conclusive argument against it. International arrangements are apt to be complicated, and I cannot agree with Mr. Culbertson that "the problems of world organization . . . if they are clearly presented . . . are considerably less complicated than the Culbertson System of Bridge." And—although it has the germ of a good idea—I think that Mr. Culbertson's statement, "If the thinking men and women of America spent but one tenth of the time and effort in trying to learn the basic problems of world peace that they have spent in trying to learn the Culbertson System of Bridge, America could not only free itself of the atomic threat but free the world of the social hemorrhage of aggressive war"—is over-hopeful.

The trouble with Mr. Culbertson's solution is that the political principle on which it is based is wrong. Once it is conceded that great national armaments must be kept up, any plan for a rule of world law must necessarily fail. And without a world law to suppress war, peace is impossible. National armaments, beyond a low minimum to keep domestic order, are for one purpose only—to wage war. If the nation-states insist on keeping their armaments, that fact of itself proves either that they are unwilling to rely on an international authority

to keep the peace, or that they have a hidden purpose to wage war, either of which would be fatal to an effort to create a world law. Moreover, the splitting up of the military power of the world into international and national forces, no matter what the formula, assumes that an international body can enforce a world law by acting against the armed forces of national governments, whereas the basis of world law must be the direct

enforcement of law against the individual and the elimination of all national forces which can prevent that enforcement. It is assuredly not possible to keep the peace by agreeing to make war.

The value of this book is in the early violent pages where Mr. Culbertson states his hatred for the idiocy of a world of international anarchy and for the wars which nation-state politics will inevitably produce.

who dares to state his views before prefects and rectors, and who closes his days as a minister proudly marching with the Jews who are being herded by the Germans to trains bound for labor-camps, even though he knows that death lies ahead.

It was different, though, with Toon Mussert, who mustered gangs about him to harass those they didn't like. They were the collaborators and the SS troops of the morrow. What they "lacked in courage was easily made up by the vast superiority of numbers. They seemed to be able to muster a mob at a moment's notice when it came to pouncing on one of our fellows."

In contrast was Alfons Boogaert, a brilliant student who was loved by most of his classmates. He was a fervent Catholic. Uncle Kees, a non-believer, admired his depth of faith and said, "To those people religion is not a matter of speculation or discussion, but a reality which they question no more than the crust of bread they eat." Fons was to grow up as a kindly, sincere priest whose life was to end in torture at the hands of the Japanese.

Then there was David Dalmaden, of whom the author was most fond. Respected for his character and sincerity, David was accepted by the community. The author's mother "had an immense sympathy for the Jews in general, and prayed for the time when they would abandon their stubbornness of heart and accept Christ." David was fully aware of what it meant to be a Jew. "The farmers speak of their country, their laws, their market, their religion. It all hangs together like pearls on the same string from one end of the country to the other and from ancient times onward into eternity. Even the cows and the horses and the sheep and the chickens are an integral and inseparable part of the whole, and all of them, men and beasts, live in self-evident happiness. But I, I feel as if I am not a part, as if I do not belong. I am an outsider." David grows up to be a respected physician; yet like his Catholic classmate Fons and his Protestant friend Ary, he too dies, in his case in the battle of the Warsaw ghetto.

Pierre van Paassen's deep love of humanity and his spiritual prayer for a new and fairer world have been the inspiration for this book. Up to his climax, his sincerity and sympathy give us a picture of the world we have had and can yet have; beyond that his fervent protest shakes us out of acquiescent attitudes. He has written a moving and profound book; one that provides a broad canvas of what was done to a people.

A Dutch Town in Wartime

EARTH COULD BE FAIR. By Pierre van Paassen. New York: The Dial Press. 1946. 509 pp. \$3.75.

Reviewed by HAROLD FIELDS

THIS is an example of the type of book that is certain to make the miasmic depths of World War II stirringly real to the arm-rest readers of this and the next generation. Here is no harrowing story of bloody battles, no thrilling saga of daring captures of inaccessible positions. On the contrary, it subtly details what happens to the souls and the attitude of a peaceful people, clustered in a peaceful city, citizens of a stubborn, but peaceful country, when war comes. It is the chronicle of the preceding generation on whose cultured spirit the hobnailed shoes of military despotism have cruelly stomped, leaving behind their damaging impress; it is an analytical human document that rises to a passionate protest and plea that justice and courage and civilization prevail.

"Earth Could Be Fair" is an account of life in the little Netherlands town of Gorcum. This is no mere vignette set down for its potential biographical and human interest to a wide-reading public and for those who have followed Pierre van Paassen's work in the past. Every character, every incident has been carefully selected as contributing to a grand finale—a storm that will engulf the souls and bodies of good men and women.

That is why this book is so stirring. It is the story of something that is done to a people, a whole people—a something that is not exclusively material in terms of loss of wealth and physical happiness, but goes down deep into their very inbeing and affects their very ethos. This is the type of war book we need: begun on a symphony of a mellow, matured civilization that has its foibles, its elements of intransigence, and its strengths, and tragically ending in a cacophony of war, internecine distrust, and Herrenvolk despotism. From this point the book rises to still

higher pitch: it cries aloud to man to save the world, as the author cries aloud over the death of David Dalmaden, moaning, "I would weep for him, were there not a whole world to weep for."

The town of Gorcum, where the author was born, was one of the small, serious, plodding towns of the Netherlands that still retained buildings dating back hundreds of years, tunnels that had been built for escape in wars centuries back, and a family caste system that was the product of an old, communal life.

Van Paassen writes sensitively of typical Dutch characters as they grow up in this book, and makes them part of the reader's own life. Van Paassen is proud of his contemporaries as they grow up with the years. There is "Uncle Kees," a liberal, calm, philosophical, lovable man who encourages the boys to fight for what they deem right and who shows, from time to time, the steel that is riveted to his soul. There is Ary Brandt, his classmate, argumentative and assertive,



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