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## The political role of religious pacifism during the inter-war years

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Ancil K. Nance for the Master of Science  
in Teaching in Social Science presented June 3, 1971.

Title: The Political Role of Religious Pacifism During the Inter-War  
Years.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

  
Charles M. White, Chairman

  
G. Bernhard Fedde

  
Dorris M. Lee

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to make a judgement concerning the effectiveness of the selected political actions of certain religious peace groups during the inter-war years. Information was obtained from the Portland State University Library, the Multnomah County Library, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Oregon office, the national offices of the American Friends Service Committee, the National Council of Churches, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Conversations with people who had been involved with the peace movement included Roland Bainton, Jerome Davis, G. Bernhard Fedde, Carlin Kapper-Johnson, and Mark Chamberlin. Periodicals that provided much of the information about events and opinion during the twenties and thirties were: the New York Times, The New Republic, The Nation, Harpers Magazine, and The World Tomorrow. A number of books concerning the peace movement were especially

useful; those books were: Boeckel's Turn Toward Peace, Bowman's The Church of the Brethren and War, 1708-1941, Curti's Peace or War, Pickett's For More than Bread, and Vining's Friend of Life.

Information from those sources showed that the religious pacifists were able to influence the course of events relating to the Mexican Crisis of 1927, the Washington Disarmament Conference, the Peace Pact to Outlaw War, the Russian famine relief effort, and the status of conscientious objectors. In some way the final outcome of each of these issues was affected by the actions of religious pacifists: a possible war with Mexico was avoided, disarmament was attempted, war was outlawed, many lives were saved in Russia, and conscientious objectors were given a legal status that was better than what they had had during the First World War.

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF RELIGIOUS  
PACIFISM DURING THE INTER-WAR YEARS

by

Ancil K. Nance

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to judge the effectiveness of political actions carried on by selected religious peace groups during the inter-war years. Many issues were involved, but only selected issues whose final outcome was attempted to be affected by the religious groups can be studied. Selection from among such issues was determined by the availability of resources in the Portland area, although valuable information was obtained from national offices of the American Friends Service Committee, the Church of the Brethren, the National Council of Churches, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The issues to be considered are: the settling of the Mexican oil lands crisis of 1921-1927, the calling of the disarmament conferences of 1921, 1927, and 1930, the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact in 1929, the alleviation of hunger in Russia during the early 1920's, and providing a just legal status for conscientious objectors before America entered the Second World War. The common tie between these five apparently unrelated issues is that the religious pacifists, acting in concert with other pacifists, thought they saw positive results for their efforts in the final outcome of these issues. These attempts by pacifists to influence the course of events, in order to be understood, need to be placed in perspective before studying them in detail.

Perspective is provided by a study of four selected areas. These areas are: post-war writing, attitudes of various American churches

toward the First World War and the rise of the peace movement, reactions of the general public toward pacifists and peace issues, and statements by militarists regarding pacifists. Other areas may also have provided a perspective for the issues of this paper, but these four areas were selected because they do show clearly the conditions under which pacifists existed; also, the information was available from sources in the Portland area. The first of these four areas to be considered is the post-war writing.

### I. POST-WAR WRITING

After the war many writers tried to show what the war had been like. Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front is well known, as is John Dos Passos' Three Soldiers, which showed how the wheels of the system ground on, even after the armistice was signed. Less well known, but equally vivid is Under Fire by a French author, Henri Barbusse. Two short quotations give a fair sample of his descriptions.

The air is now glutted and viewless, it is crossed and re-crossed by heavy blasts, and the murder of the earth continues all around, deeply and more deeply, to the limit of completion.<sup>1</sup>

The bullets that flayed the soil in straight streaks and raised slender stems of cloud were perforating and ripping the bodies so rigidly close to the ground, breaking the stiffened limbs, ...bursting and bespattering the liquefied eyes.<sup>2</sup>

An English poet, Siegfried Sassoon, also told of the war, and he brought it uncomfortably home to those who had not been there. Sassoon's poems could cut, as these bitter verses from "Does it Matter?" show:

<sup>1</sup>Henri Barbusse, Under Fire, trans. Fitzwater Wray (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1917), 224.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 226.



Does it matter?—losing your legs?...  
 For people will always be kind,  
 And you need not show that you mind  
 When the others come in after hunting  
 To gobble their muffins and eggs.

Does it matter?—losing your sight?...  
 There's such splendid work for the blind;  
 And people will always be kind,  
 As you sit on the terrace remembering  
 And turning your face to the light.<sup>3</sup>

Another of Sassoon's poems, "Suicide in the Trenches," even more bitterly brought the war home:

I knew a simple boy  
 Who grinned at life in empty joy,  
 Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,  
 And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,  
 With crumps and lice and lack of rum,  
 He put a bullet through his brain.  
 No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye,  
 Who cheer when soldier lads march by,  
 Sneak home and pray you'll never know,  
 The hell where youth and laughter go.<sup>4</sup>

Remarque, Barbusse, and Sassoon, along with other foreign and American authors and poets were read in America after the war. Their writings stirred readers and increased their determination to resist war in the future. This determination was augmented by the writings of a member of the British Parliament, a British journalist, and a University of Chicago professor, whose works were published in the United States. Arthur Ponsonby, Phillip Gibbs, and Harold D. Lasswell showed their readers how the public had perhaps been duped into believing

<sup>3</sup>Siegfried Sassoon, Collected Poems (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), 76.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 78.

falsehoods about the war because of clever and even crude propaganda techniques. For instance, according to the Member of Parliament, Ponsonby, films showing atrocities being committed by hideous German villains, and pacifists succumbing to patriotic feelings were shown to American audiences.<sup>5</sup> He also wrote that a number of so-called "actual war picture" films, which were really prepared by Hollywood, were shown to Americans and that the sinking of the Lusitania was distorted in propaganda films "to the utmost limit."<sup>6</sup>

A propaganda play, "Duty to Civilization" by Frances Nielson was based upon an apparently false story spread by an American soldier. He told about a French girl's crucifixion by German soldiers.<sup>7</sup> He said he saw her body on a barn, but the villagers of the area, the German generals, and American General March all denied knowledge of the event. The story was so good, however, and the drama so convincing that it even gained the blessing of President Wilson, according to Ponsonby.<sup>8</sup>

The exposing by Ponsonby in 1928 of these falsehoods was disturbing, as were the revelations concerning war-time blunders described by the journalist, Phillip Gibbs, in his book Ten Years After, published in 1925.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur Ponsonby, Falsehood in Wartime (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1928), 182.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 185.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

Gibbs reminded the public of how horrible it was to have both legs blown off, or entrails torn out in a good cause, but even more horrible was the fact that "over and over again battalions were wiped out (by their fellow soldiers) because some one had blundered." "It was the same on the German front, the French front, every front."<sup>9</sup> The real nature of the war they had supported began to come home to many readers. Gibbs asked his readers if it were possible for "humanity to get that same impulse for the cause of peace" as there had been for war.<sup>10</sup> Readers who wondered why they had ever supported the war were given some answers by Harold D. Lasswell, a University of Chicago professor. He exposed the propaganda techniques by which each nation tried to gain support for its cause. "Everybody tried to tar the other fellow with the same stick. Rumours of propaganda and bribery fell thick and fast."<sup>11</sup> Support for the war came about in part as a result of successful propaganda, according to Lasswell. He pointed out that there were three fronts in the war, "the military front, the economic front, and the propaganda front."<sup>12</sup> Each front had its leaders, and he said that "if the great generalissimo on the military front was Foch, the great generalissimo on the propaganda front was Wilson. His monumental rhetoric... was scattered...over Germany" as an instigation to revolt, he and Lenin "were the champion revolutionists of the age."<sup>13</sup> "While he (Wilson)

<sup>9</sup>Phillip Gibbs, Ten Years After: A Reminder (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925), 47-48.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>11</sup>Harold D. Lasswell, Propaganda Technique in the World War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 133.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 216.

fomented discord abroad, Wilson fostered unity at home. A nation of one hundred million people, sprung from many alien and antagonistic stocks, was welded into a fighting whole, 'to make the world safe for democracy.'<sup>14</sup> Lasswell argued that it was the propaganda front, led by Wilson, that provided the wide-spread support of the war in the United States. This was an unsettling idea for many of his readers, who felt that they had been tricked into supporting the war. Also disturbing was the estimate that the war cost 338 billion dollars and almost thirteen million lives.<sup>15</sup> But facts like those, the revelations of falsehoods and propaganda, and the war literature did not affect everyone in the same manner, and not everyone was aware of them. Diverting interests such as the stockmarket, sports, radio, the automobile, gangsters, prohibition, the movies, scandals in Washington, the Florida land boom, and more mundane pressures, dampened the effect of the post-war writing; however, the peace groups grew despite the diversions. According to journalist James Wechsler, those people who were attracted to the cause of peace in the 1920's were "women who were seeking a cause, educators who were anxious to make some frail contribution to adult society" and "clergymen who wanted to distinguish themselves from Babbitt without causing too much of a row."<sup>16</sup> Wechsler's evaluation of the peace groups' membership is perhaps too general, because it has been estimated that twelve million people belonged to the various peace groups

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 217.

<sup>15</sup>Ernest L. Bogart, Direct and Indirect Costs of the Great War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), 299, 277.

<sup>16</sup>James Wechsler, "War in the Peace Movement," The Nation, 146:12 (March 19, 1938), 323.

by the 1930's<sup>17</sup> and it is doubtful that Wechsler's cynical comments could apply to all of them. It is important to note, however, that that estimate included most of the nation's religious denominations, learned societies, and public service organizations, and as Devere Allen (ed. of The World Tomorrow) pointed out, some of the groups had an anti-war passion that "may fairly be described as conspicuously anaemic" judging by their "alacrity to support the World War."<sup>18</sup> The post-war writings and literature can be given credit for much of the growth in the peace ranks, but there were also those who joined on their own accord because it was the popular thing to do, just as supporting the war had been previously. This was particularly true in most of the churches. A study of the reversal in the church or religious public attitude toward participation in war provides a second area for perspective.

## II. CHURCH ATTITUDES

Among the groups who generally supported the First World War were the churches of America, with the exception of the historic peace churches. Once President Wilson decided to make the world safe for democracy, churches went along with the idea. The churches' attitude was "war is un-Christian, but..."<sup>19</sup> meaning that they felt that the Kaiser was more un-

<sup>17</sup>Marcus Duffield, "Our Quarreling Pacifists," Harpers Magazine, 166 (May, 1933), 688.

<sup>18</sup>Devere Allen, "The Peace Movement Moves Left," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 175 (September, 1934), 152.

<sup>19</sup>John N. Sayre, "War is Un-Christian, But..." The World Tomorrow, 7:2 (February, 1924), 51.

Christian than war, and being the greater of two evils he had to be taken care of. According to a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Francis J. McConnell, the "vast majority of ministers in the land in 1917 had never given ten minutes' earnest thinking to the moral questions involved in war...."<sup>20</sup> He also asserted that "the overwhelming mass of public sentiment, including that of the churches, looked upon the war as holy and righteous altogether."<sup>21</sup> Between the end of the war and the 1930's a change occurred within the churches that reflected the general trend. Writing in 1934, McConnell is able to say that the anti-war spirit "characterizes the churches today as never before in all their history."<sup>22</sup> A survey conducted in 1923 by Kirby Page for The World Tomorrow, a Christian-pacifist publication of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, indicated the strength of pacifist feelings among ministers. Page sent a war opinion survey to fifty-three thousand ministers, which was about half of the total Protestant clergy in 1931. Over nineteen thousand replied, and ten thousand four hundred and twenty seven absolutely rejected war as a means of diplomacy for governments and would refuse combat if called.<sup>23</sup>

Besides the survey there were other indications that the climate within the churches had changed since the pro-war atmosphere of 1917. In May of 1934 Methodist students protesting against compulsory military

<sup>20</sup>Francis J. McConnell, "The Churches and the War Problem," Annals, 175 (September, 1934), 143.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>23</sup>Kirby Page, "Nineteen Thousand Clergymen on War and Peace," The World Tomorrow, 14:5 (May, 1931), 138.

training at Ohio State University got their church to support them in obtaining exemptions similar to those granted to members of the pacifist churches, such as the Quakers.<sup>24</sup> The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States took a stand against war and vowed never to be used as an instrument in the promotion of war.<sup>25</sup> The Protestant International Missionary Council made a four-point statement in 1928 repudiating imperialism, advocating sending missionaries to Europe and America, opposing war, and declaring that missions should make no claim on their governments for armed defense of missionaries.<sup>26</sup> The Catholic Church and the Mormon Church both had study and educational organizations to promote peace.<sup>27</sup> The Central Conference of American Rabbis, meeting in June, 1931, issued a report stating that "it is in accord with the high interpretations of Judaism (sic) to object to any personal participation" in war, and we "therefore are opposed to any legislation which would penalize the adherents of any religion who conscientiously object to engaging personally in any military operation because of their religious convictions."<sup>28</sup> All of these official church statements show the change that had come over many churches since the pro-war days of the First World War.

These statements, however, did not always reflect the attitudes of the majority of some congregations. The ministers, conferences, and boards were, at times, expressing more liberal views than those held by their con-

<sup>24</sup>McConnell, "Churches," 145.

<sup>25</sup>Florence B. Boeckel, The Turn Toward Peace, rev. ed. (New York: Friendship Press, 1931), 165.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 169.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 166.

<sup>28</sup>"Rabbis' Stand is Anti-War," New York Times, June 21, 1931, II, 6:7.

gregations. Also, there was a wide range in the type of support offered by the official statements. Some of them simply offered support to conscientious objectors, as did the Lutheran statement, and others such as the Methodist Episcopal Church, advocated active programs to promote peace, similar to those that had been carried on for years by the Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren. Other churches made no statements of support at all. There were at least two possible reasons for the weak anti-war position on the part of some churches. One was that they were too much a part of the political and economic establishment. Or, as peace advocate, Jerome Davis, put it: "The churches are getting a large part of their money from businessmen who have an interest in war. The churches are therefore afraid to anger them."<sup>29</sup> A second reason, less sinister, but I think more damning was that some ministers, particularly among the more evangelical (non-modernist, non-liberal) denominations, felt that the peace issue was outside the realm of religion and was only a matter of politics, and therefore not germane to their idea of the gospel of salvation. So, while there was a marked increase in church peace support, not all churches openly advocated peace programs. Local issues swallowed up most of the people's time and money, and even among the Quakers the peace effort was given over to a committee which had to persistently present the issues to the people.

The mixed reaction to peace that was common in the churches was also common among the general public and those who did not claim church aegis for their actions. The attitude of the general public presents a third area for increased perspective.

<sup>29</sup>Jerome Davis, statement made at an informal lecture, August 20, 1967, home of Rev. Mark Chamberlin, Gresham, Oregon.



## III. PUBLIC ATTITUDES

The anti-war feeling aroused by post-war writing and the war itself was not pervasive. Some people withdrew into their private worlds, while others got involved in the various organizations. Generally the Americans became more peace-oriented during the Depression, whereas during the Roaring Twenties it had still been dangerous to be a pacifist. For instance, in 1924 it was not unusual for pacifists in the Middle West to be in danger of assault, and in Concord, Massachusetts, pacifists had difficulty in finding a meeting hall free from such hazards as rotten eggs and stink bombs; however, these events were not reported as common in 1935.<sup>30</sup> Curti thinks this was an indication that public opinion had changed since the Twenties, and there were other indications that it had changed greatly since the First World War, when most of the public had supported the war.

In November, 1935 the New York Herald-Tribune published the results of their Institute of Public Opinion survey on war and peace issues. Seventy-five percent of those polled favored a referendum check on the war powers of Congress. Forty-seven percent desired embargoes on all belligerents, thirty-seven percent desired embargoes of war materials only, and seventy-one percent felt that we should not join with other countries in enforcing peace.<sup>31</sup> The survey indicated an isolationist impulse rather than a desire for peace itself. However, the isolationists' desire for an isolated peace coincided with the aims of some peace groups.

<sup>30</sup>Merle Curti, Peace or War (New York: Norton, 1936), 299.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 300.

For instance, the vigorous support of the National Council of the Prevention of War, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation played a major role in the "victory which isolationists achieved over the administration on the neutrality issue...."<sup>32</sup> This cooperation with the isolationists did not mean that these peace organizations were also isolationists. Instead, it was their wish to prevent war that promoted their cooperation. The pacifists who saw American support of any particular nation as a form of intervention which could only exacerbate existing tensions formed an Emergency Peace Campaign in 1936 to promote neutrality. Leading members of the EPC were the Friends, the National Council for the Prevention of War, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Their cooperation with the isolationists in Congress helped produce the 1936 extension of the 1935 Neutrality Act. It continued the earlier arms embargo to belligerents, the travel restrictions, and added a prohibition on loans, and controlled the president's authority to restrict raw materials.<sup>33</sup> However, in 1939 the arms embargo was lifted when it became apparent that the aggressors had the upper hand. A poll conducted by The Nation in 1938 indicated that public reaction to isolationist programs was negative. Of a total nine thousand two hundred and sixty-three signed ballots, only one thousand four hundred and ninety-

<sup>32</sup>Dorothy Borg, The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), 344.

<sup>33</sup>Samuel I. Rosenman (comp.), Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1936 vol., 91.

three "subscribed to the general isolationist program" which some of The Nation's Washington friends had declared to be the sentiment of most of the country.<sup>34</sup> Of course the readers of The Nation, with its leftist viewpoint, were "particularly emphatic in opposing isolation, only 13 percent voting for this policy."<sup>35</sup> This was what could be expected, but "surprisingly enough, 82 percent of the 6,816 non-readers of The Nation who voted concurred in this choice."<sup>36</sup> The Nation's poll was conducted three years after the New York Herald-Tribune poll which indicated favor for isolationism. Perhaps the shift was due to the fact that war seemed more inevitable, or more people could see a difference between the aggressors and the victims. Or perhaps it was a difference in audience. The Nation tried to send questionnaires to persons of varying backgrounds in order to avoid bias. Among the lists from which names were drawn were those from at least one large organization which was presumably isolationist in its outlook.<sup>37</sup> Only one list was obtained from an organization whose members favored collective security, and less than 150 votes came from that source. Almost all the states fell within the 80 to 88 percent range favoring collective security, and the National Lawyers's Guild poll, using entirely different questions yielded almost identical results, showing a six to one majority in favor of distinguishing between aggressor and victim.<sup>38</sup> Most of the sample questionnaires

<sup>34</sup>"A Foreign Policy for America," The Nation, 116:19 (May 7, 1938), 522.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

submitted by other groups tried to show that isolation was a peace policy and collective security was a war policy, whereas The Nation viewed collective security as an attempt to secure peace on a world wide scale and saw isolation as only a selfish desire to keep America out of foreign wars. The Nation concluded from its poll that there was a "surprising unity in liberal opinion throughout the country on the necessity for some form of concerted action to check the drift toward war."<sup>39</sup>

Conservative opinion, on the other hand, was isolationist, and before the pacifists and isolationists combined forces in the mid-thirties, conservative opinion held that the peace groups were disloyal and a part of the international Communist conspiracy. For instance, a New Jersey agent of the Daughters of the American Revolution was quoted as saying that "the pacifist movement is an integral part of the Communist movement which leads to the destruction of home, country and God."<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in 1927, an article in the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel claimed that the leaders of the Fellowship of Reconciliation were prominent members of the Communist Party.<sup>41</sup> After the Fellowship and others joined with isolationists to keep America out of war, these kinds of statements were harder to make, since the conservatives found themselves in league with some of their so-called communist/pacifists. Considering these statements and also the results of the public opinion polls, it is apparent that the mood

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>New York Herald-Tribune, April 5, 1928, quoted in Don M. Chase, "What Sort of People are Pacifists," The World Tomorrow, 7:2 (February, 1929), 83.

<sup>41</sup>Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, June 29, 1927, quoted in Chase, "What Sort...", 83.

of the general public was as varied and changing as that of the churches. One group of Americans, however, was not plagued with any lack of unity.

#### IV. MILITARY ATTITUDES

The public utterings of militarists concerning pacifists had common vibrations, and they provide additional background information for the study of pacifists' efforts during the inter-war years. Generally, military men showed a misunderstanding of pacifism. For instance, in 1931 General Douglas MacArthur commented on Kirby Page's survey of ministers, which was conducted through The World Tomorrow. MacArthur said that the stand of the majority of the ministers branded them as the leading exponents of "law violation at individual pleasure."<sup>42</sup> He went on to say that our freedoms depended upon our government and our laws and that defensive war was justified when all other methods failed. He felt that because of the "deepseated disease of individual depravity" and the menace of personal greed it was necessary to use force, which the ministers disavowed in the Page survey.<sup>43</sup> What MacArthur failed to see was that the pacifists viewed killing as wrong, even if killing was used to control greed and hatred, that it was better to be killed than to kill. Some other reactions to pacifism were less reasoned than was MacArthur's.

Speaking at a memorial service, Edward E. Spafford, past National Commander of the American Legion, described pacifism simply as "akin to

<sup>42</sup>"MacArthur Assails Ministers on War," New York Times, June 3, 1931, 14:2.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

disloyalty."<sup>44</sup> Another military man, General Amos A. Fries, was quoted by The New Republic as saying "'the insidious pacifist' is 'more to be feared than the man with torch, gun, or sword.'"<sup>45</sup> The work of the Federal Council of Churches against officer training in the colleges earned the wrath of Lieutenant Colonel Orvel Johnson. He was quoted by the New York Times as saying that the "'greatest menace' to the Reserve Officer's Training Corps 'is the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.'"<sup>46</sup> Johnson further stated:

"To the extent that the Federal Council of Churches succeeds in inducing our young men to refuse to properly prepare for and aid to perform the full obligation of citizenship, they have helped them on the road to Communism, the first of which is atheism," he added. "How to protect the Protestant churches from the pacifist preachers is one of the greatest problems in America at this time."<sup>47</sup>

These statements by MacArthur, Spafford, Fries, and Johnson show that the militarists were united in their view that the pacifist were a real threat to the safety of America. However, as has been shown, the attitude of the rest of the American people toward pacifists was varied and changing during the Twenties and Thirties, and pacifists did find support as they worked for peace in a variety of ways, five of which have been selected for analysis in this paper. The selected issues, as listed in the opening paragraph will be dealt with now, beginning with the Mexican Crisis of 1921-1927.

<sup>44</sup>"Spafford Scores Pacifists," New York Times, May 25, 1931, 4:2.

<sup>45</sup>"Discrediting the Army," The New Republic, 34:437 (April 19, 1923), 204.

<sup>46</sup>"Church Council Attacked," New York Times, February 4, 1932, 14:3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEXICAN CRISIS

Tension between the United States and Mexico during the 1920's over oil and mineral land rights almost led to war, which was averted when a diplomatic settlement was reached. Merle Curti, in his book Peace or War, claims that the Federal Council of Churches had a hand in facilitating the negotiations of that settlement.<sup>48</sup> He states that the Federal Council of Churches sent Rev. Hubert C. Herring to Mexico City to see what the situation was and what could be done, since our government, the oil companies, and the Callas government in Mexico appeared to be at an impasse.<sup>49</sup> According to the New York Times, however, Herring headed a group of concerned citizens, sent by no particular organization.<sup>50</sup> Herring himself was the Executive Secretary of the Social Relations Department of the Congregational Church. Others on the fact finding mission included Herbert Croly of The New Republic, B. Y. Landis of the Department of Research and Education of the Federal Council of Churches, Paul Hutchinson of The Christian Century, and

<sup>48</sup>Curti, 290.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>"Americans to Make Survey in Mexico," New York Times, December 18, 1926, 5.

editors of other periodicals.<sup>51</sup> Each member of the party was to pay his own expenses and went as an individual rather than as a representative of any organization.<sup>52</sup> Their task, as reported in the New York Times, was to find out "by personal inquiry and interviews with the heads of the Mexican government, clergy, financiers, educators, and labor leaders" what basis in fact existed for the "anxiety attributed to State Department officials that 'Mexican Bolshevism is reaching down through Nicaragua and threatens the American defenses of the Panama Canal.'"<sup>53</sup> From this account in the New York Times it seems that the Federal Council of Churches had a representative along on the trip but it does not indicate that Herring was sent by the Council, as Curti claims. But more importantly, it is clear that the mission was needed. On the day the party was to leave, December 30, 1926, the New York Times reported that President Calles of Mexico had refused to extend the time for American oil companies to apply for new concessions on their properties.<sup>54</sup> The Mexican view was that if any American companies felt that their rights had been violated they could have redress to the Mexican courts.<sup>55</sup> The New York Times also reported that this situation had been termed "critical" by the State Department in its correspondence.<sup>56</sup> The New York

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>"Mexico Refuses Time Extension to Oil Operators," New York Times, December 30, 1926, 12.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.



Times felt that Calles' action had brought an end to all of the discussions that had developed about the oil laws up to that time.<sup>57</sup> By January 9, 1927, the American study group, led by Herring, had arrived in Mexico and had talked with Calles. It was apparent from his statements to the group that he also viewed the situation as critical. He told Herring that Mexico would be willing to submit to the Hague Arbitration Tribunal the dispute between America and Mexico over the new Mexican oil laws, "if it were necessary to make such a sacrifice to avert more serious difficulties."<sup>58</sup> He stated that Mexico had the right to pass the new oil lands legislation and that the "oil interests were not deprived of any right" since any subsoil rights acquired before 1917 could be extended for fifty years, and then another thirty years after applying for the new concessions required by the new law.<sup>59</sup>

Calles said that he believed "small groups of interests...were trying to create trouble through influencing the American State Department."<sup>60</sup> He told the American study group that he feared the withdrawal of American recognition of his government would result in a revolution in Mexico, which was another reason why he was willing to submit the oil dispute to arbitration.<sup>61</sup>

Coolidge, instead of accepting Calles's willingness to submit to arbitration, made a speech accusing Mexico of helping foment revolution in

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> "Calles for Hague Appeal," New York Times, January 9, 1927, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Nicaragua, thus adding another issue to the troubled situation. Coolidge was reported by the New York Times to have said "I have the most conclusive evidence that arms and munitions in large quantities have been on several occasions since August, 1926, shipped to the revolutionists in Nicaragua" from ports in Mexico.<sup>62</sup> Coolidge's accusation was viewed by Representative Huddleston, Democrat, Alabama, as a preparation for war with Mexico, whereas Representative Wood, Republican, Indiana, "defended the Coolidge policy, denying that there was any danger of war with Mexico."<sup>63</sup> Despite this denial, it appeared that Coolidge was ready for war rather than for negotiations since it was his view that there was "nothing to arbitrate."<sup>64</sup> He had sent the Marines to Nicaragua to protect Americans and their property and it was possible for him to do the same in Mexico. Mexican officials feared that the Marines would be sent following any seizure of land owned by American oil interests.<sup>65</sup>

A resolution was proposed by Senator Robinson of Arkansas to arbitrate the oil lands issue. Secretary of State Kellogg issued a statement agreeing that arbitration would be good, and he said that he had always been open to arbitration.<sup>66</sup> Coolidge did not agree with Kellogg

<sup>62</sup>"Coolidge Openly Accuses Mexico," New York Times, January 11, 1927, 1.

<sup>63</sup>"New House Attacks on Coolidge Policy," New York Times, January 12, 1927, 1.

<sup>64</sup>"Coolidge Opposes Arbitration," New York Times, January 22, 1927, 1.

<sup>65</sup>"Calles for Hague Appeal," New York Times, January 9, 1927, 1.

<sup>66</sup>"Kellogg for Arbitration," New York Times, January 19, 1927, 1.

and he felt that the American people would support him when they saw, as he did, that the only real issue was whether property legally owned by American citizens in Mexico could be confiscated.<sup>67</sup>

The day before Coolidge issued his statement, the Mexican Department of Industry reported that out of 147 companies operating in Mexico, all but twenty-two had accepted the new oil law.<sup>68</sup> It was also reported that several oil companies had asked that the government be restrained from applying the new Petroleum Law in such a way as to "injure their property rights."<sup>69</sup> A judge in the Fourth District Court, in Mexico, granted only provisional writs of suspension to six companies and a judge in the First District refused suspension orders to two other companies.<sup>70</sup> Despite Coolidge's statements, Mexico was proceeding with the enforcement of the new law, although it was evident that the Mexican government was still prepared to compromise. With this in mind several groups in America appealed to the President to arbitrate. According to the New York Times the Federal Council of Churches issued a statement which "endorsed arbitration with Mexico and called upon the Government 'to formulate a clear policy for our future relations with the peoples and governments of Latin America.'"<sup>71</sup> The Council also "canvassed 75,000 ministers, urging

<sup>67</sup>"Coolidge Opposes Arbitration," 1.

<sup>68</sup>"Six Oil Companies Get Mexican Injunctions," New York Times, January 27, 1927, 2.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>"Church and Labor Appeal," New York Times, January 24, 1927, 1.

them to arouse their congregations in behalf of arbitration."<sup>72</sup> Other groups who presented pleas at this time included the American Federation of Labor, the World Peace Foundation, and a group of one-hundred and one professors.<sup>73</sup> Still Coolidge did not yield. Mexico then refused drilling permits to American and other foreign companies for lands acquired before the 1917 constitution went into effect. This refusal applied to those companies who had not complied with the new land law and filed for new concessions. This refusal was regarded as confiscation by the oil companies because it prevented them from drilling on what they called their land.<sup>74</sup>

Republican support for Coolidge's policy had waned and the Senate passed, with a unanimous vote, the Robinson resolution recommending arbitration. That the unanimous vote was a result of peace group activities cannot be proven, but it is a probability. For instance, upon the return of the Herring study group a conference of thirty different peace organizations decided to pressure Washington with letters, meetings, and personal confrontations to renew negotiations on the oil issue.<sup>75</sup> The peace groups were joined by the liberal press, labor unions, and some protestant churches in what historian Samuel E. Morison calls "a remarkable uprise of public sentiment" that "even converted the United States Sen-

<sup>72</sup> Curti, 291.

<sup>73</sup> "Church and Labor Appeal," 1.

<sup>74</sup> "Mexico Sees Crises Brewing Over Oil," New York Times, January 26, 1927, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Curti, 291.

ate."<sup>76</sup> The Senate's conversion, or unanimous approval of the Robinson resolution, came in late January 1927, but it was not until October of that year that Coolidge conceded to further negotiations. He then sent a personal friend, Dwight Morrow, to Mexico City as United States Ambassador.

Morrow achieved a compromise settlement. It allowed Mexico to retain its constitutional and legislative independence, such as the right to pass oil legislation, while it also granted to the United States most of the guarantees of previous oil lands agreements. This final compromise was the result of a long chain of events, beginning with the findings of the Herring study group, which went to Mexico at a time when both American and Mexican officials were concerned about the possibility of war between the two countries. It is possible that a less amicable solution would have resulted had the study group not gone to Mexico, and had the peace organizations not conducted a campaign to let Congress know that they wanted a peaceful settlement of the Mexican crisis. The evidence of public support for negotiations offered by their letters, telegrams, meetings and confrontations was in contrast to the adamant position of Coolidge against negotiations. Public and Congressional support for negotiations probably helped Coolidge decide to send Morrow to Mexico. This was not the first time that public support had been aroused by the many peace groups.

<sup>76</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 925.

## CHAPTER III

### DISARMAMENT CONFERENCES

Support for the Washington Conference in 1921 came in the form of over thirteen million messages from peace group members and supporters across the country.<sup>77</sup> These messages gave Secretary of State Hughes and our delegates at the conference an indication of public support for limitation of arms. Other expressions of support came in parades, news releases, study groups, literature distribution, speakers, and conferences. These activities were sponsored by groups such as the League of Women Voters, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Federal Council of Churches.<sup>78</sup> The support of these organizations may have paid off, because out of the many proposals made at the conference, there resulted agreements very close to those that Secretary Hughes had originally proposed, and which had been supported by the peace groups. For instance, Great Britain and the United States agreed to a maximum capital ship tonnage of 500,000; Japan agreed to 300,000, and France and Italy 175,000 each. This Five Power Treaty also provided for a ten year holiday in capital ship construction, and the destruction of specified tons of existing capital ships. This agreement was the first time that any of the great powers had agreed to any major form of disarmament, and this was viewed by the members of the New York Council

<sup>77</sup>"Washington Conference, Report of the New York Council for Limitation of Armament," The New Republic, 30:381 (March 22, 1922), 110.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

for Limitation of Armament as a victory for peace.<sup>79</sup> However, a later view of the treaty, held by Samuel E. Morison, is that it helped bring about World War II in the Pacific, since it gave Japan the more powerful force, because American ships had to be spread between both the Atlantic and the Pacific, while Japan had only one ocean to cover. According to Morison, the treaty, instead of disarming, actually increased the relative strength of Japan's arms.<sup>80</sup> This view neglects the fact that both American and British ships patrolled the Pacific; America was not alone. Britain had nine naval bases in the Pacific Far East, including Hong Kong, Sidney, Rangoon, and Singapore. The United States had four: Samoa, Pearl Harbor, Guam, and the Philippines. Japan had four bases outside of Japan itself. All of these bases were defended drydock and fuel stations.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps the odds were not quite as lopsided as Morison contends, even though America's fleet was smaller than allowed for in the naval treaty of the Washington conference. One reason for the small size of the American navy was the activities of what journalist Henry Cabot Lodge (grandson of the late Senator) called the "pacifist lobby."<sup>82</sup> In 1928 he denounced it for using the Kellogg Treaty negotiations as a pretext "to prevent congressional action on the cruiser bill."<sup>83</sup> Senator Hale of Maine, said of the pacifist lobby: "They condemn any attempt on the part

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Morison, 921.

<sup>81</sup>U.S., Senate, 70th Congress, 1929, 1054-1055.

<sup>82</sup>Henry Cabot Lodge, "The Meaning of the Kellogg Treaty," Harpers Magazine, 158 (December, 1928), 40.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

of friends of the cruiser bill to secure its passage at this session of Congress on the ground that its passage will demonstrate to the rest of the world that we are hypocritical in asking the other nations to join the multilateral treaty."<sup>84</sup> The navy had planned to build seventy-one cruisers, but the final bill provided for only sixteen, perhaps because of the pacifist lobby, as Curti claims,<sup>85</sup> or perhaps because seventy-one cruisers were more than Congress was willing to finance. At any rate, America kept within the limitations of the treaty made at the Washington conference, and the good will that was generated by the conference may have made up for a possible sacrifice of capital ship tonnage on our part. The New York Council for Limitation of Armament, which included the Federal Council of Churches, viewed the whole conference with a sense of gratification because it established a "precedent for conferences on international affairs in place of actions through diplomatic agencies," which tended to be more secret.<sup>86</sup>

The conference also provided the opportunity to educate the public on foreign affairs, and turn public opinion to the support of the goals of the peace groups. However, these goals were met only partially in that the New York Council for Limitation of Armament report stated that they wanted the submarine to be eliminated as a weapon of war; instead it was only restricted,<sup>87</sup> They wanted complete withdrawal of any foreign presence in China; instead the reaffirmation of the Open Door

<sup>84</sup>U.S., Senate, 70th Congress, 1929, 1061.

<sup>85</sup>Curti, 292-293.

<sup>86</sup>"Washington Conference," The New Republic, 109.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 110.



meant the continued exploitation of China.<sup>88</sup> Finally, they wanted the use of poison gas to be completely eliminated, but it was not.<sup>89</sup>

Despite these failures, or matters of unfinished business, the peace groups felt that their efforts had been successful, since they had been able to get public opinion on their side to provide the needed public support for our representatives at the conference.

In the years following the Washington conference, other conferences were held. In 1927 a conference held in Geneva was a failure. One reason for its failure was disclosed by Senate investigations during 1929 and 1930. According to The New Republic, the investigations showed that in 1926 a former civilian employee of the Navy Department, William B. Shearer, set out as an expert on naval affairs for Geneva "armed with naval intelligence information, which he dispersed effectively at the 1927 conference to newspaper correspondents" attacking the British views of what limitations should be imposed upon armaments.<sup>90</sup> Following the break up of the conference he returned to the United States to lobby for cruiser building. In these exploits "he was secretly an employee of...three shipbuilding firms."<sup>91</sup> These firms were Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, and the American Brown-Boveri Electric Corporation.<sup>92</sup> For his work he received \$50,000, but he

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>"Keeping the Profit in War," The New Republic, 60 (September 18, 1929), 113.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>"Shipbuilders and Shearer", Nation, 129:316 (September 25, 1929), 316.

claimed that the companies, which had dropped him by then, still owed him \$250,000 more.<sup>93</sup> He also said that "after the shipbuilding companies dropped him, William Randolph Hearst gave him \$2,000 a month to propagandize against the League of Nations and the World Court."<sup>94</sup> His presence at the conference could have been harmless had he not posed as a naval expert and had he admitted to being a propagandist for builders of cruisers, and thus naturally opposed to any arms limitations. But instead he lied. According to The Nation "when taxed with representing armament interests by L.V. Gordon of the Church Peace Union, Mr. Shearer wrote in reply: 'I do not represent any company of any kind.'<sup>95</sup> The shipbuilders themselves, while not denying that Shearer had been hired by their Companies, all denied knowing that he had been hired and for what reasons. This made it appear that they did not know what was going on in their own companies, and as The New Republic observed, during the Senate investigation they "glowingly painted themselves as the prize boobs of the business world," in order to avoid appearing as sinister plotters.<sup>96</sup> Shearer's employment by the companies was established by the Senate investigation. His efforts to keep Britain and the United States from agreeing on issues at the conference were successful, in that the news correspondents published the information he released about the need for large cruisers and thus undermined Britain's position in seeking smaller cruisers. Another reason for the failure of the conference may have been that Italy and France refused to attend,

<sup>93</sup>"Keeping", 113.

<sup>94</sup>"Mr. Shearer's Tale," Nation, 129:318 (October 16, 1929), 401.

<sup>95</sup>"Shipbuilders and Shearer," Nation, 315.

<sup>96</sup>Washington Notes, The New Republic, 60 (October 9, 1929), 203.

limiting the scope of the conference. A third reason was given by Senator Hale, of Maine: "The failure of the Geneva conference, I firmly believe, is directly due to that policy on our part of letting our Navy drop behind."<sup>97</sup> Since we were behind, Hale reasoned, we could not deal from a position of strength as we had at the Washington conference, and our proposals lacked the support that being the strongest can give.<sup>98</sup> Finally, a fourth cause of the failure at Geneva may have been that under the provisions of the Washington conference, a conference was to be called in 1930, and the Geneva delegates, knowing this, may not have felt that their task was very urgent. At any rate, whether it was Shearer's efforts, which were questioned by the Church Peace Union, or any of the other possible reasons, the Geneva conference failed, and the cause of disarmament was delayed until 1930.

President Hoover and Prime Minister MacDonald agreed to begin another conference in London in January, 1930. France and Italy were able to attend, but it was only America, Britain and Japan who could come to any agreements to limit naval construction and to scrap some existing battleships. They agreed on a 10:10:6 ratio for heavy cruisers, a 10:10:7 ratio for light cruisers and destroyers, and equality for submarines. Unrestricted submarine warfare against merchant shipping was outlawed in the agreement by all powers, including France and Italy. Herbert Hoover said of this treaty: "Billions of dollars to waste in competitive building were saved and much international ill will was avoided."<sup>99</sup> This appeared

<sup>97</sup>U.S., Senate, 70th Congress, 1929, 1061.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Herbert Hoover and Hugh Gibson, The Problems of Lasting Peace (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1942), 163.

to be another victory for peace through conferences, which, as has been pointed out, was a goal of the various groups working for peace, including the Federal Council of Churches. But there was a dissident voice. An editorial in The Christian Century stated that the cause of peace had been "tragically betrayed" at the conference because they had not really agreed to disarm. Instead the main questions had been "How big a navy do we need in order to be able to cope with the contingency of war?"<sup>100</sup> Instead of preparing for peace, the powers had prepared for war; they had ignored the peace pact which outlawed war.<sup>101</sup> The fact that the conference was held, and that some good will was generated was out-weighed by the thought that it was the goodwill of giants agreeing to select better clubs for future conflicts, according to The Christian Century.

<sup>100</sup>"The Betrayal," The Christian Century, 47:14 (April 2, 1930), 423-424.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PEACE PACT TO OUTLAW WAR

The possibilities of future conflicts occurring were hopefully diminished by the peace pact to outlaw war, which The Christian Century felt had been ignored at the London Conference. Many groups had campaigned to get the peace pact signed. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., in a Harpers Magazine article wrote that the pacifist organizations, together with many clergymen, made an intense campaign to gain support for the peace pact.<sup>102</sup> The campaign began in 1927 when Dr. Nicolas Murray Butler<sup>103</sup> noticed a proposal to the United States from French Foreign Minister Briand on an inner page of the New York Times.<sup>104</sup> Briand had proposed that his country and ours sign a pact to outlaw war.<sup>105</sup> Butler began drawing attention to the proposal with his own letters.<sup>106</sup> Soon peace groups were promoting it and journalists were writing about it. Proponents of the idea got an additional boost when Charles A. Lindberg landed in Paris creating vibrations of friendship and cooperation between America and France. The wary isolationists in America

<sup>102</sup>Lodge, 33.

<sup>103</sup>Butler was President of Columbia University and was associated with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<sup>104</sup>James T. Shotwell, "Reflections on War and Peace," Perspectives on Peace 1910-1960, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (New York: Praeger, 1960), 26. See note 103 below.

<sup>105</sup>"Briand Sends Message," New York Times, April 6, 1927, 5.

<sup>106</sup>Shotwell, 26.

were partially satisfied when they were assured that the pact would not be a bilateral one between America and France, but would be a multilateral treaty with more than fifty nations involved, and each signatory nation would be free to defend itself in event of an attack.

The peace groups that campaigned for support of the peace pact by sending letters, telegrams, and petitions to the Secretary of State, Congress, and the President were: the Carnegie Endowment, the American Committee for the Outlawry of War, the Committee on the Cause and Cure of War, the World Peace Foundation, the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill, the Federal Council of Churches<sup>107</sup> and other church groups including the American Friends Service Committee, which stated in its annual report that it had "been active in marshaling sentiment in favor of the ratification of the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War (the Kellogg Pact)."<sup>108</sup>

The treaty was declared in effect by President Hoover in 1929. Most of the peace groups greeted the news with jubilation. However, an editorial in the Christian-pacifist magazine, The World Tomorrow pointed out the weaknesses of the treaty: "...the interpretations set forth in various governmental notes permit five kinds of war: in self-defense, in defense of allies, on behalf of the League of Nations, in support of the Locarno agreement, in 'certain regions' mentioned by Great Britain," in so-called backward countries.<sup>109</sup> The editorial also pointed out that

<sup>107</sup>Robert H. Ferrell, Peace in Their Time (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 232.

<sup>108</sup>Annual Report, Society of Friends, June 1, 1928-May 31, 1929, np.

<sup>109</sup>"Conceding Too Much," The World Tomorrow, 12:2 (February, 1929), 53.

"each nation alone has the right to decide when it is acting in self-defense."<sup>110</sup> With all of these exceptions it was uncertain that war had been renounced. The uncertain character of the treaty was predicted by Norman Thomas in 1924. He said, concerning the outlawing of war, "It is highly improbable that nations engaged in the present insanity of strife for profits, reparations and control of raw materials, would agree to the outlawing of war," and if they did "their observance would be problematical."<sup>111</sup> Considering the provisions for approved wars that the treaty contained, Thomas was correct. It was because of these provisions that The World Tomorrow did not share in the joy of many when the treaty was signed. Admittedly, the peace groups had worked hard. For example, Kellogg estimated that a total of at least fifty thousand people sought to express themselves through letters and resolutions directed to him personally; on some days he received up to 300 letters.<sup>112</sup> The victory that these letters helped bring for the pacifist lobby may have been hollow, but this was not due to any lack of effort on the part of the peace groups. More correctly, it was due to the fact that diplomatic promises to disarm and eschew war were ignored in the face of aggressors, either real or simply anticipated. Hedged agreements, such as the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, could easily be seen as empty, but the cause of peace was helped by the attention which was drawn to the movement by the sign-

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Norman Thomas, "The Outlawry of War," The World Tomorrow, 7:1 (January, 1924), 9.

<sup>112</sup> Ferrell, 238.

ing of the treaty. Peace pacts and the attempts at disarmament were not the only, or even the best ways to promote peace, they were only steps in the right direction.

Other steps in the direction of peace were taken by the pacifists as they worked to bring about the conditions of peace. These conditions included "world community, world disarmament, a measure of justice, reasonable freedom from hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, over-population, domination and aggression."<sup>113</sup> Friends and Mennonite PAX-men worked in a peace corps-like organization all over the world. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Federal Council of Churches and the Friends sent relief to coal miners on strike in America, and all of the major groups participated in sending food and clothing to aid children during the Spanish Civil War. These relief efforts sometimes involved political maneuvers and had results affecting the political world. This can be seen in the story of how the American Friends Service Committee helped famine-stricken people in Russia in the early 1920's, as recorded in Elizabeth G. Vining's biography of Rufus M. Jones.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup>"Friends Peace Committee," Religious Society of Friends, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1966, pamphlet, np.

<sup>114</sup>Elizabeth Gray Vining, Friend of Life, the Biography of Rufus M. Jones (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott Co., 1958).



## CHAPTER V

### RUSSIAN FAMINE RELIEF

The story begins during the civil war between the Whites and the Reds in Russia, which followed the 1917 Revolution. Among other things, the war resulted in dislocated families, harvest failures, forced land requisitions, and miles of unused farm land. All this, along with the damage done by the Germans in the World War, helped bring on a famine that took an estimated five million lives.<sup>115</sup> Two Quakers, working with dislocated peasants in Russia, saw the famine coming and tried to do something about it. Arthur Watts, English, and Anna J. Haines, an American, had been looking for ways to increase American Friends Service Committee aid to Russia. The committee, in turn, was searching for resources.

On January 24, 1921, Rufus Jones, for the Friends, took the problem to Herbert Hoover, who, as head of the American Relief Association, was able to release one-hundred thousand dollars of ARA funds for the Friends to spend on food and medical supplies to be distributed in Moscow.<sup>116</sup>

This aid was insufficient to hold back the spreading famine. By July, 1921 the Volga River valley was the scene of much starvation. Maxim Gorky contacted Hoover,<sup>117</sup> who was by then Secretary of Commerce in the Harding administration. Gorky's plea was for more aid for the starving

<sup>115</sup> Georg von Rauch, A History of Soviet Russia, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), 130.

<sup>116</sup> Vining, 175.

<sup>117</sup> Rauch, 130.

Russian people. Hoover agreed to set up the necessary organization and funds, provided certain conditions were met. The Communist Minister of Foreign Affairs, Litvinov, agreed to the conditions, which stipulated freedom of movement for the American staff and control by them of food and supply transportation from the ports to the people. Hoover also called for the freeing of eleven Americans held in Russian prisons. The Russians freed the eleven plus about one-hundred more that Hoover had not known about.<sup>118</sup>

Following Gorky's plea Hoover raised twenty-seven million dollars from various government agencies and eighteen million was given by the Russians themselves from their supply of former Czarist gold.<sup>119</sup> This money bought food and supplies and over two-hundred Americans from many different groups went to Russia to help in the distribution. Besides the Friends there were groups such as the American Red Cross, the Federal Council of Churches, the YMCA, and the Knights of Columbus represented in the relief effort. Before the Hoover relief could arrive it was reported that the Friends were supplying "an average of one-hundred and twenty-eight thousand tins of milk a month" to the children's institutions of Moscow.<sup>120</sup> The Friends had their own organization for distribution and they were disturbed when Hoover attempted to unite total relief effort under American Relief Association aegis.<sup>121</sup> They felt

<sup>118</sup>Vining, 176.

<sup>119</sup>Vining, 176.

<sup>120</sup>Jerome Davis, "Friends Among the Children in Russia," The New Republic, 28:364 (November 23, 1921), 375.

<sup>121</sup>Vining, 176.

that if they joined forces it would give a political flavor to their work.<sup>122</sup> This difference between the Friends and Hoover was picked up by The New Republic, and in an editorial they charged Hoover with an "implacable hostility to Bolshevism."<sup>123</sup> The New Republic felt that Hoover's attempts to control the Friends showed a mistrust of the Soviets, and perhaps the Friends. Hoover wrote a letter to Rufus Jones of the Friends to show his support for their work in Russia. It was reprinted in The New Republic. The letter tempered the hostility of The New Republic's editorials toward Hoover. In the letter Hoover said that the Friend's efforts had his "fullest support."<sup>124</sup> He also said that "the effort being made by all American organizations to mitigate this terrible situation is free of purpose in political, religious or racial contention. It is not the sentiment of charity to ask who or why."<sup>125</sup> This sentiment was contradicted, however, in a later paragraph, where Hoover, in reference to American Relief Association controls, stated that the "sole purpose of these arrangements is to assure protection and efficiency in administration that every cent shall do its utmost in saving life---that the whole effort shall be American in name and ideals."<sup>126</sup> In other words, Hoover wanted those receiving charity

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>"Mr. Hoover's Implacable Hostility to Bolshevism," The New Republic, 28:352 (August 31, 1921), 2.

<sup>124</sup>Herbert Hoover, Letter to Rufus Jones in The New Republic, 28:356 (September 28, 1921), 116.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

to know who and why. The dispute between Hoover and the Friends did not halt the efforts of either the Friends or the ARA, and many lives were saved, leaving a lasting impression upon the people who were aided. However, according to Georg von Rauch, head of the Russian Institute at the University of Kiel, Germany "Soviet historiography denied the humanitarian motives of the Hoover effort and alleged intentions of a subversive character."<sup>127</sup> American relief work tapered off as the famine ran its course and the Russian economy took a turn for the better.

Russian agricultural and industrial production improved and the New Economic Policy, using credit and money in a form of state capitalism, proved to be effective. For instance, "according to official estimates, by 1925, agricultural recovery in the Northern Caucasus reached 77.5 per cent of the year 1916; in Kazakhstan the figure was 71.9 per cent; in Siberia 92.2 per cent; and in the Ukraine 96.1 per cent."<sup>128</sup> "Industrial production, which had stood at about 18 per cent of the prewar level in 1920-21, rose to 27 per cent in 1921-1922, and to 35 per cent in 1922-1923. By 1925-1926, the coal industry registered the largest advance, and almost reached prewar output. Iron and manganese trailed somewhat, but were not too far behind coal."<sup>129</sup> These figures indicate the condition of the Soviet economy during and following the famine relief efforts of the Friends and the American Relief Association. But this story does not end here with the recovery of the

<sup>127</sup> Rauch, 464.

<sup>128</sup> Basil Dmytryshyn, USSR: A Concise History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 120.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 121.

Soviet economy. According to G. Bernhard Fedde this American effort created an impression upon the Russians which was to pay off later. Specifically, the Berlin blockade following the second World War was lifted partly due to the influence of an unnamed Russian official who was helped by the 1921 famine relief.<sup>130</sup> Fedde maintains that there are other incidents of behind the scenes results of the Friend's work which cannot be printed because of the need to protect the individuals involved.

The relief work of the peace groups was more successful than were the efforts to obtain disarmament and actually prevent war. Lives were saved by the famine relief, whereas the disarmament conferences and the pact to outlaw war only served to propagandize for peace and did not result in any real disarmament or prevention of war. Another area in which the peace groups were eventually successful in achieving their goal was in providing a just legal status for conscientious objectors.

<sup>130</sup>This information about the blockade was related to me in a discussion I had with Dr. Fedde concerning the scope of this paper. He was then a member of my thesis committee.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

The American government was only slowly allowing Americans to follow their own consciences on whether to participate in war or not. This issue was not really pressed until too late in World War I. There were times when the struggle was serious and times when it became almost ridiculous, as when the Supreme Court denied a woman, Madame Schwimmer, United States citizenship because of her pacifist beliefs. By the time America entered World War II the peace groups had obtained provisions in the draft law that let the conscientious objectors play a more positive role in American life than the prison terms of World War I had permitted.

Historically, exemption from military service was not an unusual request. In 1789, James Madison proposed in his Bill of Rights that along with the right to bear arms there should also be the right not to bear arms in military service. This protection for conscientious objectors was not adopted with the rest of the Bill of Rights. During the Civil War an Act of 1863 allowed a draftee to get a substitute or pay three-hundred dollars to avoid service. Alternate service in hospitals or in the care of freed slaves was provided by an Act of 1864 for conscientious objectors to war.

By 1917 a Selective Service Act protected the right of conscientious objectors only if they were members of one of the well known peace churches (Friends, Brethren, and Mennonites), or if they were ministers of the gospel.

But even they met with difficulties. "Scores of Mennonites and larger groups of Hutterites left the United States for Canada because American public opinion and the courts and jails were hard on conscientious objectors;" some even died in jail and others were tortured.<sup>131</sup>

During the First World War religious objectors, though exempt from soldier duty, were required to perform alternate service of some sort, such as working in hospitals or on farms. Non-religious objectors had their claims for exemption refused. About four thousand who claimed objector status were turned down.<sup>132</sup> Those who resisted induction or alternate service were sentenced to prison terms as long as "25 years or even life."<sup>133</sup> Others, an estimated 120,000, avoided induction by fleeing to Mexico "or by obtaining false medical certificates or by taking safe, exempt jobs."<sup>134</sup> Not all of those who left the country were conscientious objectors.

Alternate service was not operative until about 1918, and during that first year confusion and cruelty faced almost all objectors. The peace churches and the Fellowship of Reconciliation united to ask President Wilson to take immediate steps to end the injustices being done to the objectors. After the war they pressed Wilson again to gain cle-

<sup>131</sup>Frank H. Epp, "America's War Refugees in Canada," The Mennonite, 83:47 (December 24, 1968), 805.

<sup>132</sup>Don M. Chase, "What Sort of People are Pacifists?" The World Tomorrow, 12:2 (February, 1929), 83.

<sup>133</sup>Norman Thomas, "Pacifism in America," Playboy, December, 1968, 280.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 279.

mency for the objectors, but the final World War I objector was not released until 1933.<sup>135</sup>

Some individual pastors spoke out against the shabby treatment accorded to conscientious objectors, but most of the churchmen were acquiescent. Norman Thomas, in a letter to The New Republic in 1922 said that it was harder to deal with an informal committee of the Federal Council of Churches than with the officials of the War Department when it came to discussing conscientious objectors.<sup>136</sup> Conscientious objectors and political prisoners found army and prison chaplains more "intolerant and arrogant in spirit than ordinary officials."<sup>137</sup> Churches and churchmen in general were slow to rally to the aid of the objectors while World War I was being fought. After the war the Federal Council of Churches was in advance of the churches as a whole when it passed a resolution in favor of amnesty for objectors in prison.<sup>138</sup> Then, slowly, other churches re-evaluated their earlier war time positions on conscientious objectors and began making pronouncements that sounded more like the historic peace churches. These statements were presented to the public and government officials and may have helped pave the way for the improved draft provisions of World War II. For instance, in 1930, thirty-seven churches represented in the National Study Conference of Churches called upon the government to respect the rights of consci-

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 280.

<sup>136</sup>Norman Thomas, "The Churches and Civil Liberty," The New Republic, 30:384 (April 12, 1922), 290.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.



entious objectors; they decided that it was the duty of the churches to support such individuals.<sup>139</sup> In 1932 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church took a strong stand against war, and called for the abolition of compulsory military training in state supported schools.<sup>140</sup> These statements showed up yearly, and were echoed in local conferences. For instance, in 1935 the Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church favored the elimination of compulsory military training at Oregon State and at the University of Oregon; they also agreed to support any of "our young people who have conscientious objections to" military training.<sup>141</sup> The Presbyterian Synod of New York State offered resolutions similar to those of the Methodist Episcopal Church, supporting conscientious objectors, opposing military training in schools and colleges, and warning the congregations of possible economic hardships as a consequence of remaining neutral in the European and Far Eastern conflicts.<sup>142</sup> By the beginning of the Second World War statements in support of conscientious objectors were available from almost every major church body, including the Jews. This kind of support had been lacking during the First World War and reflects the change that had come over the American churches. This church support, combined with that of the peace groups, was first ap-

<sup>139</sup> Boeckel, 153.

<sup>140</sup> McConnell, 145.

<sup>141</sup> Journal of the Oregon Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Eighty-third Session, June 25-30, 1935, Salem, Oregon (Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern Press, 1935), 191.

<sup>142</sup> Oswald Garrison Villard, "The Peace Cause Moves On," The Nation, 139:3618 (November 7, 1934), 525.

preciated by objectors still in prison from the First World War, and then by immigrants seeking United States citizenship. Isolationist America was not supportive of conscientious objectors, and even with the combined efforts of the churches and the peace groups it took more than ten years to get World War I objectors freed. A similar lengthy challenge was faced by immigrants who happened to be conscientious objectors. When they applied for citizenship they found little sympathy in the courts to which they had to appeal their cases.

Rev. T. F. King from Canada, a pastor at the Lake Arthur, Louisiana Methodist Episcopal Church applied for citizenship on November 4, 1929. His application was denied following a session with the judge which included answering questions concerning hypothetical situations dealing with wars and patriotism.<sup>143</sup> The session went like this:

Judge: "But supposing, to take a concrete case, California wanted more territory, and decided to seize some in Mexico, and everyman was drafted for some form of service, would you object or be loyal?"

Answer: "I do not believe the United States would engage in such a war."

Judge: "I do not want any conditions. Under such circumstances, a war of aggression, would you object?"

Answer: "In all probability I would. I would first have to consider my duty to God and humanity."

Judge: "In other words you cannot subscribe under any and every condition to the doctrine, My country right or wrong, my country?"

Answer: "No."

<sup>143</sup>"Citizenship and War," The Christian Century, 47:15 (April 9, 1930), 455-457.

Judge: "Then you cannot be admitted."<sup>144</sup>

Impossible and unrealistic situations were used by judges in their questioning. The fact that most questions used did not relate to the real world did not seem to bother the judge, since the object of the process was to ensnare, not clarify. In this case the judge had posed a situation which was in opposition to the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, signed only the year before.

Not all judges opposed immigrant pacifists, and sometimes the courts reversed each other. For instance, in May of 1929 the Supreme Court denied citizenship to an immigrant, Madame Rosika Schwimmer because of her beliefs as a Quaker pacifist and an internationalist.<sup>145</sup> Mme. Schwimmer had lived in the United States since 1921, and had applied for citizenship in 1926. Justices Holmes and Brandeis dissented from the Majority opinion, stating that "Quakers have done their share to make the country what it is, that many citizens agree with the applicant's belief and that I had not supposed hither to that we regretted our inability to expel them because they believe more than some of us do in the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount."<sup>146</sup> This decision, to which Holmes and Brandeis dissented, reversed the decree of the Circuit Court of Appeals and upheld the decree of the District Court. A similar reversal occurred in the case

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 455-6.

<sup>145</sup>Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, "The Pacifist Bogey," Harpers Magazines, 161 (October, 1930), 553.

<sup>146</sup>United States v. Schwimmer, 279 U.S. 644 (1929).

of United States v. Macintosh in 1931.<sup>147</sup> Douglas C. Macintosh was an immigrant from Canada, a Baptist minister, and a Yale University Divinity School Professor when he applied for American citizenship in 1925. He had served as a chaplain in the Canadian Army during World War I. He was not a pacifist, and would support the government in its actions if it were not "against the best interests of humanity" to do so.<sup>148</sup> This reservation, for the sake of humanity, induced a five to four decision against his citizenship appeal to the Supreme Court. Justices Hughes, Brandeis, and Stone dissented.

Many other individuals with a religious base for their beliefs, including Quakers, were denied citizenship by the courts.<sup>149</sup> Because of the Schwimmer, Macintosh, and other cases, Congressman Anthony J. Griffin of New York introduced a bill in 1930 to amend the Naturalization Act to keep anti-war feelings from being grounds for denial of citizenship. It was hoped that the bill would also keep the courts from having to reverse themselves as in the Schwimmer and Macintosh cases. Griffin's bill had the support of numerous religious groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Council for the Prevention of War, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Hearst newspapers, the Scripps-Howard chain, Jane Addams, John Dewey, and James T. Shotwell.<sup>150</sup> Even with all of this support the

<sup>147</sup>United States v. Macintosh, 283 U. S. 605 (1931).

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Bromley, "Bogey," 553.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 565.

bill failed to pass Congress. This was ironic, since just a year before America had signed the Paris Peace Pact to outlaw war.

War was outlawed and immigrants who were conscientious objectors were denied citizenship. This is not as incongruous as it may appear, since the treaty to outlaw war still permitted so-called defensive wars. America could still go to war, and conscientious objectors would still be subject to the same laws as non-objectors. Because of this, work got under way to get legislation permitting war objectors to be exempt from military service.

A delegation consisting of Rufus D. Bowman of the Church of the Brethren, and the representatives of the other peace churches met directly with President Roosevelt for about thirty minutes on January 10, 1940.<sup>151</sup> During that time they presented two statements, one was of a general nature, about the peace convictions of the churches; the second was a "procedure to be used in dealing with conscientious objectors."<sup>152</sup> This second statement suggested specific alternatives for conscientious objectors, such as relief of war sufferers, refugee relief, reconstruction, forestry, medical-health work, and farm service.<sup>153</sup> Roosevelt's reaction to the presentation was positive. He said "I am glad you have done it. That's getting down to a practical basis. It shows us what

<sup>151</sup>Rufus D. Bowman, The Church of the Brethren and War, 1708-1941 (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Publishing House, 1944), 275.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 278.

work the conscientious objectors can do without fighting. Excellent! Excellent!<sup>154</sup> Roosevelt appreciated this compromise between non-cooperation and joining. But like many compromises it can be criticized. By cooperating with the government at this point, the peace churches were giving approval to the power of the government over individuals, even in the matter of religious beliefs. On the other hand, this attempt at compromise could be seen as a step toward some future time when more freedom of conscience would be possible, which seems to be the view of the peace churches at that time.

Following the initial meeting with Roosevelt, the representatives met with Attorney General Murphy and Robert H. Jackson, and presented specific recommendations on January 12, 1940.<sup>155</sup> The recommendations were incorporated in a bill which passed Congress on September 14, 1940. Efforts to get this bill through Congress were aided by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resisters League, the peace churches, Methodists, and others.<sup>156</sup> At last conscientious objectors could perform alternate service instead of serving as non-combatants, or going to jail. To assist them in finding an alternate service the National Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Committee, the American Friends Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the Methodist Commission on World Peace,

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 279 (from Bowman's notes after the interview).

<sup>155</sup>Clarence E. Pickett, For More Than Bread (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1953), 311.

<sup>156</sup>Bowman, 290.

all had representatives on the Board. This board met with Selective Service Director, Clarence A. Dykstra, and later General Lewis B. Hershey, to coordinate government and civilian efforts. The Selective Service Act provided that those who had religious objections to participation in war in any form could be "assigned to work of national importance under civilian direction."<sup>157</sup> This was what the religious pacifists had asked for in the initial meeting with President Roosevelt. Had that meeting never occurred there probably would not have been a workable alternate service program. The problems faced by objectors during and since World War II is not within the scope of this paper, but it seems certain that were it not for the provisions obtained by the peace churches and other religious pacifists, a situation much like that which existed during World War I would have developed in all of its harshness and cruelty.

<sup>157</sup>Lillian Schlissel, ed., Conscience in America (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 214.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The efforts to improve the position of conscientious objectors, and the relief of famine in Russia, are the best examples of how the religious pacifists were successfully involved in political activities during the interwar years. In each of these two examples their efforts brought some positive, demonstrable results. In the other three examples the work of the religious pacifists was not distinct from the other peace groups. Furthermore, it is only speculation that the pacifists had real influence on the outcome of the Mexican Crisis, the disarmament conferences, and the peace pact to outlaw war; although evidence has been presented to show a good possibility of pacifist influence on those issues during the interwar years. Roland Bainton wrote about the role of pacifists between the wars: "Conscientious objectors have never been numerous enough to stop a war. Between the two wars the hope appeared not unrealistic that they might attain sufficient strength to apply an effective brake. They failed and there appears to be even less likelihood of success in our own day."<sup>158</sup> I attended a lecture of Bainton's at Concordia College in 1967. Following the lecture I asked a question inspired by the above statement from his book. I asked if any of the religious pacifists had been

<sup>158</sup>Roland H. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 248.



able to bring pressure upon the government and if there had been any results. He replied "They put pressure on, I am sure, but I can't be specific about results."<sup>159</sup> I also asked him if he thought that the political role of religious peace groups had been effective. He answered "That is a hard question to answer. I've been a member of these peace groups right along and have had a feeling of futility. They have failed in their major goals. But they have made us more sensitive to the issue of peace. They have created an atmosphere which may not have existed without them."<sup>160</sup> Bainton's feeling of futility is understandable because war was not prevented and complete disarmament was not attained. Concerning the efforts toward disarmament, one writer said "The most that the pacifist movement...can do is to cause the armament program...to lag a few months or years behind the general standard."<sup>161</sup> This seems to have been one result of the disarmament conferences that were supported by the pacifists, although that was hardly what they had intended.

There is at least one reason why the pacifists failed to achieve their major goals, even as they scored the five minor victories described in this paper. Not all members of the pacifist groups and peace churches went along with the pronouncements of the national leadership

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Roland Bainton, Concordia College, Portland, Oregon, August 25, 1967.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Bruce Bliven, "Pacifism: Its Rise and Fall," The New Republic, 89:1146 (November 18, 1936), 67.

of the peace groups. For instance, goals set at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference were not always carried out by local churches, partly due to lack of field supervision from the main office.<sup>162</sup> In 1933, instructions by the Brethren Annual Conference to pay federal taxes only under protest, because tax money was being used to arm for war, "were probably not carried out by very many of the membership."<sup>163</sup> In The New Republic, editor Herbert Croly called the resolutions of church bodies "pious and impotent expressions of opinion" because they had "little or no effect after they were uttered on the behavior of Christian peoples."<sup>164</sup> He also wrote that "Certain results which governments and classes have to accomplish they cannot accomplish without war. The psychology and morals of the great majority of Christians are the reflection of these necessities rather than of the life and teaching of Jesus."<sup>165</sup> According to Croly, the failure of religious pacifism to uproot war was due to the "want of integrity in Christian ethics as practiced and interpreted by the vast majority of Christians."<sup>166</sup> These views help explain why the political actions carried on by religious pacifists during the inter-war years were effective in achieving limited goals, as illustrated by the five examples, but war itself was not prevented, and perhaps that is all that we may expect in the future.

<sup>162</sup>Bowman, 257.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 238-9.

<sup>164</sup>Herbert Croly, "Behaviorism in Religion," The New Republic, 24: 377 (February 22, 1922), 367.

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<sup>166</sup>Ibid.

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