



# A Letter to the Teachers of America

*By Ralph Borsodi*

## To the Teachers of Mankind:

First I must explain why I address this letter to you . . . to you merely because you teach . . . no matter whom you teach, whether adults or children . . . nor where you teach, whether here in America or China, or in Russia or New Zealand . . . nor what you teach, whether principles or practices . . . nor how you teach, whether individual to individual, in classrooms or to groups, by the printed page, with pictures, or by word-of-mouth perhaps over winged waves. I address this letter to you because what you teach and what you fail to teach determines what mankind wants, what mankind believes and thinks, and what mankind does or fails to do. You may not know that this is so; you may deny that this is so when it is called to your attention; you may even believe that it should not be so. But what you think about the matter does not alter by a jot or tittle the fact that it is so, nor the fact that in your innermost heart you must feel that the calling you profess involves you in a special responsibility from which you cannot escape and which you cannot shift to any other man or men, no matter how great their powers or exalted their positions.

To you who must individually bear a share of this responsibility and who cannot avoid wielding your share of the influence exerted by the teachers of mankind, I have something to say.

**I**T has been said of men, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

By our fruits—by the hearts and minds and behavior of the men we have taught, we stand condemned. For it is men whom we have taught, whose minds and hearts we have shaped, and whose behavior we have influenced, who have made this fair green earth into an arena in which hate and death crucify life and love.

Teaching is no mere job, to which it is possible to turn merely because we need to earn a living. Teaching is the greatest responsibility which anyone can assume. Those of us who have assumed this responsibility, no matter how petty or how noble the motives which first led us into the work of influencing our fellow men, can no longer afford

to postpone the assumption of the leadership in society essential to the discharge of that responsibility to the uttermost farthing. The time has come when the teacher must cease to be a mere hireling. The time has come for the teacher to lead. The time has come when the leadership which the warrior lost to the priest, the priest to the merchant, the merchant to the banker, and which the banker is now losing to the public official, must be taken over by the teacher. A new world must be built. And the castle-centered, church-centered, bank-centered, government-centered community must be replaced by a school-centered and university-centered society.

And in that new society, the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of mankind (entrusted in part into our hands), must be made supreme in the hearts and minds and over the behavior of mankind. But the triumph of the teacher must come differently. It cannot come by compulsion through the use of arms and police forces, nor by playing upon man's fear of hell and hope of heaven, and certainly not through the promise of material security, material plenty and boundless material progress. By its very nature it can come only through persuasion and only as a result of the influence exerted and the consequences flowing from education.

## QUO VADIS?

Twenty-five years ago the world went through the horrors of war. With guns and bayonets, with gas and shells, mankind opened its veins and watched rich red blood flow everywhere. A bloody altar was erected, a bloody communion served, and as the bloody libations were poured forth, Fourteen Points were carved upon it and the worshippers told, "This is the war to end all war." Today we know that all that blood was shed not to end war, but merely to obtain a truce.

Three years ago the truce was ended, if indeed

it did not end ten years ago when Japan invaded Manchuria. Today the world is again at war. On every continent, in the heart of Old Europe and out in the uttermost isles of the seas, the precious blood is flowing again. And when reluctant mankind again asks, "Why?" it is again asked to worship at an altar, this time called the Atlantic Charter, and again it hears the words, "This one is the real war to end all war."

It is not true that this war is a war which will end all war. By all men everywhere let this be heard: *from this war we shall go on to another*; from the bloody madness of today, we shall go on to the greater bloody madneses tomorrow. In the womb of this war, the seeds of the next war have already been dropped. Only a miracle can stop the bloody harvest which our children and our children's children are being doomed to reap. Just as we have discovered that life is unendurable in a world partly Hitlerized and partly non-Hitler, so the next generation will discover that life for them will be unendurable in a world partly Communist and partly non-Communist.

It is only half the truth—and therefore wholly false—to say that the Kaiser caused the last war, and that Hitler caused this one. It will be only half the truth and therefore just as false to say that the coming Hitlers will cause the next one. Wars are precipitated by Hitlers; they have their true beginnings in the forces which create Hitlers and the conditions which produce the masses ready to follow them.

Today we are fighting this generation's Hitler and this generation's Hitlerized followers. Terrible as it may be to say it, our leaders *are intensifying* conditions which make for war. In every nation that nemesis of modern civilization, heavy industry, is being expanded and over-expanded in a frantic effort to forge enough weapons of war—tanks and guns and ships and munitions—with which to win the war. Not only in Old England, which was the first with a sort of sublime innocence to set industrialism on its way, and in the United States, but also in China, India, Mexico, Brazil, the forces of Industrialism, Urbanism and Nationalism are being strengthened and the last vestiges of regionalism, community life and rural values undermined. In a world in which every man, woman and child becomes hopelessly dependent even for daily bread upon the full functioning of heavy industry, no normal way of living is possible. Abnormality and subnormality inevitably increases, and monsters like Hitler are not only generated, but also the herds which such Hitlers need.

#### MEA CULPA!

It is not true that the permanent peace we so desperately seek can be won through the triumph

of the American way of life, nor the Russian, nor the British, nor any way of life of any of the great industrial nations of the earth. It is as false for the United Nations' leaders to say that the new order must be based upon the way of life and the form of government in which they believe, as it is false for Adolf Hitler to say that it must be based upon what he believes. Only this much is true—that if we must choose between our present ways of life and the life which Hitler would impose upon us, *our ways are worth struggling and even dying for*.

It is not true that we are guiltless. It is not true that Britain or Russia or the United States are guiltless. Only those who come into the Court of Justice with clean hands may say that. And our hands are not clean.

For over a century we fought a war of extermination upon the American Indian—a war which gave us possession of the lands which they formerly possessed—a war marked on our side by all the deceits, broken treaties, treacheries and atrocities which we condemn in others. We fought a war with Mexico—an imperialistic war which resulted in the conquest of nearly half the continental area of the United States. In spite of boundless natural resources; in spite of matchless technical achievements; in spite of the New Deal and the century of the common man, we failed to solve the problem of unemployment and dire poverty until, plagued by Hitler's might we started heavy industry turning out implements of war. What reason is there for us to boast of the superiority of our government and to trust our political leadership to make peace for the world?

But neither is the British government superior. It is embarrassed by the fact that its record in India belies its record in Canada and South Africa and Australia.

And certainly not the Russian government, with its plans for world revolution, its faith in dictatorship, its OGPU, its war upon Finland, its conquest of the little Baltic states, its unforgettable deal with Nazi Germany for half of Poland.

We teachers are false to the responsibilities of our difficult profession if we trust the leaders of the United Nations—*after the war is won*—to write a peace treaty for the world. These men are not supermen. They are no better qualified to win the peace than were Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau. Roosevelt cannot forego politics; Churchill, his lifelong devotion to Empire; Stalin, that salvation comes from "the dictatorship of the proletariat." They may be great men in spite of these grave flaws, but they are not great enough to be trusted, *after the war is won, when they no longer need to court public opinion in the matter*, to frame the peace. Each one of them will strive to force what he can into the peace treaty for his

ideas, his partisans, his nation. It is as foolish to expect that after the war is won Stalin will not seek to make a treaty which will permit the heroic people of Russia to spread Communism, as it is to expect that Roosevelt will not try to make a treaty which will permit him to spread the New Deal, spread what he calls democracy, spread what he believes is the American way of life. The result of postponing this question until after the war is over will be another truce—a truce in which the seeds of the next world war or the next world revolution will already have been planted.

*The treaty of peace must be written now.* The people of America as well as our Allies must know specifically what the United Nations are fighting for now. Above all, the people of Germany and Italy and Japan and of all the allies of the Axis powers must know it now. Only when the people of the United Nations know specifically what the war aims of their leaders are, is there any chance that the treaty of peace will contain the provisions essential to a *permanent* peace. If, in order to sanctify the bloody sacrifices of our men, we cannot make the United Nations agree upon war aims now, when desperate necessity makes every one of the political leaders willing to compromise, *there is no hope.* For after the war has been won, each triumphant great power will seek to write into the treaty what its directing head feels his nation's contribution to the common victory entitles him to demand. Not the leader advocating the sublimest truths, but the leader backed by the strongest armies, will prevail. And the treaty which the victors will finally present to the vanquished for signature, will prove a mere truce, providing the most ruthless leader with the breathing spell his armies need before he begins to force his ideas upon the rest of the world.

The time for us to face this problem of defining war aims is now; not after the war has been won, and certainly not when it will be too late for the victors to win the peace.

#### THE MINIMUM ESSENTIALS OF PERMANENT PEACE

To insure that this war shall be followed by permanent peace, the United Nations must now announce that when representatives of the victors and the vanquished in this war shall meet, they shall act as the representatives of the determining majority of all the people of the world. The United Nations must formally announce *now* that the treaty of peace is to be binding upon all nations, not only the belligerents, but the neutrals as well, and that all treaties and agreements between nations, and all constitutions and laws in conflict with the provisions of the treaty, shall immediately after the treaty is signed, become null and void.

Finally, the United Nations must now announce that the treaty will contain provisions for these three essentials of permanent peace:

I. The immediate, universal (and if necessary compulsory) transfer by all nations of all their armies and armaments—military, naval and aerial—and all their military and naval bases and fortresses, whether within or upon the boundaries of a nation, to a World Military Police; the future rank and file of this police force to be recruited by voluntary enlistment from among the peoples of all nations and races; the future officers and commandery to be open to professionally trained persons of any race or nation through uniform tests and examinations of technical, intellectual and moral qualifications. This World Military Police thus to be established shall have the right to dispose of its forces anywhere in the world on reservations of its own selection; to balance the races and nationalities included in each of its divisions and located in the various regions of the world so as to insure impartiality; to move its forces into any area or sea, and to have them there do anything which the commandery finds necessary in order to insure disarmament, prevent re-armament, and restrain any groups, races or nations anywhere in the world from engaging in wars or violent revolutions. The right of a nation to declare neutrality shall immediately upon the declaration of peace, be ended.

II. The immediate (and if necessary compulsory) abolition of all customs barriers, tariffs and trade regulations and the establishment of universal *free trade* between the peoples of all nations; the cessation of all restrictions of any kind or nature upon *free travel* across national boundaries or between political sub-divisions for purposes of trade, communication and social intercourse (genuine health quarantines alone excepted); the nullification of all restrictions upon *free communication* between individuals and in groups or meetings anywhere whether made orally or in written, printed or visual forms; the renunciation of all *imperial governments* which require armies in order to maintain their colonies, and do not in fact therefore rule with the consent of the governed. But the right of any nation or state or community to determine for itself the criteria it shall use for the admission of immigrants who desire to live permanently or to occupy land within its boundaries—including such criteria as language, race, religion and political beliefs—shall not be effected by this renunciation of national sovereignty, nor its right to change its social, economic, political and religious institutions at any time or by any method excepting only the use of force.

III. The immediate (and if necessary compulsory) pooling of all the natural mineral resources of the earth, including the use of the seas and the air, excepting only the ownership of surface lands, by declaring them the common heritage of all the peoples of the earth, including the generations to come, and by licensing all enterprises (no matter whether native or alien) engaged in extracting raw materials from the earth, require them to pay royalties equal to the full economic rent of the resources they use to the Trustees of a World Fund to be established for the support of the World Police and the maintenance of world peace.

*(To be concluded in the next issue)*