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POLITICAL THOUGHT

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JOSEPH S. ROUCEK



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LEWIS, JOHN, *The Case Against Pacifism* (London: Allen & Unwin, c. 1940). This is an elaborate and detailed statement of the argument against pacifism. The author is not too successful in much of his treatment, but at other points delivers several telling blows against pacifist armour.

MACGREGOR, G. H. C., *The Relevance of an Impossible Ideal* (New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1941). This is an answer, couched in theological terms, to the views of Reinhold Niebuhr. The author, a Scottish theologian, attacks Niebuhr's position on the ground that it mis-states the relationship of traditional Christian thought to "perfectionist" ideals.

MACLVER, R. M., *Towards An Abiding Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1943). One of the most suggestive works dealing with the possibilities of a world order following the Second World War. Unfortunately, MacLver is not too clear at many points in his argument. On the whole, the framework is internationalist rather than cosmopolitan.

NEUFANG, OSCAR, *World Federation* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1939). Neufang, who for long has been a federationist as contrasted with an apologist for a league, states his argument most succinctly here.

RUSSELL, FRANK M., *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936). A general text-book analyzing theories of international relations from ancient to modern times. This is a comprehensive survey and the bibliographical lists attached should be helpful to the student.

STAWELL, F. MELLAN, *The Growth of International Thought* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1929). A brief history of international doctrines since the eighteenth century. A short sketch, the major problems are treated in such a manner as to enable the student to see the picture as a whole.

STREIT, CLARENCE, *Union Now* (New York: Harpers, 1940). Streit's work has provoked more comment, and won more assent to the idea of world federation, than any work in the past forty years. Why this is true is difficult to discover. Oscar Neufang has elaborated the theory clearly years before, yet his work produced scarcely a ripple.

WELLS, H. G., *A Modern Utopia* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905).
 _____, *The Anatomy of Frustration* (New York: Macmillan, 1936).
 _____, *The World Set Free* (New York: Macmillan, 1914).
 _____, *World Brain* (Garden City: Doubleday Doran, 1938).

Wells has been the most consistent exponent of the cosmopolitan ideal in modern times, and these works are among those which best exemplify his argument. The first and the third are novels.

WOOTTON, BARBARA, *Socialism and Federation* (London: Macmillan, 1941). Some writers, of whom John Strachey is one, look upon federation and socialism as antithetic conceptions. But the author of this pamphlet seeks to show that they are complementary instead.

CHAPTER XII

THE ELITE IN RECENT POLITICAL THOUGHT

FRANCIS G. WILSON

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEW

In 1909 James Bryce declared in his presidential address to the American Political Science Association that there had been in fact only one form of government—the government of the few.¹ This view could readily be argued in the more happy days of modern democracy, before the emergence of the present crisis. But even such a standardized axiom of twentieth-century political science cannot now be pressed with a smile of wisdom by those once sure that democracy was the final form of government in the history of progressive humanity. Indeed, the government of the few has become in part the symbol of political irresponsibility and the tyranny of organization. Even if the few rule in fact in the democracies, we do not desire to display too openly a condition which suggests that the difference of regimes is relative rather than absolute.

Ideally, however, students of politics have believed that the government of the best—necessarily the few—is the proper regime could it but be organized. Plato dreamed in his *Republic* of a just city to be governed by those who were the best, the most able, and the wisest. They were to be chosen by a rigid and life-long system of education, at each stage of which the unfit would be separated from the competent. True aristocracy is just this, the government of the best, of a ruling class dedicated to the common well-being and to the application in verity

¹ James Bryce, "The Relations of Political Science to History and to Practice," *The American Political Science Review*, III (February, 1909), p. 18.

of the highest principles of justice. If Plato sadly admitted that his city of justice was laid up in heaven, so have others who would construct an ideal society, which has been in many instances governed by the few. The history of utopian thought is replete with the dream of government which combines beauty and justice in the full sense of the words.²

Our concern in this chapter is with those ideas about the government of the few which have been expressed in fairly recent times. Democracy has been based on the principle of the day-to-day sovereignty of the people, the government of the many in the Greek or Aristotelian sense. Therefore, government of the few as a principle stands in some measure as a criticism, a rejection, or an improvement of democracy. It should be made clear, however, that the defense of the government of the few can be pressed as an improvement of democracy; the government of the few, say professional administrators or benevolent leaders of the masses, does not always stand in contradiction with the modern democratic conception of social organization. Thomas Jefferson, for example, believed that the natural aristocrats should rule, provided their power should come from the free suffrage of the people.

The ideas expressed above, however, are the exception rather than the rule. Many critics of democracy in the nineteenth century and our own have been believers in the government of the few because it was a way to escape from the perils of the government of the many. Some form of aristocracy was, therefore, the remedy for the weaknesses of democracy as it emerged from the European crisis of the French Revolution. Sir Henry Sumner Maine in his *Popular Government* (1886) pointed out the fragility, the weaknesses and the unprogressive character of democratic government. Thomas Carlyle and other Victorians showed without reserve their contempt for the government of the masses; they were looking for ways in which the very limited British democracy of their day might be cir-

² J. O. Hertzler, *The History of Utopian Thought* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923).

cumvented and more responsible government instituted.³ Frenchmen, like Faguet and Le Bon, were critical of the democratic process;⁴ in the United States writers like H. L. Mencken in his *Notes on Democracy* (1926) enjoyed satirical criticism of democracy, while others objected to the lack of standards in democracy or the lack of intelligence in the electorate.⁵ Or, if we turn to an earlier period in American history, writers like John Adams and James Kent were fearful of the results that would follow the establishment in America of an unlimited democracy. Whatever the nature of these criticisms, however, the trend of history during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been toward an effort to realize the sovereignty of the people. Democracy seemed, indeed, to Tocqueville in 1835 when he wrote his *Democracy in America* a providential fact, that is to say, the universal trend was toward equality which meant to him democracy. It may be added that Tocqueville as an aristocrat had little taste for the new democratic age.

THE MODERN CRISIS

Democracy, therefore, has never been without its critics. The prophets of doom have always been shouting at the masses in the market place that they were moving toward destruction in the name of democracy. Yet, if the implication of all this anti-democratic criticism has been to support the government of the few, that criticism seemed never able to give a convincing program for the realization in practice of the government of the few. The criticism was negative, or it looked with nostalgia to an impossible restoration of the past. It could not propose a means of restoring the government of the able or the best. While

³ See Benjamin E. Lippincott, *Victorian Critics of Democracy* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1938).

⁴ Émile Faguet, *The Cult of Incompetence*, translated from the French (London: J. Murray Company, 1911); Gustav Le Bon, *The Crowd, A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1913).

⁵ See Irving Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924); N. J. Lennox, *Whither Democracy?* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1927).

certain groups have been proposed as candidates for the new ruling class, no general support for any program could be mustered. Thus the defenders of democracy have regarded criticism as a parlor luxury without much practical application to the triumphant march of the government of the many.

Today the situation has changed. The critics of liberalism have proposed, and in many instances established, regimes which negate the democracy of the last century and a half. Criticizing democracy is no longer a parlor game; it is part of the deadly conflict of politics. Those who speak against democracy today must accept responsibility for their words, for they are speaking for the regimes which in effective degree destroyed the popular system over large areas of the world. How did this change come about? An answer is hard to give, since any great transitional period in society is a complex result of even more complex causes. To state the importance of the crisis is less difficult; all intelligent minds know that it is great, and they know that the alternative to historic democracy must specifically be fought. The world crisis in regimes, the new world revolution as some say,⁶ may be with us for generations, and only at the end of the long crisis can we say what the result will be for the democratic system around which, for example, the American tradition has grown. Within democracy itself the divisions of purpose have been acute, but in the twentieth century all men of good democratic will have come together against the greater enemy.

One of the central political symbols and organizations of power in the anti-democratic regime is the elite. It is to this idea and practice that we must now turn. Against the sovereignty of the people stands the sovereignty of certain kinds of elites. That the elite should govern, the few and the putative best, is accepted by those who stand against the traditional order of free men in a free state, enjoying a free economy, *i.e.*, a "capi-

⁶ Herman Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1939); *The Redemption of Democracy* (New York: Alliance Book Corporation, 1941); Robert C. Brooks, "Reflections on the 'World Revolution' of 1940," *The American Political Science Review*, XXV (February, 1940), p. 1 ff.

talistic' or private property system. Naturally, as democracies have tended toward a balance of political and economic forces, of cooperation and compromise between groups, the new regimes (totalitarian or authoritarian as one will) have tended toward dominance in the control of the state and the economy, and they have substituted effectively suppression for cooperation and compromise. As Carl Schmitt has urged, the central idea of the "political" is the antagonism between friend and foe.⁷

A concentration of political and economic power can exist only if there is a strong ruling class, having organization and integration within itself sufficient to overcome the latent and always emergent opposition. The elite is, in the twentieth-century crisis, the name given to the new ruling orders, which in all soberness have been organized to such a degree of effectiveness that other and older oligarchies in most instances will hardly bear comparison. That the masses are called upon to support the elite makes little difference; the unorganized masses cannot do otherwise except at the peril of their lives. Up to the outbreak of war, in 1939, the mass revolution against the authoritarian states of Russia (1917), Italy (1922) and Germany (1933) had not occurred. It has not shown its force against the one-party dictatorship of China, against the regime in Turkey, Spain or other countries in Europe and South America which cannot be assimilated to the democratic ideal of the great powers of Western civilization. The existence of these regimes constitutes the democratic crisis, a crisis which may last for generations.⁸

What can one say of the nature of these new elitist and totalitarian regimes? In other words, what is the nature of fascism, whether in Russia, Germany, Italy or other countries? The words are full of theories, which we must mention briefly, though all of them imply some conception of the nature of historical movement and causation. None can deny, however, that the traditional democracies moved into the supreme conflict

⁸ See Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 4 volumes (New York: American Book Company, 1937-1941).

of war against fascism in 1939; the greater democracies have turned their effort against the greater and more efficient fascism of Germany, using all the enemies of Germany, such as Russia, in order to preserve the free society, if they may, that has been theirs.

Socialist and communist movements were the first victims of the elite in fascist Europe, and therefore the followers of Marx tried first to organize in order to stem the new authoritarian tide. The communist United Front and Popular Front of 1935-1939 sought to unite socialists of all sects against fascism, while the Popular Front was an effort to unite all non-Marxians in the crusade. From 1939 to 1941 Russia and Germany seemed friends and these efforts were quietly put aside. On the other hand, with the Soviet-German War of 1941, the Russians have turned to the capitalist democracies for help to save the Workers' Revolution of 1917. Marxians have said that the true nature of fascism is the reaction of capitalism in crisis; the war against fascism is a continuation of the old war against the bourgeoisie.⁹

For a time some democratic thinkers looked upon fascism as a weapon to be used primarily against the danger of the communist revolution. That conception has now changed, and the democratic, capitalistic societies, believe that fascism is against the ideal of a free economy; the denunciations of capitalism to be found throughout fascist literature have been taken seriously. On both the communist and the democratic sides, however, the argument has stressed the importance of ideology.

Another school is more interested in political process or pattern, and it has seen from the outset of warlike argument the similarity in oppression and tyranny between the Russian and the other totalitarian regimes. In passing, it may be said that all of these regimes, from Russia onward, have claimed to be truly democratic. Such uses of the term, however, cannot be accepted as they fall completely outside any reasonable historical context. If the importance of ideology in these regimes is denied, the process of authoritarian control becomes the focus of

⁹ See Melvin Rader, *No Compromise* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939). See Chap. VI especially, for a discussion of the elite.

attention. The regime is based on techniques of control, and these techniques are equally to be deplored in all regimes and all are equally undemocratic in the extent to which they are used.¹⁰ Whether the ideology of the regime is the Marxian conception of the new society as in Russia, the organic nation as in fascist Italy or the superiority of the Aryan race as in National Socialism, it is equally in contradiction with the Christian and democratic conception of the reasonable individual; and the techniques used by the elites in all these regimes go beyond the humane principle of compromise and democratic submission to the just decision of the people.¹¹

THE NATURE OF ELITIST THEORY

We must now turn to a more detailed examination of the conception of the elite in modern political theory. What does the word "elite" mean? It is a French word which has migrated into other modern languages. It means in general a select group or a select few. In comparative government the term applies, narrowly, to the party members in the single-party authoritarian states. These party members have shown their fidelity to the cause, be it communism, fascism or national socialism. There are two senses in political theory in which the term is ordinarily used, one of these senses being descriptive and the other positive, evaluative or normative.

ELITE AS A DESCRIPTIVE CONCEPT

The descriptive theory of the elite must be separated sharply from the normative, since in the former case it is merely, or seeks to be, a sociological or scientific conception. It is, in this view,

¹⁰ See Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, translated from the German (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936); Waldemar Gurian, *The Future of Bolshevism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1936); *Bolshevism, Theory and Practice* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932).

¹¹ See F. G. Wilson, "The Structure of Modern Ideology," *The Review of Politics*, I (October, 1939), pp. 382-399; "Political Suppression in the Modern State," *The Journal of Politics*, I (August, 1939), pp. 237-257.

merely a generalization drawn from the observation of the political and social behavior of men in organizations. Here we find the view expressed, like that of Bryce in 1909, that there is always in control a few leaders or rulers who may be called an oligarchy. The power of oligarchies may differ widely, just as their organization, closed or open, may vary widely. Likewise, the techniques of control may be variable and quite compatible with the democratic process, or, indeed, it may be argued that such is inevitably the nature of the democratic process itself. To say there is inevitably an oligarchy in well-organized groups does not condemn them; one might also say there is always a ruling class or order, as John Adams did, or, if one wishes, an elite that does in fact exercise the social or political power vested in the group as a whole. A sociological analysis of leadership does not mean the rejection of purpose or a denial of its effectiveness. It does not mean the denial of reform or social change. It may in fact be argued that a well organized leadership or elite is necessary if social reform or progress is to be achieved.

Such modern theories are realistic, that is, they seek to describe accurately the political process. They may be brought into the democratic system of sociology without making that system a denial of liberal government. These conceptions may advance the scientific explanation of what takes place in society. In a general sense elitist explanations may mean simply that social scientists have undertaken to see clearly just how the people attain any of their goals. To organize the people means to give them leadership. That leadership has laws or patterns which a sociological or Aristotelian examination of politics can reveal. From the democratic standpoint, to say there are elites or oligarchies in social, political and economic organization is not a denial of norms; it is a statement of conditions under which any norms must be realized. In the United States certain thinkers have accepted the concept of the elite in a descriptive sense, though it must be conceded that the term is European in origin, arising either from the French syndicalist thought of Georges

Sorel or the aristocratic and anti-democratic thought of conservatism.¹²

THE ELITE IN SOCIAL PROGRAMS

If we turn from more or less objective discussion of the notion of elites to the normative, polemical or programmatic side of the question, a variety of interpretations may be selected for treatment. But it is often difficult to separate the social program connected with the elite and the objective treatment of social organization. Continuous argument has prevailed as to whether Pareto's theory of the elite is an objective description of the facts of society or an argument for reactionary conservatism. In any case, many of the current elitist theories are associated with particular programs which are anti-democratic and authoritarian in implication. The nature of the elite approved or organized varies with the program or social theory involved.

Early in the present century Georges Sorel, then a leader of the revolutionary French syndicalist movement, insisted that the proletariat could attain its just ends only by the use of violence in the class struggle. Violence was, therefore, ethically justified and politically creative. Since the weapons of the workers are not properly parliamentary democracy and the bourgeois intellectualist theory of class reconciliation, the proletariat must

¹² See Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics, Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1936); Edwin Mims, Jr., *The Majority of the People* (New York: Modern Age Books 1941), pp. 248 ff., especially 269, 273; F. G. Wilson, "A Theory of Conservatism," *The American Political Science Review*, XXXV (1941), p. 29 ff. It cannot be argued that the sociological acceptance of the elite in the United States is very general.

Among European writers who have fathered the principle of the elite, primarily as a descriptive concept, one should mention Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, translated from the Italian (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939); Vilfredo Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, translated from the Italian, 4 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935). The "iron law of oligarchy" was argued in Robert Michels' *Political Parties*, translated from the Italian (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1915).

Mosca stressed the existence of a ruling class in all societies. He analyzed the forms this class takes, but he insisted strongly on the juridical defense of the individual. Pareto argued the existence of elites based on wealth and power; one of his main contributions is the theory of the circulation of elites. Michels' data relates to socialist parties in Europe before 1914; he shows the existence of oligarchies in what one might presume would be thoroughly democratic social structures.

turn to the inherent possibilities of the class. But the class war was a training school; each strike demarked the able leaders, or proletarian elite, from the masses of the workers. The socialist movement must be led by the elite stratum which is produced by the class struggle, while conversely the masses of the workers must be inspired by the myth of the general strike, which may indeed come, and which will overthrow the whole capitalist structure. It has been said that the ideas of Sorel are the key to contemporary political theory. But no one can deny that Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*, in which these ideas are ramblingly presented, is one of the lasting books of our time.

The elite principle runs through much of socialist thought since the days of Marx and Engels. Marx believed that the proletariat was to be the future ruling class, and he stated at one time, for example, that the industrial proletariat was the "natural trustee" of the rural producers or peasants.¹³ While the discussion of leadership has not formed a significant part of Social Democratic literature in Germany, or in the socialist thought of France and England, the Russian Revolution in 1917 changed this condition. For the Communist Party, *i.e.*, the Bolsheviks, in Russia has stressed the revolutionary role the proletariat will play in the organization of the new society once the revolution has been won. The most comprehensive statement of the problem of leadership in communist literature arises from the discussion of proletarian tactics,¹⁴ but more narrowly the party, *i.e.*, the Communist Party with its limited membership, has been regarded as the "best of the proletariat", the vanguard of the whole movement. Thus the party constitutes not only the center of the

¹³ This view was presented in *The Civil War in France*, Chap. III. See Karl Marx, *Capital, The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*, edited by Max Eastman (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), p. 406.

¹⁴ See V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (revised translation, New York: International Publishers, 1932); "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder (revised translation, New York: International Publishers, 1934). The whole literature of the United Front is, in a sense, a literature of the tactics of leadership.

governing order in the new society, but also the elite of the whole international proletariat.¹⁵

If we turn to the concept of leadership in the German National Socialist movement, a very different concept of the elite is presented. Instead of the broad foundation of the elite being the proletariat, it is the superior Aryan race. The folk state has implied the creation of institutions of leadership from this group, and under the Nazi regime strenuous training was provided for those who were to be the political leaders of tomorrow.¹⁶ It cannot be said that in Italy organization of leadership was as complete as in Germany. In the first place, while German thought emphasized the folk, the "state" was made the supreme symbol in modern Italian thought. Naturally, the Fascist Party in Italy assumed a large share in the control of government, though as in Germany bureaucratic organization was continued in effect as a competitor with the party.¹⁷ Training for leadership, culminating in party membership, characterized, however, the Italian program. A process of selection was operative from the early years in the schools until full positions of responsibility were attained by those best suited to the needs of the regime. A somewhat similar process must, it is believed, be characteristic of any revolutionary regime whether fascist or otherwise.¹⁸

¹⁵ See Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism* (New York: International Publishers Co., 1932), p. 106 ff. The Trotskyist criticism of the Stalinist regime in Russia has the same flavor. Trotsky has argued that the betrayal is in the ruling stratum, and that the Russian regime vitiated socialism by the creation of a privileged ruling class. See Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1937).

¹⁶ *The Nazi Primer*, translated and edited by Harwood L. Childs (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1938); Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, translated from the German (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939); Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München, 1934); Frederick L. Schuman, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (revised edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936).

¹⁷ Fritz Morstein Marx, "Bureaucracy and Dictatorship," *The Review of Politics*, III (January, 1941), pp. 100-117.

¹⁸ H. Arthur Steiner, *Government in Fascist Italy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1938); see Benito Mussolini, "The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism," *International Conciliation* No. 306 (1935); Alfredo Rocco, "The Political Doctrine of Fascism," *International Conciliation* No. 223 (1926).

Lawrence Dennis, an American fascist writer, has accepted the elite principle as the basis of the reorganization of society. See *The Coming of American Fascism* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1936); *The Dynamics of War and Revolution* (New York: The Weekly Foreign Letter, 1940).

that they are supporting the exploitation of the people or the denial of the best interest of the nation or social group.²²

The elite principle in Europe has, however, been chiefly acclimated in the anti-democratic and authoritarian systems. It has been deeply associated with the principle of the fascist dictatorship. As such it has been doctrinally connected with anti-liberal views, and with the practice of neo-Machiavellian politics. The theory of the elite in Sorel and Mussolini has been a justification of violence in politics and a phase of the use of totalitarian means. Here is, indeed, the modern version of Machiavelli's *Prince*. To many it is political realism gone to seed to such an extent that it is no longer political realism. The elite is the primary technique of the bloody revolution and its concomitant, the counter-revolution. It is reason of state, *ragione di stato*, gone lush.²³ The fundamental democratic criticism of elitism must be that it leads to a totalitarianism in means for the attainment of ends that are morally justified. Democracy must be a democracy of means if it is to be democracy at all. Dishonorable political means endangers the honorable political end.²⁴

Cutting across the theories of the modern world which justify the elitist conception of politics, other thinkers have been oppressed with the mass movement. To some the mass movement is the greatest danger faced by modern civilization, for it is upon the mass movement that the new elite can be constructed and from which it draws its sustaining political support. For there is contempt of the masses in the minds of the elite, as well as fear; there can be little love.²⁵

²² Cf. Othmar Spann, *Der Wahre Staat* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1931).

²³ Historically, dictatorship has been a perfectly good democratic and republican device for meeting emergencies. In the Roman Constitution provision was made for extraordinary power for short periods, and it was a consul who was given this power. See Carl Schmitt, *Die Diktatur* (München, 1928); Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson* (München, 1924); Frederick M. Watkins, "The Problem of Constitutional Dictatorship," in *Public Policy*, edited by C. J. Friedrich and E. S. Mason (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 324 ff.

²⁴ Cf. Max Lerner, Introduction, *The Prince and the Discourses* by Niccolò Machiavelli (New York: The Modern Library, 1940).

²⁵ José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, translated from the Spanish (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1932); Johan Huizinga, *In the Shadow of Tomorrow* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1936); Emil Lederer, *State of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1940).

In the United States we have had, perhaps, elites throughout our national history. However, Americans do not like the term except as descriptive of the social process, or as a means of analyzing the iniquity of world revolution which has swept out from Europe. We still regard the business man as important in our civilization, but we may, like Jefferson, turn to the education of the more competent as the solution of our difficulties. An elite based on education of the able may not in the end be undemocratic.²⁶

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²⁶ See John Gould Fletcher, "Education, Past and Present," in *I'll Take My Stand*, by Twelve Southerners (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1930).

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CHAPTER XIII

MILITARISM AND POLITICS

STUART PORTNER

The history of the twentieth century has been that of a world at war. The first forty years of the century have produced armed conflict devastating in the destruction of life and property beyond the proportion of any war in history. During these four decades, and at no time in history, have nations so armed themselves in the contest to impose their will upon other nations. A new idea of a "nation in arms" has become a reality as the entire political, economic, and military structures of the nation have been welded into a single integrated pattern to better enable the nation to attain victory at war.

Economic nationalism, territorial ambitions, and the desire for power have been as fundamental causes of the war that broke out in 1939 as they were of the first World War. The forces motivating action in Germany during Hitler's ascendancy have been different only in outward manifestation and in language to that impelling Germany to seek a more significant portion of the world's territory in the days of William II. Mussolini's attempt to gain an empire for Italy has been but a modernization of the play inspired and produced by Crispi half a century previously, and has resulted in a disaster even worse than the Italian defeat at Adowa in 1896.

The problems of international relations remain what they have been from time immemorial, and fundamental among these problems is the desire to maintain what one possesses, or to gain what one does not possess but covets. Armed force is merely the instrument employed by nations to gain and maintain power. As Clausewitz has indicated, war is but an extension of politics,