

# Nation More United Than in Past Crises

## Throughout the Revolution, in War of 1812, and During Mexican, Civil, and Spanish Wars Our Internal Dissensions Were Continuous

By ALLEN SINCLAIR WILL.

AMERICAN history has been full of surprises. One of the greatest, perhaps, is that we are embarking upon the present war more united as a people than in any war we have ever waged, except the brief conflict with Spain in 1898. He would have been a bold prophet who dared to predict this when it first became likely that America would be involved in armed conflict with the Teutonic Powers, but a glance over our past will be sufficient to prove it beyond a doubt.

In making this comparison, it is necessary to bear in mind that unity and disunity are relative terms. No nation has ever been unanimous in any modern war, and the proportion of dissent is the main element to consider. It is a matter of common knowledge, for instance, that from the fateful August day when Germany launched her armies against Belgium, France, and Russia, there has never been a moment when a large section of her people has not been ready to denounce the conflict openly as unjust and to demand its immediate end. Almost the whole mass of the German Socialist Party, it is believed, has actually shared this view, though only the minority Socialists have been continuously ready to assert it in the Reichstag and elsewhere. Vorwärts, the famous Socialist organ in Berlin, has challenged the Government at every turn, and, but for the sternest military repression in modern history, voices of dissent would have been greatly multiplied. At present a coalition of parties in the Reichstag, amounting to a considerable majority in that body, is openly insisting that the policy of conquest and annexation which brought on the war be disowned, and is eager to welcome peace, as Maximilian Harden said, from the Pope or anybody else who may bring it.

As for Austria, its war dissensions are too well known to need extended reference. Not since the beginning of the struggle has normal government in that heterogeneous empire been possible, and only the power of the Hapsburg military machine, strongly backed by Germany, keeps the mass of its internal division from breaking all restraint.

These conditions—in Germany a peace majority in the Reichstag and in Austria a mass of divergent elements—may be compared with the extraordinary approach to unanimity witnessed thus far in Congress at Washington.

The principal danger which foreign observers feared, as well as not a few at home, was open and effective resistance to the war by the Teutonic element in our population. It appeared inconceivable to many that the apparently numerous body of Germans and Austrians in America, deliberately incited by a propaganda organization headed by Dumba, as we knew a long while back, and by Bernstorff, as the letter recently disclosed by Secretary Lansing proves, would not be an obstructive force which would threaten to hamper the national Administration.

It is too soon, perhaps, to attempt a correct analysis of all the forces which have made this dreaded peril non-existent. For one thing, it is evident that the mass of these people had no disposition to take an attitude of open resistance, and for another that the Administration has shown no weakness and a great deal of tact in dealing with what was admittedly a delicate situation. At any rate, no real problem has grown out of this situation.

The I. W. W. and the People's Council may be classed as sporadic movements. The one is being hunted down by force and the other is being dissolved into impotency by the power of ridicule.

How different in the Revolution, which

was fought amid such divided councils that in some of the colonies it was more of a civil war than a war against an external power! John Adams was authority for the statement that "New York and Pennsylvania were so nearly divided—if their propensity was not against us—that if New England on one side and Virginia on the other had not kept them in awe, they would have joined the British." Pennsylvania, the locus of the Continental Congress and Independence Hall, was called by Timothy Pickering the "enemy's country." When Howe occupied Philadelphia it is well known that the elegant and affluent Tories there received him with such open-handed hospitality that the witty and practical Franklin observed that "Howe has not taken Philadelphia so much as Philadelphia has taken Howe." In Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland there were many thousands of Tories. They were in the majority in Georgia and South Carolina. The loyalists had no hesitation in asserting frequently that they constituted an actual majority of the people. They were particularly strong, naturally, among the conservative and property owning classes, the holders of vested interests and the clergy of the Church of England. Although Great Britain showed no special desire to encourage the enlistment of Tories in her armies, they were a numerous element at all times in the military forces which opposed Washington, and in a large part of the South the struggle was more Whig against Tory than American against Englishman.

At all times throughout the Revolutionary War, of course, an overwhelming proportion of the genius and initiative of the Colonists was on the side of

the Revolution, and the best historical opinion appears to be that fully two-thirds, if not more, of them desired full political independence. In England as well as America there were great differences of opinion, a large body of the English Whigs regarding the fight for liberty in America as their own fight, and fearing disastrous results to the cause of constitutional progress in their own country in the event of Washington's failure.

The divisions in the Revolution, however, were inevitable, and therefore not representative of the general current of our history, for all uprisings against an established order necessarily involve differences with classes which thrive or are complacent under the old order. Neither were the divisions in our brief war with France in 1798 representative, for it was to be expected that the republican-democratic opposition to that war would attract the important body of sentiment which was moved by affection for France based on her services to the Americans in the struggle for independence.

The war of 1812 was a truly national war, and here we may fairly begin an exact comparison. Indeed, it was practically ordered by a referendum, that goal of ultra-pacifists in these days, for the Congress which passed Attorney General Pinkney's terse formula "that war be and the same is hereby declared to exist" between the United States and Great Britain, was elected in 1810 on the direct issue of taking this momentous step if it appeared there was no other recourse. Every effort to obtain redress of grievances had been made before war was resorted to, and therefore solidity of opinion might have been expected when the conflict actually began.

New England, then a much greater proportion of the national mass than it is today, was not only strong in opposition to the preliminary measures, but remained in open discontent throughout. Massachusetts threatened nullification of the Jefferson embargo, and some of the extremists in that State would have welcomed secession. In Connecticut the Federalists were even more aggressive, and Governor Trumbull summoned the Legislature "to interpose their protecting shield between the rights and liberties of the people and the assumed powers of the general Government."

Studies by Henry Adams in the British archives show that Foster, the British Minister at Washington, was waited upon early in 1812 by leading Federalists, who visited him of their own accord, and conferred with him as to a "thorough amalgamation of interests between Great Britain and America." They urged that Great Britain should make no concession to the demands of President Madison, and seemed to think "that Great Britain could by management bring the United States into any connection with her that she pleased." These Federalists told his Majesty's Minister that if war came it would be short; and the Madison Administration would be overthrown.

Fancy a body of Republican leaders, after Germany's declaration of ruthless submarine war in February last, calling on Count von Bernstorff and presenting such suggestions!

New Englanders denounced the war in strong terms in June and July, 1812, encouraged by the fact that the Spring elections in their States had shown marked Federalist gains. The Governors of several States refused to call out their militia. In Baltimore there was a great riot, brought on by a mob's attack on a Federalist newspaper, and in the Maryland election which followed in October the Federalists won a notable victory, sending to Congress Alexander C. Hanson, one of the editors of the newspaper in question.

New England banks withheld subscriptions to the national loans. Although New England then possessed nearly one-third of the banking capital of the country, it subscribed during the war to less than \$3,000,000 of the loans, while the Middle States took \$35,000,000. Meanwhile, New England bought British drafts with specie sent to Canada, supplied beef to the British armies there, and subsistence to the British fleets off the coast, of which Madison complained in his message to Congress Dec. 9, 1813. Madison's mind, wrote William Wirt, was "full of the New England sedition."

Nor did New England's opposition abate as the war proceeded. The Hartford Convention, which was its climax, met Dec. 15, 1814, only nine days before the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the conflict, was concluded. The story of this convention, which was attended by delegates appointed by the Legislatures of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, besides unofficial delegates from New Hampshire and Vermont, is too well known to need telling here. A committee took its radical resolutions to Congress.

"Had Jackson been defeated at New Orleans," says Babcock in Volume XIII. of Hart's "American Nation," "or had news of the failure of the negotiations at Ghent been received, the overthrow of the Government at Washington and the establishment of a New England confederacy, and possibly an alliance with Great Britain, would seem to have been inevitable. The news of peace and of victory saved Madison, and perhaps the Union."

The Mexican war was violently opposed by the anti-slavery element, and

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was vehemently denounced, not only by that element but by many who did not favor the policy of national expansion, as an act of wanton and wholly unjustifiable aggression. Like the war of 1812, it was, in effect, submitted to a referendum. The Presidential election of 1844 turned almost wholly upon this issue. Polk's popular plurality was less than 40,000, and he did not have a majority of the popular vote, although his electoral majority was 65.

John Quincy Adams and twelve other members of Congress signed an appeal to the people of the free States in protest against the annexation of Texas, asserting that it would be identical with dissolution of the Union. The resolution for annexation passed the House of Representatives by the comparatively close vote of 120 to 98, and the Senate by 27 to 25. Congress was almost overwhelmed by the deluge of petitions against the admission of Texas as a slave State. Abraham Lincoln, then a member of the House of Representatives, was opposed to the war, but after it was begun he voted for the supply bills. Throughout the conflict there was no enthusiasm by the anti-slavery men for it, nor was any disposition shown in large sections of the North to enlist.

It is difficult to gather any correct impression from the average history of the civil war of the extent of the opposition in the North to beginning it or carrying it on. The Democrats, who were numerous in the North and had many Representatives in Congress, had no desire to invade the South, but insisted on means of conciliation to bring about a restoration of the Union. The "Copperhead" element, of which Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio was one of the most conspicuous examples, could not be wholly suppressed, even when suppression was attempted.

The dead in the New York anti-draft riots in July, 1863, were more numerous than those of not a few battles.

The climax of the anti-war movement came in the Presidential campaign of 1864, when the Democrats nominated General George B. McClellan for President.

The Democratic campaign was based on failure of the Lincoln Administration to bring about a reunion of the States by the methods it adopted. The success of that campaign was conditioned, therefore, on continued failure. While the Baltimore Convention which nominated Lincoln was in session, details came of the severe repulse at Cold Harbor, and before the month ended Sherman was beaten back at Kenesaw Mountain. But the turning of the military tide soon brought a political transformation.

While there was a long period of hesitation before embarking upon the Spanish-American war of 1898 for the freeing of Cuba, the blowing up of the Maine coalesced national sentiment so that there was no important opposition, especially as the fears of those who were against a war of conquest were allayed by the passage of the Platt amendment. Thus it may be said that in 1898, after nearly a century and a quarter of national existence, we were at last practically united in a resort to arms. The real opposition in this case came after the purchase of the Philippines and the acquirement of Porto Rico by the peace treaty had aroused the so-called anti-imperialists, who made their fight for Bryan in the Presidential campaign of 1900, thus, in effect, calling upon the American people to pass judgment upon the war after it was over. The verdict for McKinley at the polls settled the issue. Had the actual outcome of the conflict with Spain been anticipated, we should have had another divided House in the prosecution of the war.

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