CON

SHOULD AMERICA JOIN A MOVE FOR A FEDERAL UNION OF THE WORLD'S DEMOCRACIES?

by STUART CHASE

In a pamphlet published by the America First Committee, Mr. Chase, economist and author, voices the following opposition of any plan to involve the United States in the affairs of Europe:

"THE people of the United States are in possession of a workable pattern for community survival and well-being. The people of Europe, Asia and Africa are not. I believe that any attempt by the United States forcibly to impose a pattern on the Old World will not only fail, but almost certainly shatter the American pattern. This will leave the world without stability and without hope, anywhere.

"This is a very broad statement at a high level of abstraction. Let us bring it closer to earth. It is composed of four assumptions:

"1. That the United States enjoys a relatively stable culture.

"2. That communities in the Old World do not.

"3. That the United States cannot remodel and stabilize the Old World by armed force.

"4. That a serious attempt to do so will destroy the American pattern.

"One: Our relative stability is compounded of many factors — our continental size, our natural resources, our geographical isolation, our dominating position in the hemisphere, our democratic habits practiced by generations of pioneer ancestors. As a result of these factors we have few wars in the hemisphere, fewer armed revolts, no fortified frontiers, and good neighbors north and south. Our standards of living are higher than anywhere else in the world today. This does not mean that living standards are adequate for all classes of people; only that they are unchallenged elsewhere and are, in most areas, well above the line of starvation, despair and revolt.

"In the United States, citizens elect their leaders and have wide latitudes in the exercise of free speech, free press, free assembly, free worship and freedom from being pushed around by autocrats, land owners, gentlemen in colored shirts, and the secret police. They are not immune from being pushed around — witness the Negroes and the Okies — but relative to Old World citizens, they are freemen. Even in Britain, Sweden, Switzerland today, one has to do what the authorities tell one to do, or else.

"A major test of stability was the great depression of 1929, which presently caused Europe to fall apart, but only rocked without shattering the Americas. We have found a sound culture bed. From this base, rough as it is, great developments are clearly visible — the abolition of poverty, unprecedented improvements in health and energy, a towering renaissance in the arts; an architecture and an engineering to challenge the gods. Towards these ends we are groping, with firm ground under our feet. We are the New World. We are the hope of mankind. Our culture is not burdened with the terrible dead weights which the Old World must carry.

"Two: Countries in the Old World do not have this stability. Just because they are old they are vulnerable to the impact of high technology. Their instability hardly needs documentation. Look at any edition of any newspaper . . . Britain fighting heroically for her life, as customs centuries old are melted down beneath the bombs. The British Empire swaying on the brink. The obliteration of France in a shadow so black we almost forget it is there at all. The frozen communities of Belgium, Holland, Scandinavia, Switzerland. The murderous tension in the Balkans, with boundary lines snapping in all directions. The gutted shell of Spain. The Mediterranean as the new dead sea. The gory deadlock in China. Terror in Iran, Africa and the East Indies. A precarious stability depending on one man's will in Germany, Russia, Italy.

"Even in the best of times, Old World communities carry a load of unstable elements, largely lacking in the Americas. Consider the fractures implicit on a continent with twenty-five or more languages, tariff walls and currencies; with inadequate natural resources, with class divisions, violent ideologies, violent politics, bloody historical feuds. These cleavages were bad enough in the handicraft age. In the power age they make the culture unworkable. How many years, decades, will it take to steam-roller these differences into a stable pattern which can guarantee both goods and freedoms? Power age communities need to be continental in scope to fit an expanding technology. Hitler now announces a new order in Europe. God knows Europe needs it, but one wonders if Hitler can do more than set up a kind of vineyard on Vesuvius. It looks as if the choice in Europe was to give up either nationalism or technology. Crusades to restore the rights of small nations will crash

into the technological imperative, and vice versa. Can anyone resolve this crazy quilt but the people of Europe themselves? The British have not even suggested what they propose to do about it if they win.

"Three: The United States cannot solve the political and economic problems of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Indies by armed assault on their totalitarian leaders. Consider what is involved. First, a military adventure — and we cannot possibly equip ourselves for military adventures overseas before 1944 at the earliest — in which America takes on Germany, Italy and Japan with their smaller allies, and before the show is over perhaps Russia, Spain and France as well. Britain might be more of a liability than an asset in this adventure because of the extreme vulnerability of the British Isles. Pledged to defend this outpost, now flanked by enemy bases and ringed on the west by fleets of submarines, we should be severely handicapped in our efforts to make a frontal assault on the European, African or Asiatic mainland. If we confined our military effort solely to the defense of Britain, we might save the British Isles, and we might not. It would, I suspect, be a full-time job, and leave us little energy for the reduction of Berlin, Rome, Tokio, Madrid and Moscow.

"On the fantastic assumption that all these capitals were in our hands, what then? Our work would have just begun. Then we should have to find a social framework to fit some 1,500,000,000 people, burdened with the cleavages just mentioned, and say to them: "Take this and like it." We can be quite sure that many of them, perhaps most of them, won't like it. So then we might try to make them like it. One way would be to keep a few million American boys, armed to the teeth, in constant attendance to see that they like it. Another would be concentration camps. Another would be puppet governments with strings pulled from Washington.

"How long would this educational program take? How long should we be in establishing our new order in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Indies? And what if the blueprint turned out to be no good? Would the pattern we impose fit the revolutionary changes that are already far gone in those parts? Whom, by the way, would you nominate to prepare the blueprints — Mr. Walter Lippmann, Mr. Jesse Jones, Mr. Hoover? When people say we ought to go and help Britain knock out Hitler and restore democracy, the free market and the little nations, they apparently have no conception of what such a crusade entails. Their imaginations go riotously to the shooting of Hitler, and there they stop. I grant it is a satisfying picture, but unfortunately the removal of Hitler would be only a preliminary incident in the total task before us.

"Americans are fine, upstanding, enterprising folks. They could probably organize and defend the whole Western Hemisphere by giving their entire attention to the job. Or they might possibly win a stalemate peace for Britain which would preserve her shattered island and her honor. But I do not see how they can do what I have indicated above. Giving Britain her island and her honor, furthermore, settles nothing, with Europe and Asia still in totalitarian hands.

"Four: If Americans attempt this program, whether they knock out the dictators or not, they will most assuredly wreck their own New World pattern. As I said, we are an enterprising people. When we start a thing we like to finish it. We have never lost a war yet. With war once declared, or acts of war committed, there would be no end except victory or defeat — unless it were the utter exhaustion of both sides.

"The consequences to our culture of an all-out war abroad are simply told — M-Day, the liquidation of political democracy, of Congress, the Supreme Court, private enterprise, the banks, free press and free speech; the persecution of German-Americans and Italian-Americans, witch hunts, forced labor, fixed prices, rationing, astronomical debts, and the rest. We would become as a people tough, cruel and vindictive. Scientific research would go to pot. With the whole world on our hands, draining our life blood overseas, we would have no time and no desire to plan for the America of the future. Our pattern would be smashed beyond repair.

"If these asumptions are valid, what should be the foreign policy of the United States?

"1. Arm to the point where no Old World power or combination of powers will dare attack us.

"2. Link the Western Hemisphere into a self-sufficient economic unit, pending the time when the peoples of the Old World have achieved a stability which warrants cooperation with them.

"3. As a salute to a brave nation fighting against great odds, give Britain all the material aid we can spare from our defense requirements. The amount should be determined by technicians rather than politicians. Britain is not fighting our war. France was not fighting our war — neither were Holland, Belgium, Poland, Finland or Norway. European nations are fighting because their continental pattern makes no sense. They will go on fighting in this war, and in other wars, until they learn how to live peaceably together. We have learned this lesson on our continent. Our war, if it comes, must be to defend what we have learned."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

In an editorial in its issue of March 8, 1941, placed in the Congressional Record *of March 5 by Senator Bennett Champ Clark, Missouri, Democrat,* The Saturday Evening Post *voices the following criticism of union with Great Britain:*

"THERE is already a London-Washington axis, and there is in effect an Anglo-American military alliance against the aggressor in which we assume unlimited liabilities with no conditions, terms, or stipulations beforehand; but before going forth to war in Europe, actually, the American spirit demands above all a crusading theme. Defense is not a crusade. The thought alone of crushing Hitler is not enough. What would come after that? There might