

PSYCHIATRY

Prescription for Peace

Globalunacy can be avoided by curing national insanity. Only way of dealing with aggressive nations is through collaboration and agreements.

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

► THE MENTAL PATIENT who poses as Napoleon or God suffers from "delusions of grandeur" and we have no doubt that he is "crazy."

Nations suffer from the same sort of insanity. Germany under Hitler was one, Japan was another. For a good many years the governments claiming supreme sovereignty, or the king or emperor who claimed to be all powerful, have gotten away with it. But the world—and the scientists—are getting wise to such mental disorders of nations.

The mental patient with "delusions of grandeur" lands in a mental hospital—unless, like Hitler, he could succeed for a time in putting the idea over on his public.

In the nation, such delusions of power land a country in war.

Many other parallels between the behavior of nations and the warped attitudes and thinking that produce mental breakdown in the individual are found by Dr. Kenneth E. Appel, psychiatrist of the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania.

Nobody loves a hermit or a dictator; they are nearly always considered a bit queer. To keep his mental health, a man must be able to get along reasonably well with other men at home, in business, in his social life. He has to be willing to sacrifice some of his own personal interests for the sake of keeping his friends.

It is much the same with nations. They, too, must give up a certain amount of "supreme sovereignty" to preserve peace in the world.

Important Problem

This is one of the most important problems facing the United Nations Assembly today—perhaps it is the most important.

In reality, every nation, no matter how powerful, is dependent upon other nations. Even in war, it is necessary to have allies. A reasonable cooperation with other countries in an international organization is necessary for the protection of mutual interests and the control of

aggression in power-crazy nations.

Isolationism for the individual, Dr. Appel says, is a sort of mental suicide. For the nation it is "globalunacy." Dr. Appel, as a psychiatrist, has made a clinical study of this international insanity and has written a prescription.

The cause of a nervous breakdown, or neurosis, simply stated, is the feeling of helpless anger and futility that comes from trying vainly to apply the fixed habits and attitudes of childhood to the new situations of adult life. The child may overlearn his lesson when his mother teaches him that he must always be gentle, submissive and dependent on his parents' commands in the home. If the child does overlearn, he may find himself tragically unfit to face an adult world of business or war. If he cannot change to meet the new demands upon him, he will break.

New Ways of Thinking

Nations, too, Dr. Appel points out, face the necessity of developing new ways of thinking and dealing with other nations to fit the new conditions of a world containing the modern inventions of radio, the airplane, rocket, and the atomic bomb. If they fail to do this, the whole world faces catastrophe.

People are naturally conservative, he says; they feel more secure in following the "safe" old ways. And politicians and statesmen too often play upon this natural fear of the new and suspicion of the strange and foreign. The result is short-sighted isolationism and dangerous nationalism.

"New concepts, methods, and solutions must be developed to meet the new environment which modern technology has created for us," Dr. Appel declares in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. "Old methods will not solve new conditions. They lead to disaster with the individual, and with nations they lead to war.

"Modern technology has made us citizens of the world. Men at the opposite side of the earth are our neighbors. The airplane and the radio have made the traditional concepts of geographical borders antiquated. Borders and bound-

ary lines should become administrative and cultural, not power concepts."

Isolationism in patients is always considered by physicians as an unhealthy sign. No one can keep his mental health if he hides from other people and lives within himself. To keep mental balance you need to be with other people, to share your experiences with them, to learn from them and laugh or weep with them. The person who lives completely alone is likely to lose his grip on reality. He may begin to see or hear things that are not there, to develop unreasonable suspiciousness and cantankerousness, to act "queer."

So it is, Dr. Appel says, with nations. Any country needs contact with others. They need interchange of raw materials and manufactured goods as well as cultural give and take. An attempt to keep others out and live alone in self-sufficiency breeds suspicions, aggressiveness, and delusions of national grandeur. A nation, like an individual, can get to be touchy and cranky and spoiling for a fight. It is not a healthy state—this attempt to persist in horse-and-buggy international relations in an atomic age.

It is not just the patient who has become "fixated" on childish habits of thinking and attitudes, or the schizophrenic who withdraws from human contacts to live in a dream-world within himself, who has parallels in the public life of nations.

There is also the maniac patient with exaggerated ideas of his own knowledge or power. You may be able to think of international incidents brought to mind by this young man's case:

He had been brought up in an indulgent atmosphere. Both money and affection were lavished upon him by his parents who encouraged him in the idea that he was an extraordinary person. He became thoroughly convinced of his own powers and believed himself adequate for any situation.

When the great depression descended upon the country, he was going to save the nation and the world. So he conceived a grandiose scheme of granting unlimited credit to business in this country and to unfavored nations throughout the world. Lavish spending was to go along with this unlimited credit—a point of view which, Dr. Appel says, has not been unknown in our own political life. To keep his imaginary "pot of gold at



PRESERVING THE PEACE—A psychiatrist who has studied the world's "globalunacy" prescribes international collaboration as the only protection against insane nations. Here U. S. delegates leave for the United Nations Assembly where this problem is one of the most serious being discussed. Photograph by Acme.

the end of the rainbow" always showering wealth and the good things of life on the people, it was only necessary, this man felt, to ask Congress for appropriate legislation. It doesn't take a psychiatrist to see the connection between this impractical view of life and the fact that in childhood he had always gotten everything he wanted simply by asking his parents to give it to him.

The Government, to this man, was just a benevolent, indulgent mother standing always ready to hand out bread and molasses.

This phantasy or delusion was indulged to such a degree that nurses and drugs had to be employed to prevent him from imposing these world-saving ideas on others, and to restrain anger that resulted when he met with refusal. Finally a guardian had to be appointed to conserve his financial resources, and he was hospitalized.

Children universally like fairy tales and the comic strips in which Cinderella and Superman can accomplish anything by means of magical powers given them by a fairy godmother or a uniform.

Adults, if they are normal, outgrow these ideas. As they gain strength, and competency, they learn to depend upon hard work and hard thinking instead of

wishing to solve their problems. But those who are weak and incompetent do tend to cling to their childish ways. They may not actually cross their fingers, or wish on a star or carry a rabbit's foot, but they will still rely on asking favors of relatives and friends, or the church and the government. And they have a simple faith in the power of their own fantastic imaginings.

When statesmen have a similar disregard for reality and build grandiose schemes for a "new world order" in which they are going to conquer the world, wipe out whole peoples, control thought and establish themselves as supreme dictators, the insanity that results is costly not just to individuals but to the whole world.

How are such madmen and insane nations to be controlled? Dr. Appel has suggestions for this, too, drawn from his experience with mental patients.

"The only way of dealing with aggressive nations," he says, "is through realistic collaboration and agreements between other nations. This is collaboration and not isolationism."

And isolationism, Dr. Appel feels, can be overcome only when each nation faces realistically the actual limits of its own powers.

"The old idea," he says, "of sovereignty, namely, that no one can tell us what we must do or can do, that we are and will do what we please, is tragically refuted by the war. Actually, we cannot do just as we please.

"The old idea of sovereignty is much more represented by the realistic phrase, 'We will do what we can with existing limitations.' Practically, it has always been the latter, but we euphemistically and narcissistically use the former phrase when we are talking."

Freedom of individuals is always within limits provided by society. If a man imposes too much on the rights and interests of others, he will land in a court of law, in jail or in a mental hospital. If a nation imposes too much on the rights of other nations, it will land in war. Since other nations will usually band together against such aggression, the freedom of a dominating, power-crazed nation will ultimately be lost completely in defeat.

"Psychiatry teaches that only through the control involved in compromise and accommodation with his fellows can the individual achieve success and satisfaction—the same should apply to nations."

Science News Letter, February 9, 1946

Some varieties of *fungi* grow in bags created by themselves which, when full grown, burst to send thousands of spores floating through the air.

Some 30 firms in Belgium interested in the production of fuel or power are creating a scientific center to investigate the possibility of gasifying *coal* in the seam underground.

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and Howard T. Behrman, M.D.

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