

# Some of the Causes of Ancient and Modern Wars and Some of the Reasons for their Outcome

BY MAJOR GENERAL JOHN A. LEJEUNE, U.S.M.C., RET.

**I**N ALL probability, warfare is as old as the human race, having had its origin in the jungle, when man was as savage as the wild beasts that surrounded him. War was necessary, then, for his survival, including, as it did, not only the struggle of man for life and existence against the four-footed savage, but, also, against his primitive brother who competed with him for the possession of food, a dwelling place, or a mate, or who, for any other reason, aroused his envy, his covetousness, or his hatred.

At first, war was a combat between individuals, similar to the combat described in Genesis between Cain and Abel, in which Cain slew Abel and was branded with a mark on his brow which stamped him as the murderer of his brother. Already man had progressed to the point where human life was regarded as somewhat sacred, and the slaying of a man by his brother was deemed to be a crime.

Murder, however, although outlawed in the dawn of civilization by all peoples, notably in the Sixth of the Ten Commandments brought down by Moses from Mount Sinai and proclaimed as the law of God, still continues today, with more or less frequency, in every nation on earth.

Warfare between individuals, in all probability, was soon supplemented by warfare between families.

The family, at a very early date, became the unit of government and of defense and offense. The head, or patriarch of the family, ruled it and all the members of the family were banded together for the common defense and the common welfare. Animals lose the sense of responsibility for their offspring as soon as they are able to shift for themselves, but human mothers and fathers continue to care for and to attempt to guide theirs as long as they live. In this, the human savage, in all probability, was differentiated from the animal savage, not long after his creation. The family tie became stronger and stronger, and warfare between family groups occurred frequently in all stages of civilization.

Man's ability to organize and his executive capacity were powerful factors, too, in enabling him to survive in an environment in which he was constantly exposed to death by violence, by exposure, or by starvation. The family, therefore, unquestionably evolved into the clan, in an early era, and as such consisted, not only of the immediate family, but also of those related to the patriarch and their retainers. In the course of years, many of these clans increased in size to such an extent as to

become tribes, and, finally, when stabilized or localized, took on the character of states or nations. These clans or tribes were organized chiefly for protective purposes, and they waged almost constant warfare with neighboring units of the same kind. They fought for the exclusive use of hunting grounds, or for the control of fertile areas in which life could be easily sustained, or for the possession of grazing fields for their flocks and herds which they had gradually accumulated.

Man has always been restless and warlike, and has always sought new areas to explore and to conquer, but was, eventually, driven by the pangs of hunger, as the numbers in his tribe or clan increased, to stabilize for a while, so that he might cultivate the ground in order to provide a sufficiency of food to supplement that which he obtained by the chase or from his flocks or herds.

Many tribes of North American Indians had reached a partial state of stabilization when the Europeans first appeared in the New World. The males, however, still continued to wander in pursuit of game or of their human enemies, leaving the squaws at home to raise the children and the crops.

Probably a similar process was followed by the semi-savage tribes of Europe and Asia. Prior to the discovery of America, however, stabilization, localization, cultivation of the soil, and civilization had become the normal state of existence in large parts of Europe and Asia, and in certain parts of Africa and America.

Under these conditions, the inhabitants became less hardy and less warlike than their more primitive and more barbarous neighbors and, for self protection, built walled and fortified cities in which the farmers, the shepherds, the cattleherders, and all those dwelling outside the walls took refuge when attacked.

Necessity, too, drove the masses of the people to strenuous labor, much of it of a sedentary nature, and that fact as well as the danger from attack and the instinct for conquest brought about the organization of standing armies, while peoples engaged in trade over the seas were compelled to protect their argosies from attack by pirates, or by trade rivals, through the instrumentality of armed vessels which were the forerunners of modern navies.

The fertile valleys of the Nile and the Euphrates appear to have been the domiciles of the earliest civilized peoples. There the famous cities of greatest antiquity were located. There still remain the ruins of Ur, Babylon, Thebes, Memphis and many other centers of popula-

tion, which are now being excavated and explored by antiquarians, who are constantly finding ancient writings proving the existence there of highly organized states of society and of more or less efficient forms of government, but always there seemed to have hung over the people like a pall the sinister cloud of war.

Their kings, or other rulers, were chosen because of their military prowess, and wars between city states went on almost continuously. Most to be feared, however, were the warlike people of the forest or of the desert. Over and over again, we read of their conquest of the less hardy and more civilized peoples. When people addicted to the arts of peace came into conflict with those addicted to the art of war, the struggle almost invariably ended in the triumph of the warrior races.

The story was repeated over and over again in later years and it is so recorded in history. For instance, the warlike Greeks vanquished and destroyed Troy; Sparta, then Thebes defeated the less virile Grecian states; Philip of Macedonia with his war-loving followers conquered the entire Grecian peninsula; and his remarkable son, Alexander the Great, led the Macedonian cohorts to triumph after triumph in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Persia, and India.

Later on, the more virile Romans conquered Greece, as well as the great rival of Rome, the Semitic city state, Carthage, and extended their dominion over the Iberian Peninsula, Gaul, Britain, Egypt, Northern Africa, and a large portion of Asia; Roman Legions, too, crossed the Rhine and the Danube, and defeated the Teutonic tribes east and north of these rivers, but their possession of that area was uncertain and temporary.

Finally, owing to the decadence of the Roman people, the semi-civilized Teutonic tribes drove back the Roman Legions and overran, conquered, and occupied the European provinces of the Western Empire. The Angles and Saxons and the Danes occupied Britain, the Franks and the Norsemen conquered Gaul, the Goths and the Visigoths took control of Spain, the Lombards and kindred tribes harried Italy, and finally, the Western Roman Empire was erased from the maps of the world.

In addition, there were many other invasions of the civilized nations of the world by semi-barbarous tribes such as those which were ruled by Attila and Genghis Khan. The remarkable military successes of the Mongol hordes under the leadership of Genghis Khan and his successors brought nearly all of Asia, including the civilized peoples of China and India, under their rule, and the Great Khan at the head of a puissant host vanquished the armies of civilized Europe and penetrated to the very heart of that continent.

Gradually, in the course of centuries, nations were erected on the ruins of the Roman Empire. Their formation, however, was a bloody process. Innumerable wars occurred, not only between those nations, but, also, between the feudal lords of the same nation, and between the kings and their own subjects.

Religion, likewise, played a prominent part in the Old World in the shedding of human blood from the dawn of history.

A classical example is described in the Bible. I refer to the migration of the twelve tribes of Israel from

Egypt to Palestine and the wars which they waged for the possession of the "Promised Land."

Moses, the leader of the migration, was reared and educated at the Court of Egypt, but his sympathy and his heart were with his enslaved people, and he determined to effect their liberation, their migration, and their establishment in the "Promised Land."

His people, however, were ignorant, superstitious, and cowardly. Having been slaves and ghetto dwellers for a long period of time, they knew naught of the lore of the wilderness or the desert, naught of the use of weapons, naught of the art of self-government. Many of them had long since abandoned the pure and simple worship of Jehovah and had become addicted to the superstitions and idolatry of the Egyptians. In their abject state, they preferred the misery of their then condition to the suffering and the danger which would confront them should they undertake an escape from Egypt. On the other hand, their Egyptian masters were loath to give up the slaves who labored for them so efficiently and so industriously.

Moses, himself, stood in need of preparation for his mission of leadership. This he obtained by several years of study and meditation in the wilderness or the desert. Doubtless, he improved the opportunity, too, to familiarize himself with the country to be traversed, the location of water holes, water springs, and food supplies, the feasible routes between the two countries, and the conditions, military and otherwise existing in the "Promised Land."

On his return to Egypt, two exceedingly difficult tasks confronted him. The inertness, the ignorance, and the fears of the Israelites had to be overcome, and, in addition, it was necessary to influence the rulers of Egypt to give their consent to the departure of the enslaved race.

These almost insurmountable obstacles he was, finally, enabled to surmount by the exercise of his extraordinary ability and his phenomenal knowledge of human psychology. In all history, there is no clearer demonstration of the truth of Napoleon's dictum that in a great crisis, *the man is everything*.

Moses led a mob out of Egypt but, after holding his followers in the wilderness for forty years, while he stimulated their religious spirit and racial esprit and prepared them for warfare and self-government, he died in sight of the "Promised Land" and his successor, Joshua, led a warrior race into the "Promised Land" of which every man and every woman except Joshua had been born and reared in the wilderness.

It is not astonishing, therefore, that they should have decisively defeated the tribes then in occupation of the "Land which flowed with milk and honey," destroyed their cities, and ruthlessly butchered their men, their women, and their children. Religious fanaticism, combined with the toughening process they had undergone, made them invincible in battle and merciless in dealing with the defeated foe.

For the next example of religious warfare, we will pass from B.C. to A.D., or more specifically from Moses to Mahomet.

Mahomet, an illiterate Arabian camel driver, succeeded

*(Continued on page 75)*

signals to be employed and give the equipment each man is to carry. Dismiss your patrol.

(2) Assemble and inspect your patrol. Give each man his training block.

(3) Execute your mission. Show how you locate and record any data regarding gaps in the enemy wire. Return to your own trench.

Problem No. 4. — (Fourth Night) — RAIDING PARTY.

*Situation:* From the data obtained in problem No. 3 you are assigned eighteen men beside yourself as a raiding party with the mission of raiding the enemy line and capturing and bringing back an enemy prisoner.

Requirement: (1) Assemble and instruct your party. Dismiss.

(2) Assemble and inspect your party. Assign each man his training block.

(3) Execute your mission and return to your own lines.

Problem No. 5.—(Fifth Night)—AMBUSH.

*Situation:* From the data obtained in problem No. 3 and from other information available it is determined that enemy night patrols of approximately eight to ten men are habitually using the gaps which were discovered in their wire. You, with nineteen of your men, are assigned the job of ambushing an enemy patrol which is expected to pass through a designated gap tonight.

Requirements: (1) Assemble your patrol and issue the necessary instructions. Dismiss.

(2) Assemble and inspect your party. Assign each man his training block.

(3) Execute your mission and return to your own lines.

A series of combat problems has been outlined above but a parade, guard mount, orderly duty and a thousand and one other things that marines are supposed to know and do well can be worked out on this board.

The "picture works the prob." On the combat board a howitzer man actually sees and does what he will see and do in the field. A private in the rear rank of an infantry squad figuratively grabs himself by the neck when he grasps his training block. Looking at the picture on the board he says and does what he will say and do in the actual situation on real ground.

## SOME CAUSES OF ANCIENT AND MODERN WARS

(Continued from page 17)

in creating a religious movement among the Arabs which gained so rapidly in momentum that, in a comparatively short period, his fanatical followers were able to conquer and to proselyte nearly all of Asia. They also carried the "Crescent" in triumph to northern Africa and across the straits of Gibraltar into Spain and Portugal. After bringing nearly all the people of that Peninsula under subjection, a powerful Saracen army invaded France and reached the great plain south of Tours, where they were overwhelmed in battle by the hosts of Christendom under the leadership of Charles Martel, the illegitimate half brother of the King of the Franks.

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This decisive victory probably saved Europe from becoming Moslem, and so heartened the Spaniards that after a state of constant heroic warfare extending almost to the discovery of America, they finally were successful in expelling from Spain the Moorish King Boabdil and his followers.

Farther east, the militant Moslem Turks ultimately succeeded in vanquishing the Eastern Empire and in occupying its capital city, Byzantium, and all of the territory south of the Danube, including Greece and the adjacent islands. Even today, St. Sophia is a Mohammedan mosque and the authority of the present ruler of Turkey in Asia extends over Constantinople, Adrianople and a small portion of the European hinterland.

The successes of the Moslem Saracens in the Holy Land eventually brought on another series of religious wars, known as the Crusades.

Christendom having been thoroughly aroused by the fervid eloquence of Peter, the Hermit, a great evangelist, made one mighty effort after another to reclaim the sacred places of the Holy Land from the impious control of the Mohammedans, and religious fanaticism was thus, again, responsible for repeatedly drenching the ancient home of the Israelites and its approaches with human blood.

Not content with religious wars, the nations of the Old World engaged almost constantly in wars from other causes against each other. Wars of succession or dynastic wars were frequent, as were wars for the annexation of adjacent territory, wars for the possession of newly discovered areas, and wars of the strong against the weak for the purpose of subjugating them and destroying their independence. Civil wars, also, were frequently waged, and these increased in number and in violence when Martin Luther and his Protestant contemporaries hurled the javelin of Protestantism full in the face of the Established Church.

In fact, from one cause or another warfare continued almost without cessation in Europe until after 1815, when with the exile of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte to the Island of St. Helena there came a period of peace.

After Waterloo in 1815, the civilized nations of the world seemed, for a time, to be war weary and to be anxious to heal the wounds of war and to cultivate the arts of peace.

This war weariness, however, gradually vanished with the death of the veterans of the wars of the Napoleonic period, as the new generations which replaced them, to whom international combats were unknown experiences, were eager to undertake what they regarded as man's greatest adventure.

The United States and Mexico led off, and were soon followed by Great Britain, France, Turkey, and Russia in the so-called Crimean War. Then there occurred the brief conflict between France and Austria which ended with the battle of Solferino.

Then came the bloody war between the States in our own country. Following very soon after it were the Prussian-Austrian, the French-Prussian, and the Turkish-Russian wars.

Thereafter for more than a decade the world was free

of major combats. Then there came in rapid succession the Chino-Japanese, the Grecian-Turkish, the Spanish-American, the British-Boer, and the Russian-Japanese wars.

Europe was once more in a ferment. National and racial jealousies, commercial rivalries, military and naval competitions, lost or unredeemed territories, offensive and defensive alliances, territorial acquisitions—all these pointed to the occurrence of a major catastrophe. Minor fires such as those in the Balkans were, at least, partially extinguished without becoming a great conflagration, but many embers continued to smoulder.

Most men and women in America, however, and many in Europe refused to believe that another general conflict would be precipitated.

They blinded themselves to the conspicuous signs which they should have been able to read.

They did not face the facts, but calmed their fears by the repetition of parrot-like shibboleths such as: A major war is unthinkable, the rulers of civilized nations would not dare to permit a conflict whose consequences could not be foreseen, the people would revolt rather than go to war, the laboring classes would decline to fight each other, the cost of a modern war would be so great as to bankrupt the participants therein within a few months, the great bankers and other financiers would refuse to finance such a war, etc., etc.

Americans deemed themselves secure, and with the exception of a few, felt certain that the oceans which separated their country from the Old World would serve as effectual barriers to our being drawn into participation in such a war.

Suddenly, in the midst of all this futile discussion, there was a shot fired by an obscure man, in an obscure town, of an obscure province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which killed a Prince.

Ominous quiet prevailed for a month, then the explosion came.

Ultimatums, mobilizations, hysterical attempts at eleventh hour intervention, hostile acts, invasions, declarations of war, battles, death, and destruction followed each other in rapid succession, and the world endured more than four years of unprecedented agony.

The cost in treasure and in life has not yet been accurately estimated. It was prodigious, it was appalling, and the nations involved in it have, as yet, scarcely reached the convalescent state.

In spite of this, hostilities have since been carried on in various parts of the world almost continuously—Greece and Turkey, China and Japan, Italy and Ethiopia, Spain, and now, a major European War is in progress.

For some months, there had existed a serious controversy between Germany and Poland concerning Danzig, and the so-called corridor connecting Poland with the sea. That controversy, of late, has rapidly become acute, and on September 1, 1939, the German armies invaded Poland, and in about two weeks they defeated the Armies of Poland and occupied the western part of that country. The Russian Armies have occupied the eastern part.

On September 3, England and France declared that a state of war automatically existed between those coun-

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tries and Germany, in consequence of the attack on Poland by the German armies. All the other nations, including Italy, proclaimed their neutrality.

What does the future hold in store for the world? Will warfare continue to be one of man's chief occupations, as in the ages that have gone by? What should be done by civilized people to prevent, or at least to make less frequent the coming of this, the most terrible of scourges?

The obstacles to be surmounted in the quest for permanent peace are, at best, well nigh insuperable.

The sketchy summary of the history of warfare which has just been given indicates that men individually and collectively are essentially pugnacious and combative. They seem always to stand ready to defend what they have, or to take what they want when they want it.

The League of Nations, which was intended to settle international disputes and to maintain peace, has become powerless, owing to the failure of the United States Senate to ratify the Treaty which created the League and owing to the subsequent withdrawals of Japan, Germany, and Italy from membership in the League. All nations, including the United States, have been, for some time, increasing their armies, navies, and air forces so as to be in readiness for any eventualities.

The United States has used every influence at its command for peace but all of its efforts were of no avail. Nobody knows how long the present European War will last, what additional nations will become involved in it or what the result will be.

It is clearly the duty of the United States always to be peace-loving but not supine; enlightened but not decadent; merciful but not lacking in virility; helpful to the world but not afraid of the world; just and honorable in all dealings with other nations but determined not to submit to injustice; earnestly advocating the peaceful settlement of all difficulties, but always fully armed and prepared to submit the decision to the arbitrament of arms should it be found that recourse to that tribunal cannot safely or honorably be avoided; anxious for peace and slow to wrath, but, having drawn the sword, to throw the scabbard away until the United States armed forces have decisively defeated the enemy forces.

**BIRTHDAY OF THE CORPS**

*(Continued from page 11)*

It's Tommy this and Tommy that,  
And "chuck 'im out, the brute!"  
But it's "savior of his country"  
When the guns begin to shoot.

The British Marines, by the way, have an enviable record for loyalty during mutinies in the navy. Thank God we have never had such an experience, but if we do we know the Semper Fidelis on the bronze ornament means what it says. We have a legend also from our British cousins-in-arms of the marine detachment that stood at present arms while the ship went down. I question the good sense of the man who ordered this, but I *must* admire