

Text of Dorothy Day's Address to the Liberal-Socialist Alliance

in New York City -- December 8, 1941

There is now all this patriotic indignation about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Japanese expansionism in Asia. Yet not a word about American and European colonialism in this same area. We, the British, the French, and others set up spheres of influence in Asia, control national states -- against the expressed will of these states -- and represent imperialism in the Orient. We dictate to Japan as to where she can expand economically and politically and we declare what policy she must observe. From our nationalistic and imperialistic point of view we have every right to concentrate American military forces in the Philippines, confronting Japan at her front door. Were Japan to face us from Cuba what would be our reaction? If the United States insists upon a colonialist policy in Asia then this nation must be prepared for a militaristic backlash. . .

I share my deepest sympathy with the parents, wives and friends of the American military forces that perished at Pearl Harbor. But I count these young men as victims, tragic victims, of a blindly mistaken American foreign policy . . .

Hitler is a madman; however, our American State Department is quite aware that -- under treaty -- Germany must declare war on any power which moves against the Empire of Japan. Need I remind you that the Fascists are allies of the Russian Communists? What action will Moscow take in support of Germany? Are we actually prepared to confront a German-Russian alliance? But let us suppose that the Soviet Union does nothing at the moment at least. Is it not probable that Hitler will observe her own dicta and move "to the East where expansionism can readily be accomplished"? How then can the United States justify a military alliance with Stalin whose blood baths have rivaled Hitler's purges? So we are faced with a dilemma: either we go to war against

a German-Italian-Russian-Japanese alliance -- a suicidal undertaking -- or we become Russia's defender -- an ideological crime.

But I waste rhetoric on international politics -- the breeding grounds of war over the centuries. The balance of power and other empty slogans inspired by a false and flamboyant nationalism have bred conflict throughout "civilized" history.

And it has become too late in human history to tolerate wars which none can win. Nor dare we quibble about "just wars." Well did Pius X tell us that "in any conflict both sides claim moral justification. We find the term repugnant and impossible to define. All wars are, by the very nature, evil and destructive."

It has become too late for civilized people to accept this evil.

We must make a start. We must renounce war as an instrument of policy. We must affirm that there will be no more war. Never -- but never -- again.

Thoreau bid us to make a stand, Markand denounced war as insanity, Pius X could find no definition for a "just war." Evil enough when the finest of our youth perished in conflict and even the causes of these conflicts were soon lost to memory. Even more horrible today when cities can go up in flames and brilliant scientific minds are researching out ultimate weapons.

War must cease. There are no victories. The world can bear the burden no longer. Yes we must make a stand.

Even as I speak to you I may be guilty of what some men call treason. But we must reject war: yes we must now make a stand. War is murder, rape, ruin, death: war can end our civilization. I tell you that -- within a decade -- we will have weapons capable of ending this world as we have known it.

War is hunger, thirst, blindness, death. I call upon you to resist it.
You young men should refuse to take up arms. Young women tear down the
patriotic posters. And all of you -- young and old -- put away your flags.

It is too late for nationalism.

It is too late for war.

War is rapine, bloodshed, brutality, death.

It is too late for this.

It has always been too late.

Let us make an end of it.

War will be no more.