

## EDITORIAL

### IMPACT OF WAR ON CIVILIAN ANESTHESIA

WAR brings not only many problems of anesthesia for the armed forces but also the problem of the supply of anesthetists for the civilian population. Professional anesthetists are being called into military service. Residents for training in anesthesia are available either in reduced numbers or not at all. Internships are limited to a year or less, with consequent shortening of the time allotted to anesthesia. One result of these changes is that in centers of war industry a much reduced number of anesthetists must care for an increased civilian population. This in turn calls for numerous readjustments. Part-time and full-time anesthetists who are not working to their utmost capacity would help the war effort by moving to new locations where their services may be urgently needed. In any small community to be thus left without an anesthetist, one or more general practitioners may first be trained in the rudiments of anesthesia. Well organized departments of anesthesia have offered brief residencies to the medical personnel of the armed forces, to aid in the development of military anesthesia while temporarily filling the vacancies in their own over-worked personnel. Many an institution that has taken pride in an entirely professional department may, on the other hand, find it to their best interests to fill the vacancies by enlisting the services of members of the house or visiting staff who have heretofore had no special training in anesthesia.

The modern Mars suppresses some of man's highest ideals, and the end is made to justify the means. Straightforwardness and truth yield to the cunning and deception which are absolute necessities of military strategy. Construction gives way to destruction, which becomes the most important immediate goal of mankind. This in turn demands that peace-time efforts to reduce mortality and morbidity be subordinated to preparations for wholesale destruction of human life. Anesthesia likewise must be ready, if occasion demands, to sacrifice temporarily its ideal of professional anesthetists to the immediate necessity of training and using the best of whatever personnel may be available.

The war is said to be but one phase of a world-wide revolution—political, social, and economic. These changes are almost certain to alter ethical standards. In this country at least, a powerful trend toward the dependence of the individual and the state upon a strong central government and toward the submerging of individual initiative to uniformity and security long antedated the outbreak of military hostilities. No reliance can be placed on any prediction concerning the future status of things industrial, economic, religious, moral, or social.

Medicine may even become a mere technical vassal of a powerful autocratic government, or it may be able to better its past freedom and independence of development. In common with the varied citizenry of our country, some anesthetists hope or strive for a return to individualism, others for more government-planned security and regimentation, some for increasing nationalism, with its "America First" slogans, and others for a federation of nations, ultimately worldwide. Whichever way the revolution turns, no one can expect to hold out against the new order indefinitely. But while working and fighting for the kind of civilization he wants, every anesthetist will be swept by the tide of war and revolution, and the specialty must adapt its concepts of ethical practice to the necessity of the hour.