

# EDITORIALS

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## 1943—A Stern and Terrible Year!

*The dawn of 1943 will soon loom red before us and we must brace ourselves to cope with the trials and problems of what must be a stern and terrible year.*

—PRIME MINISTER CHURCHILL.<sup>1</sup>

HUMILIATED BY PEARL HARBOR, the greatest disaster in our history, most Americans entered 1942 in a fighting mood. Isolationists were silenced, not by logic but by Japan. We learned, and quickly, that we cannot live alone. By the end of January an American Expeditionary Force was in Northern Ireland.

Army and Navy nurses, on duty at what had always been considered desirable stations in Hawaii and the Philippines, lived up to the finest traditions of the profession when death rained from the skies and when supplies were cut off from the Philippines.

By the end of the year it could be said that "the sun never sets on the new American Expeditionary Force"; thousands of nurses have been safely transported over the seven seas to care for our men in hospitals behind the battle lines.

Plans conceived in January for combining British and American forces culminated in the amazingly successful invasion of North Africa in November by "the largest military landing expedition in history." During all those months there had been much talk of "a second front" in Europe, but little conception of how or where it could be brought about. As Arthur Krock has so ably reported in the *New York Times* for December 11, 1942:

<sup>1</sup> In a victory speech broadcast to the world, November 29, 1942.

The forces that left Britain went 1,000 miles into the Atlantic before turning back toward North Africa, and from America the troops traveled 3,000 miles by sea. At different points the ships separated so that the expedition might appear at fixed points off the coast, as it did, ready to start landing within five minutes of the time selected two months previously.

In our rejoicing over that brilliantly successful strategy, we tend to forget that the real test in that theater of war is still to come. We forget, too, as we rejoice in the present successes of our forces in the Pacific, that they are small as compared with the quick and enormous successes of the enemy in the months following Pearl Harbor. The wishful thinking of individuals, who stubbornly hold fast to a belief in a short war, can sabotage national effort. So can thoughtlessness. A representative of the government, speaking recently of wartime controls, said:

There are few wilful slackers in America. There are quite a number of thoughtless slackers, and the quickest way to put them into line is not to put them into jail but by our example to put them to shame.

When President Roosevelt proclaimed that both Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day should be days of prayer, he recommended that we bear in mind the great Twenty-third Psalm. Then, inspired with faith and courage, Americans would "turn again to the work that confronts us in this time of national emergency."

## A Three-point Program for '43

MILLIONS of our men have given up their freedom for the duration, and millions more will do so before the end of the year to save, for us all, the right to individual liberty. They are meeting the highest and hardest test of citizenship and doing it magnificently. So are thousands of Army and Navy nurses, but the Army Nurse Corps is short 5,000 nurses now. Both it and the Navy Nurse Corps will need many thousands more before the year is out.

The challenge of 1943 is to every nurse! The individual alibis we shall have to live with hereafter will be extremely uncomfortable if we make narrow or selfish decisions now. With all other citizens we nurses will have to adjust to an increasingly Spartan way of life. We shall have a great opportunity to help others make necessary adjustments, but the spirit in which we meet our own problems will have the greater influence.

Thanks to the nurses of Pearl Harbor, Bataan, and Corregidor, the profession has a place of honor in national esteem; and the nurses of Boston have recently given a reassuring demonstration of spirit, skill, and administrative efficiency of which the profession may well be proud.

The three-point program (page 8) recommended for the guidance of the profession in the perilous days ahead is not new. What is new is the extreme urgency with which it is presented now.

### 1. *The economic and effective utilization of all available professional resources.*

The Red Cross is expediting its recruitment program and relieving the Army Nurse Corps of some part of its burden by evaluating the credentials of all applicants. Every enrolled Red Cross nurse is urged to return her annual questionnaire at once. The armed forces

must have the nursing service they need. Less would be unthinkable.

Every nurse is urged to participate promptly in the National Survey by returning the postcard questionnaire the very day on which she receives it. Here undoubtedly is a source of hidden power. As this is written, representatives of state boards of nurse examiners are conferring in New York City on wartime methods of expediting the licensure of migratory and inactive nurses.

### 2. *The use of auxiliary nursing personnel for every function not requiring nursing skill.*

Many of us have learned to appreciate Red Cross volunteer aides and other auxiliary workers in the past year. Wise use of such service calls for clear perception of values, for administrative skill, and good teaching. That the results in service and good will more than justify the effort was effectively demonstrated during Boston's trial by fire.

### 3. *The preparation of increasing numbers of student nurses.*

No other unit of the profession's wartime program has been more highly organized or so generously implemented as that of the Recruitment Committee of the National Nursing Council. Nonetheless, recruitment lags. Can it be that the apathy of nurses themselves is in some way responsible? Young people respond to enthusiasm. Do they encounter real enthusiasm about nursing except from recruitment platforms? Young people are responsive to faith and idealism even when seeking information about practical realities.

Some schools seem to have been neither energetic nor imaginative about adjusting to the faster educational tempo that must be maintained if the profession is to meet its obligations. No one pattern of acceleration is applicable to all schools. The government urges every school to give thought to the Recommendations on page 8. The National League of Nurs-

ing Education and the National Nursing Council for War Service stand ready to give assistance.

The profession enters the new year with heavier burdens than it has ever had. It also has far more powerful friends and can count on more assistance than ever before. But each and every nurse must accept the challenge of '43. Otherwise the Allied Nations will win the war, but we shall have lost the soul of the profession.

## Reassurance!

MANY PERSONS wonder what will happen to civilians now that nursing staffs are being reduced to meet the need of the military services. One answer to the question is found in the magnificent way in which nurses and volunteer aides responded on the night of the Cocoanut Grove night club fire in Boston on November 28.

Most of the patients were taken to the Boston City and Massachusetts General Hospitals. Fortunately, one of the hospitals (see page 4) which had been designated by the Office of Civilian Defense as a base hospital for wartime emergency had a working plan which included keeping forty nurses on call at night during week-ends. These nurses responded instantly as did 225 Red Cross nurse's aides who not only did routine jobs but, under graduate nurse supervision, gave individual care to the more seriously ill victims. Aides were also helpful in identifying the dead.

However, the need for additional registered nurses was imperative. Patients were suffering from severe shock and serious burns. They needed the best professional nursing care; morphine, blood plasma transfusions, and sulfa drugs had to be administered.

Victims were still being carried from the charred structure of the Cocoanut

Grove when the Boston Committee on Red Cross Nursing, with Ethel Inglis at the helm, went into action, recruiting and assigning the additional nurses needed by the hospitals. Recruiting in the middle of the night was no easy job.

Since the Committee had already combed Boston's nursing population for nurses for military service, almost no Red Cross First Reserves were available. Nevertheless, the Committee was able to recruit three hundred and fifty Red Cross nurses, ninety of whom later served on salary. Many were older retired nurses—the much publicized “hidden nurses”—who had recently completed refresher courses in preparation for potential war disaster. Other hospitals loaned staff members; some suspended operating activities for several days so that more staff members might volunteer for disaster. Nurses from the Community Health Association and from the graduate courses at Boston University and Simmons College volunteered personally. The nursing agencies likewise offered their services. Alumnae associations arranged with their members to relieve staff nurses assigned to the two hospitals; practically all nurses gave up off duty time.

As hospitals and nursing agencies resumed normal activities, the Red Cross Committee continued to supply necessary nurses and to replace volunteer nurses with paid service. Two weeks after the fire, fifty-three Red Cross nurses were still on duty. Due to complications, including pneumonia, resulting from injuries and exposure, necessary additional constant nursing care will be needed over a long period. The Boston tragedy has proved that nurses should not hesitate to volunteer for the Red Cross War Reserve because they are “afraid the folks back home will be neglected.” Where there's a single nurse, there's a way!