

America and the Great War, 1914-1919

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**August 19, 1914: President Wilson’s Declaration of Neutrality**

The effect of the war upon the United States will depend upon what American citizens say and do. Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned. The spirit of the nation in this critical matter will be determined largely by what individuals and society and those gathered in public meetings do and say, upon what newspapers and magazines contain, upon what ministers utter in their pulpits, and men proclaim as their opinions upon the street.

The people of the United States are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war. It is natural and inevitable that there should be the utmost variety of sympathy and desire among them with regard to the issues and circumstances of the conflict. Some will wish one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle. It will be easy to excite passion and difficult to allay it. Those responsible for exciting it will assume a heavy responsibility, responsibility for no less a thing than that the people of the United States, whose love of their country and whose loyalty to its government should unite them as Americans all, bound in honor and affection to think first of her and her interests, may be divided in camps of hostile opinion, hot against each other, involved in the war itself in impulse and opinion if not in action.

Such divisions amongst us would be fatal to our peace of mind and might seriously stand in the way of the proper performance of our duty as the one great nation at peace, the one people holding itself ready to play a part of impartial mediation and speak the counsels of peace and accommodation, not as a partisan, but as a friend.

I venture, therefore, my fellow countrymen, to speak a solemn word of warning to you against that deepest, most subtle, most essential breach of neutrality which may spring out of partisanship, out of passionately taking sides. The United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name, during these days that are to try men’s souls. We must be impartial in thought, as well as action, must put a curb upon our sentiments, as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a preference of one party to the struggle before another.

**The Lusitania**

![Large Liner Lusitania Leaving in Waters](image)

Original caption: This is the last picture of the ill fated steamship *Lusitania*, taken on the high seas. The picture shows an armed English merchant cruiser holding up the Lusitania an giving her instructions as to how best escape the German submarines. – May 1915
THE LINER THAT WAS
A SHIP OF WAR

Six days out of New York, on the sunny afternoon of May 7, 1915, passengers on the British liner *Lusitania*, bound for Liverpool, could see the low green hills of Ireland. Out of their sight below the surface of the waves and just 640 yards off the starboard bow was Unterseeboot 20. Lieutenant-Kapitan Walther Schwieger had a broadside view of the steamer in the center of the hairlines of his periscope, and at 2:07 p.m. he fired a single torpedo and sent 1,198 people to their deaths. The “unsinkable” liner sank within 18 minutes, and only 706 survived. “I submerge to 24 meters and go to sea,” Schwieger noted in his log. “I could not have fired a second torpedo into this throng of humanity attempting to save themselves.”

Among the dead were 270 women, 94 children and 128 American citizens. When Wilson heard in the evening that losses would be heavy, he slipped out of the White House and walked alone through the rainy streets where the newsboys were shouting. The outrage in the country was the greatest since the *Maine*, and it was inflamed by popular exultation in Germany. The head of the German Red Cross in America, Dr. Bernhard Dernburg, pronounced that the passengers had chosen to commit suicide, because they had knowingly sailed into a war zone. He was promptly sent home. Officially, Germany expressed its “deepest sympathy” to America, but did not disavow the sinking. It blamed Britain for forcing it to retaliate against the British “starvation” blockade, and for letting neutral passengers travel on a ship carrying munitions. The British denied the munitions (and still officially do) but the Germans were right. Many histories refer to “a small quantity of munitions,” but the investigative journalist Colin Simpson, who investigated the *Lusitania* in 1973, found that nearly the whole cargo was contraband and that a false manifest had been prepared to conceal the fact. Simpson dived to the wreck in 1980 and brought up some of the explosives. The contraband included 10½ tons of explosives and 4,927 boxes of cartridges from the Remington Small Arms Company, each with 1,000 rounds of .303 bullets. There were also 1,250 cases of shrapnel, falsely franked “non explosive in bulk,” and 3,813 40-pound packages labeled cheese but consigned to the Naval Experimental Establishment at Shoeburyness, whose appetite was more likely for pyroxylin, a nitrocellulose explosive highly susceptible to seawater. Probably it was the cause of the entry in the U-boat log: “An unusually heavy detonation follows with a very strong explosion cloud.” The true original manifest was given to President Wilson, sealed by him and sent to the Treasury archives marked “Only to be opened by the President of the United States.” In addition, the *Lusitania* had been fitted out in August 1914 to receive 12 six-inch guns, although they were not in position when it was attacked.

None of this gave the Germans a right to do what they did. According to Ambassador Gerard in Berlin the ship was flying the U.S. flag. International law gave the Germans the right to search the ship first, but they had to evacuate those aboard if they intended to sink it.

Wilson was derided in battle-bound Britain when he spoke pacifically: “There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation so right that it does not need to convince others by force.” The soldiers in France named dud shells that failed to explode “Williams.” But the President did follow up his first remarks with a campaign to make Germany pay compensation and abandon the U-boat campaign. To Teddy Roosevelt, who demanded war, he was a coward, but American opinion coalesced around the President’s patient diplomacy, which was successful for a time. The country did not want war.
March 24, 1916 – Sussex Incident

Torpedoing of a French cross-channel passenger steamer, the Sussex, by a German submarine, leaving 80 casualties, including two Americans wounded. The attack prompted a U.S. threat to sever diplomatic relations. The German government responded with the so-called Sussex pledge (May 4, 1916), agreeing to give adequate warning before sinking merchant and passenger ships.

April 19, 1916 | Wilson on the Sussex Case

...I have deemed it my duty, therefore, to say to the Imperial German Government, that if it is still its purpose to prosecute relentless and indiscriminate warfare against vessels of commerce by the use of submarines, notwithstanding the now demonstrated impossibility of conducting that warfare in accordance with what the Government of the United States must consider the sacred and indisputable rules of international law and the universally recognized dictates of humanity, the Government of the United States is at last forced to the conclusion that there is but one course it can pursue; and that unless the Imperial German Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of warfare against passenger and freight carrying vessels this Government can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the Government of the German Empire altogether.

This decision I have arrived at with the keenest regret; the possibility of the action contemplated I am sure all thoughtful Americans will look forward to with unaffected reluctance. But we cannot forget that we are in some sort and by the force of circumstances the responsible spokesmen of the rights of humanity, and that we cannot remain silent while those rights seem in process of being swept utterly away in the maelstrom of this terrible war. We owe it to a due regard to our own rights as a nation, to our sense of duty as a representative of the rights of neutrals the world over, and to a just conception of the rights of mankind to take this stand now with the utmost solemnity and firmness....

Woodrow Wilson 1916 Campaign
Woodrow Wilson: Peace Without Victory

On the 18th of December last, I addressed an identic note to the governments of the nations now at war requesting them to state, more definitely than they had yet been stated by either group of belligerents, the terms upon which they would deem it possible to make peace. I spoke on behalf of humanity and of the rights of all neutral nations like our own, many of whose most vital interests the war puts in constant jeopardy.

The Central Powers united in a reply which stated merely that they were ready to meet their antagonists in conference to discuss terms of peace. The Entente Powers have replied much more definitely and have stated, in general terms, indeed, but with sufficient definiteness to imply details, the arrangements, guarantees, and acts of reparation which they deem to be indispensable conditions of a satisfactory settlement. We are that much nearer a definite discussion of the peace which shall end the present war. We are that much nearer the discussion of the international concert which must thereafter hold the world at peace.

In every discussion of the peace that must end this war, it is taken for granted that that peace must be followed by some definite concert of power which will make it virtually impossible that any such catastrophe should ever overwhelm us again. Every lover of mankind, every sane and thoughtful man must take that for granted.

I have sought this opportunity to address you because I thought that I owed it to you, as the council associated with me in the final determination of our international obligations, to disclose to you without reserve the thought and purpose that have been taking form in my mind in regard to the duty of our government in the days to come, when it will be necessary to lay afresh and upon a new plan the foundations of peace among the nations.

It is inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no part in that great enterprise. To take part in such a service will be the opportunity for which they have sought to prepare themselves by the very principles and purposes of their polity and the approved practices of their government ever since the days when they set up a new nation in the high and honorable hope that it might, in all that it was and did, show mankind the way to liberty.

They cannot in honor withhold the service to which they are now about to be challenged. They do not wish to withhold it. But they owe it to themselves and to the other nations of the world to state the conditions under which they will feel free to render it.

That service is nothing less than this, to add their authority and their power to the authority and force of other nations to guarantee peace and justice throughout the world. Such a settlement cannot now be long postponed. It is right that before it comes, this government should frankly formulate the conditions upon which it would feel justified in asking our people to approve its formal and solemn adherence to a League for Peace. I am here to attempt to state those conditions.

The present war must first be ended; but we owe it to candor and to a just regard for the opinion of mankind to say that, so far as our participation in guarantees of future peace is concerned, it makes a great deal of difference in what way and upon what terms it is ended. The treaties and agreements which bring it to an end must embody terms which will create a peace that is worth guaranteeing and preserving, a peace that will win the approval of mankind, not merely a peace that will serve the several interests and immediate aims of the nations engaged. We shall have no voice in determining which those terms shall be, but we shall, I feel sure, have a voice in determining whether they shall be made lasting or not by the guarantees of a universal covenant; and our judgment upon what is fundamental and essential as a condition precedent to permanency should be spoken now, not afterwards when it may be too late.

No covenant of cooperative peace that does not include the peoples of the New World can suffice to keep the future safe against war; and yet there is only one sort of peace that the peoples of America could join in guaranteeing. The elements of that peace must be elements that engage the confidence and satisfy the principles of the American governments, elements consistent with their political faith and with the practical convictions which the peoples of America have once for all embraced and undertaken to defend.

I do not mean to say that any American government would throw any obstacle in the way of any terms of peace the governments now at war might agree upon or seek to upset them when made, whatever they might be. I only take it for granted that mere terms of peace between the belligerents will not satisfy even the belligerents themselves. Mere agreements may not make peace secure. It will be absolutely necessary that a force be created as a guarantor of the permanency of the settlement so much greater than the force of any nation now engaged, or any alliance hitherto formed or projected, that no nation, no probable combination of nations, could face or withstand it. If the peace presently to be made is to endure, it must be a peace made secure by the organized major force of mankind.

The terms of the immediate peace agreed upon will determine whether it is a peace for which such a guarantee can be secured. The question upon which the whole future peace and policy of the world depends is this: Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace, or only for a new balance of power? If it be only a struggle for a new balance of power, who will guarantee, who can guarantee the stable equilibrium of the new arrangement? Only a tranquil Europe can be a stable Europe. There must be, not a balance of power but a community power; not organized rivalries but a organized, common peace.

Fortunately we have received very explicit assurances on this point. The statesmen of both of the groups of nations now arrayed against one another have said, in terms that could not be misinterpreted, that it was no part of the purpose they had in mind to crush their antagonists. But the
implications of these assurances may not be equally to all—may not be the same on both sides of the water. I think it will be serviceable if I attempt to set forth what we understand them to be.

They imply, first of all, that it must be a peace without victory. It is not pleasant to say this. I beg that I may be permitted to put my own interpretation upon it and that it may be understood that no other interpretation was in my thought. I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments. Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last. Only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit. The right state of mind, the right feeling between nations, is as necessary for a lasting peace as is the just settlement of vexed questions of territory or of racial and national allegiance.

The equality of nations upon which peace must be founded if it is to last must be an equality of rights; the guarantees exchanged must neither recognize nor imply a difference between big nations and small, between those that are powerful and those that are weak. Right must be based upon the common strength, not upon the individual strength, of the nations upon whose concert peace will depend. Equality of territory or of resources there of course cannot be; nor any other sort of equality not gained in the ordinary peaceful and legitimate development of the peoples themselves. But no one asks or expects anything more than an equality of rights. Mankind is looking now for freedom of life, not for equipoises of power.

And there is a deeper thing involved than even equality of right among organized nations. No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property. I take it for granted, for instance, if I may venture upon a single example, that statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland, and that, henceforth, inviolable security of life, of worship, and of industrial and social development should be guaranteed to all peoples who have lived hitherto under the power of governments devoted to a faith and purpose hostile to their own.

I speak of this, not because of any desire to exalt an abstract political principle which has always been held very dear by those who have sought to build up liberty in America but for the same reason that I have spoken of the other conditions of peace which seem to me clearly indispensable because I wish frankly to uncover realities. Any peace which does not recognize and accept this principle will inevitably be upset. It will not rest upon the affections or the convictions of mankind. The ferment of spirit of whole populations will fight subtly and constantly against it, and all the world will sympathize. The world can be at peace only if its life is stable, and there can be no stability where the will is in rebellion, where there is not tranquillity of spirit and a sense of justice, of freedom, and of right.

So far as practicable, moreover, every great people now struggling toward a full development of its resources and of its powers should be assured a direct outlet to the great highways of the sea. Where this cannot be done by the cession of territory, it can no doubt be done by the neutralization of direct rights of way under the general guarantee which will assure the peace itself. With a right comity of arrangement, no nation need be shut away from free access to the open paths of the world's commerce.

And the paths of the sea must alike in law and in fact be free. The freedom of the seas is the sine qua non of peace, equality, and cooperation. No doubt a somewhat radical reconsideration of many of the rules of international practice hitherto thought to be established may be necessary in order to make the seas indeed free and common in practically all circumstances for the use of mankind, but the motive for such changes is convincing and compelling. There can be no trust or intimacy between the peoples of the world without them. The free, constant, unthreatened intercourse of nations is an essential part of the process of peace and of development. It need not be difficult either to define or to secure the freedom of the seas if the governments of the world sincerely desire to come to an agreement concerning it.

It is a problem closely connected with the limitation of naval armaments and the cooperation of the navies of the world in keeping the seas at once free and safe. And the question of limiting naval armaments opens the wider and perhaps more difficult question of the limitation of armies and of all programs of military preparation. Difficult and delicate as these questions are, they must be faced with the utmost candor and decided in a spirit of real accommodation if peace is to come with healing in its wings, and come to stay.

Peace cannot be had without concession and sacrifice. There can be no sense of safety and equality among the nations if great preponderating armaments are henceforth to continue here and there to be built up and maintained. The statesmen of the world must plan for peace, and nations must adjust and accommodate their policy to it as they have planned for war and made ready for pitiless contest and rivalry. The question of armaments, whether on land or sea, is the most immediately and intensely practical question connected with the future fortunes of nations and of mankind.

I have spoken upon these great matters without reserve and with the utmost explicitness because it has seemed to me to be necessary if the world's yearning desire for peace was anywhere to find free voice and utterance. Perhaps I am the only person in high authority among all the peoples of the world who is at liberty to speak and hold nothing back. I am speaking as an individual, and yet I am speaking also, of course, as the responsible head of a great government, and I feel confident that I have said what the people of the United States would wish me to say.

May I not add that I hope and believe that I am in effect speaking for liberals and friends of humanity in every nation and of every program of liberty? I would fain believe that I am speaking for the silent mass of mankind everywhere who have as yet had no place or opportunity to speak their real hearts out concerning the death and ruin they see to have come already upon the persons and the homes they hold most dear.
And in holding out the expectation that the people and government of the United States will join the other civilized nations of the world in guaranteeing the permanence of peace upon such terms as I have named I speak with the greater boldness and confidence because it is clear to every man who can think that there is in this promise no breach in either our traditions or our policy as a nation, but a fulfillment, rather, of all that we have professed or striven for.

I am proposing, as it were, that the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world: that no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development—unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.

I am proposing that all nations henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power, catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry, and disturb their own affairs with influences intruded from without. There is no entangling alliance in a concert of power. When all unite to act in the same sense and with the same purpose, all act in the common interest and are free to live their own lives under a common protection.

I am proposing government by the consent of the governed; that freedom of the seas which in international conference after conference representatives of the United States have urged with the eloquence of those who are the convinced disciples of liberty; and that moderation of armaments which makes of armies and navies a power for order merely, not an instrument of aggression or of selfish violence.

These are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward-looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind and must prevail.

**January 31, 1917 Germany announced unlimited submarine warfare**

**February 1917 – Wilson breaks diplomatic ties with Germany**

**March 1917 – Zimmerman Note**

To the German Minister to Mexico

Berlin, January 19, 1917

On the first of February we intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this, it is our intention to endeavour to keep neutral the United States of America.

If this attempt is not successful, we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico: That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left to you for settlement...

You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in the greatest confidence as soon as it is certain that there will be an outbreak of war with the United States and suggest that the President of Mexico, on his own initiative, should communicate with Japan suggesting adherence at once to this plan; at the same time, offer to mediate between Germany and Japan.

Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.

Zimmermann
(Secretary of State)


**March 1917 – Germany sinks four US merchant vessels**
April 2, 1917 | Wilson Asks for a Declaration of War

I have called the Congress into extraordinary session because there are serious, very serious, choices of policy to be made, and made immediately, which it was neither right nor constitutionally permissible that I should assume the responsibility of making. On the 3rd of February last, I officially laid before you the extraordinary announcement of the Imperial German government that on and after the 1st day of February it was its purpose to put aside all restraints of law or of humanity and use its submarines to sink every vessel that sought to approach either the ports of Great Britain and Ireland or the western coasts of Europe or any of the ports controlled by the enemies of Germany within the Mediterranean.

That had seemed to be the object of the German submarine warfare earlier in the war, but since April of last year the Imperial government had somewhat restrained the commanders of its undersea craft in conformity with its promise then given to us that passenger boats should not be sunk and that due warning would be given to all other vessels which its submarines might seek to destroy, when no resistance was offered or escape attempted, and care taken that their crews were given at least a fair chance to save their lives in their open boats. The precautions taken were meager and haphazard enough, as was proved in distressing instance after instance in the progress of the cruel and unmanly business, but a certain degree of restraint was observed.

The new policy has swept every restriction aside. Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with safe conduct through the proscribed areas by the German government itself and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion or of principle.

I was for a little while unable to believe that such things would in fact be done by any government that had hitherto subscribed to the humane practices of civilized nations. International law had its origin in the attempt to set up some law which would be respected and observed upon the seas, where no nation had right of dominion and where lay the free highways of the world. By painful stage after stage has that law been built up, with meager enough results, indeed, after all was accomplished that could be accomplished, but always with a clear view, at least, of what the heart and conscience of mankind demanded.

This minimum of right the German government has swept aside under the plea of retaliation and necessity and because it had no weapons which it could use at sea except these which it is impossible to employ as it is employing them without throwing to the winds all scruples of humanity or of respect for the understandings that were supposed to underlie the intercourse of the world. I am not now thinking of the loss of property involved, immense and serious as that is, but only of the wanton and wholesale destruction of the lives of noncombatants, men, women, and children, engaged in pursuits which have always, even in the darkest periods of modern history, been deemed innocent and legitimate. Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be.

The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind. It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken in ways which it has stirred us very deeply to learn of; but the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way. There has been no discrimination. The challenge is to all mankind.

Each nation must decide for itself how it will meet it. The choice we make for ourselves must be made with a moderation of counsel and a temperateness of judgment befitting our character and our motives as a nation. We must put excited feeling away. Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.

When I addressed the Congress on the 26th of February last, I thought that it would suffice to assert our neutral rights with arms, our right to use the seas against unlawful interference, our right to keep our people safe against unlawful violence. But armed neutrality, it now appears, is impracticable. Because submarines are in effect outliers when used as the German submarines have been used against merchant shipping, it is impossible to defend ships against their attacks as the law of nations has assumed that merchantmen would defend themselves against privateers or cruisers, visible craft giving chase upon the open sea.

It is common prudence in such circumstances, grim necessity indeed, to endeavor to destroy them before they have shown their own intention. They must be dealt with upon sight, if dealt with at all. The German government denies the right of neutrals to use arms at all within the areas of the sea which it has proscribed, even in the defense of rights which no modern publicist has ever before questioned their right to defend. The intimation is conveyed that the armed guards which we have placed on our merchant ships will be treated as beyond the pale of law and subject to be dealt with as pirates would be.

Armed neutrality is ineffectual enough at best; in such circumstances and in the face of such pretensions it is worse than ineffectual: it is likely only to produce what it was meant to prevent; it is practically certain to draw us into the war without either the rights or the effectiveness of belligerents. There is one choice we cannot make, we are incapable of making: we will not choose the path of submission
and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people to be ignored or violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are no common wrongs; they cut to the very roots of human life.

With a profound sense of the solemn and even tragical character of the step I am taking and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German government to be in fact nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States; that it formally accept the status of belligerent which has thus been thrust upon it; and that it take immediate steps, not only to put the country in a more thorough state of defense but also to exert all its power and employ all its resources to bring the government of the German Empire to terms and end the war.

What this will involve is clear. It will involve the utmost practicable cooperation in counsel and action with the governments now at war with Germany and, as incident to that, the extension to those governments of the most liberal financial credits, in order that our resources may so far as possible be added to theirs. It will involve the organization and mobilization of all the material resources of the country to supply the materials of war and serve the incidental needs of the nation in the most abundant and yet the most economical and efficient way possible. It will involve the immediate full equipment of the Navy in all respects but particularly in supplying it with the best means of dealing with the enemy’s submarines. It will involve the immediate addition to the armed forces of the United States already provided for by law in case of war at least 500,000 men, who should, in my opinion, be chosen upon the principle of universal liability to service, and also the authorization of subsequent additional increments of equal force so soon as they may be needed and can be handled in training.

It will involve also, of course, the granting of adequate credits to the government, sustained, I hope, so far as they can equitably be sustained by the present generation, by well-conceived taxation. I say sustained so far as may be equitable by taxation because it seems to me that it would be most unwise to base the credits which will now be necessary entirely on money borrowed. It is our duty, I most respectfully urge, to protect our people so far as we may against the very serious hardships and evils which would be likely to arise out of the inflation which would be produced by vast loans.

In carrying out the measures by which these things are to be accomplished, we should keep constantly in mind the wisdom of interfering as little as possible in our own preparation and in the equipment of our own military forces with the duty—for it will be a very practical duty—of supplying the nations already at war with Germany with the materials which they can obtain only from us or by our assistance. They are in the field and we should help them in every way to be effective there.

I shall take the liberty of suggesting, through the several executive departments of the government, for the consideration of your committees, measures for the accomplishment of the several objects I have mentioned. I hope that it will be your pleasure to deal with them as having been framed after very careful thought by the branch of the government upon which the responsibility of conducting the war and safeguarding the nation will most directly fall.

While we do these things, these deeply momentous things, let us be very clear, and make very clear to all the world, what our motives and our objects are. My own thought has not been driven from its habitual and normal course by the unhappy events of the last two months, and I do not believe that the thought of the nation has been altered or clouded by them. I have exactly the same things in mind now that I had in mind when I addressed the Senate on the 22nd of January last; the same that I had in mind when I addressed the Congress on the 3rd of February and on the 26th of February.

Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up among the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth ensure the observance of those principles. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.

We have no quarrel with the German people. We have no feeling toward them but one of sympathy and friendship. It was not upon their impulse that their government acted in entering this war. It was not with their previous knowledge or approval. It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in the old, unhappy days when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers and wars were provoked and waged in the interest of dynasties or of little groups of ambitious men who were accustomed to use their fellowmen as pawns and tools.

Self-governed nations do not fill their neighbor states with spies or set the course of intrigue to bring about some critical posture of affairs which will give them an opportunity to strike and make conquest. Such designs can be successfully worked out only under cover and where no one has the right to ask questions. Cunningly contrived plans of deception or aggression, carried, it may be, from generation to generation, can be worked out and kept from the light only within the privacy of courts or behind the carefully guarded confidences of a
narrow and privileged class. They are happily impossible where public opinion commands and insists upon full information concerning all the nation’s affairs.

A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within or observe its covenants. It must be a league of honor, a partnership of opinion. Intrigue would eat its vitals away; the plottings of inner circles who could plan what they would and render account to no one would be a corruption seated at its very heart. Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honor steady to a common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own.

Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the intimate relationships of her people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude toward life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a League of Honor.

One of the things that has served to convince us that the Prussian autocracy was not and could never be our friend is that from the very outset of the present war it has filled our unsuspecting communities and even our offices of government with spies and set criminal intrigues everywhere afoot against our national unity of counsel, our peace within and without, our industries and our commerce. Indeed, it is now evident that its spies were here even before the war began; and it is unhappily not a matter of conjecture but a fact proved in our courts of justice that the intrigues which have more than once come perilously near to disturbing the peace and dislocating the industries of the country have been carried on at the instigation, with the support, and even under the personal direction of official agents of the Imperial government accredited to the government of the United States.

Even in checking these things and trying to extirpate them, we have sought to put the most generous interpretation possible upon them because we knew that their source lay, not in any hostile feeling or purpose of the German people toward us [who were no doubt as ignorant of them as we ourselves were] but only in the selfish designs of a government that did what it pleased and told its people nothing. But they have played their part in serving to convince us at last that that government entertains no real friendship for us and means to act against our peace and security at its convenience. That it means to stir up enemies against us at our very doors the intercepted note to the German minister at Mexico City is eloquent evidence.

We are accepting this challenge of hostile purpose because we know that in such a government, following such methods, we can never have a friend; and that in the presence of its organized power, always lying in wait to accomplish we know not what purpose, there can be no assured security for the democratic governments of the world. We are now about to accept [the] gage [the challenge] of battle with this natural foe to liberty and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its power. We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience.

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and of fair play we profess to be fighting for.

I have said nothing of the governments allied with the Imperial government of Germany because they have not made war upon us or challenged us to defend our right and our honor. The Austro-Hungarian government has, indeed, avowed its unqualified endorsement and acceptance of the reckless and lawless submarine warfare adopted now without disguise by the Imperial German government, and it has therefore not been possible for this government to receive Count Tarnowski, the ambassador recently accredited to this government by the Imperial and Royal government of Austria-Hungary; but that government has not actually engaged in warfare against citizens of the United States on the seas, and I take the liberty, for the present at least, of postponing a discussion of our relations with the authorities at Vienna. We enter this war only where we are clearly forced into it because there are no other means of defending our rights.

It will be all the easier for us to conduct ourselves as belligerents in a high spirit of right and fairness because we act without animus, not in enmity toward a people or with the desire to bring any injury or disadvantage upon them, but only in armed opposition to an irresponsible government which has thrown aside all considerations of humanity and of right and is running amuck. We are, let me say again, the sincere
friends of the German people, and shall desire nothing so much as the early reestablishment of intimate relations of mutual advantage between us—however hard it may be for them, for the time being, to believe that this is spoken from our hearts.

We have borne with their present government through all these bitter months because of that friendship—exercising a patience and forbearance which would otherwise have been impossible. We shall, happily, still have an opportunity to prove that friendship in our daily attitude and actions toward the millions of men and women of German birth and native sympathy who live among us and share our life, and we shall be proud to prove it toward all who are in fact loyal to their neighbors and to the government in the hour of test. They are, most of them, as true and loyal Americans as if they had never known any other fealty or allegiance. They will be prompt to stand with us in rebuking and restraining the few who may be of a different mind and purpose. If there should be disloyalty, it will be dealt with with a firm hand of stern repression; but, if it lifts its head at all, it will lift it only here and there and without countenance except from a lawless and malignant few.

It is a distressing and oppressive duty, gentlemen of the Congress, which I have performed in thus addressing you. There are, it may be, many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

8 January, 1918: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points

Gentlemen of the Congress:

Once more, as repeatedly before, the spokesmen of the Central Empires have indicated their desire to discuss the objects of the war and the possible basis of a general peace. Parleys have been in progress at Brest-Litovsk between Russian representatives and representatives of the Central Powers to which the attention of all the belligerents have been invited for the purpose of ascertaining whether it may be possible to extend these parleys into a general conference with regard to terms of peace and settlement.

The Russian representatives presented not only a perfectly definite statement of the principles upon which they would be willing to conclude peace but also an equally definite program of the concrete application of those principles. The representatives of the Central Powers, on their part, presented an outline of settlement which, if much less definite, seemed susceptible of liberal interpretation until their specific program of practical terms was added. That program proposed no concessions at all either to the sovereignty of Russia or to the preferences of the populations with whose fortunes it dealt, but meant, in a word, that the Central Empires were to keep every foot of territory their armed forces had occupied -- every province, every city, every point of vantage -- as a permanent addition to their territories and their power.

It is a reasonable conjecture that the general principles of settlement which they at first suggested originated with the more liberal statesmen of Germany and Austria, the men who have begun to feel the force of their own people's thought and purpose, while the concrete terms of actual settlement came from the military leaders who have no thought but to keep what they have got. The negotiations have been broken off. The Russian representatives were sincere and in earnest. They cannot entertain such proposals of conquest and domination.

The whole incident is full of significances. It is also full of perplexity. With whom are the Russian representatives dealing? For whom are the representatives of the Central Empires speaking? Are they speaking for the majorities of their respective parliaments or for the minority parties, that military and imperialistic minority which has so far dominated their whole policy and controlled the affairs of Turkey and of the Balkan states which have felt obliged to become their associates in this war?

The Russian representatives have insisted, very justly, very wisely, and in the true spirit of modern democracy, that the conferences they have been holding with the Teutonic and Turkish statesmen should be held within open, not closed, doors, and all the world has been audience, as was desired. To whom have we been listening, then? To those who speak the spirit and intention of the resolutions of the German Reichstag of the 9th of July last, the spirit and intention of the Liberal leaders and parties of Germany, or to those who resist and defy that spirit and intention and insist upon conquest and subjugation? Or are we listening, in fact, to both, unreconciled and in open and hopeless contradiction? These are very serious and pregnant questions. Upon the answer to them depends the peace of the world.
But, whatever the results of the parleys at Brest-Litovsk, whatever the confusions of counsel and of purpose in the utterances of the spokesmen of the Central Empires, they have again attempted to acquaint the world with their objects in the war and have again challenged their adversaries to say what their objects are and what sort of settlement they would deem just and satisfactory. There is no good reason why that challenge should not be responded to, and responded to with the utmost candor. We did not wait for it. Not once, but again and again, we have laid our whole thought and purpose before the world, not in general terms only, but each time with sufficient definition to make it clear what sort of definite terms of settlement must necessarily spring out of them. Within the last week Mr. Lloyd George has spoken with admirable candor and in admirable spirit for the people and Government of Great Britain.

There is no confusion of counsel among the adversaries of the Central Powers, no uncertainty of principle, no vagueness of detail. The only secrecy of counsel, the only lack of fearless frankness, the only failure to make definite statement of the objects of the war, lies with Germany and her allies. The issues of life and death hang upon these definitions. No statesman who has the least conception of his responsibility ought for a moment to permit himself to continue this tragical and appalling outpouring of blood and treasure unless he is sure beyond a peradventure that the objects of the vital sacrifice are part and parcel of the very life of Society and that the people for whom he speaks think them right and imperative as he does.

There is, moreover, a voice calling for these definitions of principle and of purpose which is, it seems to me, more thrilling and more compelling than any of the many moving voices with which the troubled air of the world is filled. It is the voice of the Russian people. They are prostrate and all but hopeless, it would seem, before the grim power of Germany, which has hitherto known no relenting and no pity. Their power, apparently, is shattered. And yet their soul is not subservient. They will not yield either in principle or in action. Their conception of what is right, of what is humane and honorable for them to accept, has been stated with a frankness, a largeness of view, a generosity of spirit, and a universal human sympathy which must challenge the admiration of every friend of mankind; and they have refused to compound their ideals or desert others that they themselves may be safe.

They call to us to say what it is that we desire, in what, if in anything, our purpose and our spirit differ from theirs; and I believe that the people of the United States would wish me to respond, with utter simplicity and frankness. Whether their present leaders believe it or not, it is our heartfelt desire and hope that some way may be opened whereby we may be privileged to assist the people of Russia to attain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace.

It will be our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world. It is this happy fact, now clear to the view of every public man whose thoughts do not still linger in an age that is dead and gone, which makes it possible for every nation whose purposes are consistent with justice and the peace of the world to avow nor or at any other time the objects it has in view.

We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The program of the world's peace, therefore, is our program; and that program, the only possible program, as we see it, is this:

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent
determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end. For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be secured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this program does remove. We have no jealousy of German greatness, and there is nothing in this program that impairs it. We grudge her no achievement or distinction of learning or of pacific enterprise such as have made her record very bright and very enviable. We do not wish to injure her or to block in any way her legitimate influence or power. We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade if she is willing to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing. We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world, -- the new world in which we now live, -- instead of a place of mastery.

Neither do we presume to suggest to her any alteration or modification of her institutions. But it is necessary, we must frankly say, and necessary as a preliminary to any intelligent dealings with her on our part, that we should know whom her spokesmen speak for when they speak to us, whether for the Reichstag majority or for the military party and the men whose creed is imperial domination.

We have spoken now, surely, in terms too concrete to admit of any further doubt or question. An evident principle runs through the whole program I have outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak.

Unless this principle be made its foundation no part of the structure of international justice can stand. The people of the United States could act upon no other principle; and to the vindication of this principle they are ready to devote their lives, their honor, and everything they possess. The moral climax of this the culminating and final war for human liberty has come, and they are ready to put their own strength, their own highest purpose, their own integrity and devotion to the test.
To those of us who still retain an irreconcilable animus against war, it has been a bitter experience to see the unanimity with which the American intellectuals have thrown their support to the use of war-technique in the crisis in which America found herself. Socialists, college professors, publicists, new-republicans, practitioners of literature, have vied with each other in confirming with their intellectual faith the collapse of neutrality and the riveting of the war-mind on a hundred million more of the world’s people. And the intellectuals are not content with confirming our belligerent gesture. They are now complacently asserting that it was they who effectively willed it, against the hesitation and dim perceptions of the American democratic masses. A war made deliberately by the intellectuals! A calm moral verdict, arrived at after a penetrating study of inexorable facts! Sluggish masses, too remote from the world-conflict to be stirred, too lacking in intellect to perceive their danger! An alert intellectual class, saving the people in spite of themselves, biding their time with Fabian strategy until the nation could be moved into war without serious resistance! An intellectual class, gently guiding a nation through sheer force of ideas into what the other nations entered only through predatory craft or popular hysteria or militarist madness! A war free from any taint of self-seeking, a war that will secure the triumph of democracy and internationalize the world! This is the picture which the more self-conscious intellectuals have formed of themselves, and which they are slowly impressing upon a population which is being led no man knows whether by an indubitably intellectualized President. And they are right, in that the war certainly did not spring from hysteries, of the American people, however acquiescent the masses prove to be, and however clearly the intellectuals prove their putative intuition.

Those intellectuals who have felt themselves totally out of sympathy with this drag toward war will seek some explanation for this joyful leadership. They will want to understand this willingness of the American intellect to open the sluices and flood us with the sewage of the war spirit. We cannot forget the virtuous horror and stupefaction which filled our college professors when they read the famous manifesto the their ninety-three German colleagues in defense of their war.1 To the American academic mind of 1914 defense of war was inconceivable. From Bernhardi2 it recoiled as from blasphemy, little dreaming that two years later would find it creating its own cleanly reasons for imposing military service on the country and for talking of the rough rude currents of health and regeneration that war would send through the American body politic. They would have thought anyone mad who talked of shipping American men by the hundreds of thousands - conscripts - to die on the fields of France. Such a spiritual change seems catastrophic when we shoot our minds back to those days when neutrality was a proud thing. But the intellectual progress has been so gradual that the country retains little sense of the irony. The war sentiment, begun so gradually but so perseveringly by the preparedness advocates who come from the ranks of big business, caught hold of one after another of the intellectual groups. With the aid of Roosevelt, the murmurs became a monotonous chant, and finally a chorus so mighty that to be out of it was at first to be disreputable and finally almost obscene. And slowly a strident rant was worked up against Germany which compared very credibly with the German fulminations against the greedy power of England. The nerve of the war-feeling centered, of course, in the richer and older classes of the Atlantic seaboard, and was keenest where there were French or English business and particularly social connections. The sentiment then spread over the country as a class-phenomenon, touching everywhere those upper-class elements in each section who indentified themselves with this Eastern ruling group. It must never be forgotten that in every community it was the least liberal and least democratic elements among whom the preparedness and later the war sentiment was found. The farmers were apathetic, the small business men and workingmen are still apathetic towards the war. The election was a vote of confidence of these latter classes in a President who would keep the faith of neutrality.3 The intellectuals, in other words, have identified themselves with the least democratic forces in American life. They have assumed the leadership for war of those very classes whom the American democracy has been immemorially fighting. Only in a world where irony was dead could an intellectual class enter war at the head of such illiberal cohorts in the avowed cause of world-liberalism and world-democracy. No one is left to point out the undemocratic nature of this war-liberalism. In a time of faith, skepticism is the most intolerable of all insults.

Our intellectual class might have been occupied, during the last two years of war, in studying and clarifying the ideals and aspirations of the American democracy, in discovering a true Americanism which would not have been merely nebulous but might have federated the different ethnic groups and traditions. They might have spent the time in endeavoring to clear the public mind of the cant of war, to get rid of old mystical notions that clog our thinking. We might have used the time for a great wave of education, for setting our house in spiritual order. We could at least have set the problem before ourselves. If our intellectuals were going to lead the administration, they might conceivably have tried to find some way of securing peace by making neutrality effective. They might have turned their intellectual energy not to the problem of jockeying the nation into war, but to the problem of using our vast neutral power to attain democratic ends for the rest of the world and ourselves without the use of the malevolent technique of war. They might have failed. The point is that they scarcely tried. The time was spent not in clarification and education, but in mulling over nebulous ideals of democracy and liberalism and civilization which had never meant anything fruitful to those ruling classes who now so glibly used them, and in giving free rein to the elementary instinct of self-defense. The whole era has been spiritually wasted. The outstanding feature has been not its Americanism but its intense colonialism. The offence of our intellectuals was not so much that they were colonial - for what could we expect of a nation composed of so many national elements? - but that it was so one-sidedly and partisanly colonial. The official, reputable expression of the intellectual class has been that of the English colonial. Certain portions of it have been even more loyalist than the King, more British even than Australia. Other colonial attitudes have been vulgar. The colonialism of the other American stocks was denied a hearing from the start. America might have been made a meeting-ground for the different national attitudes. An intellectual class, cultural colonists of the different European nations, might have threshed out the issues here as they could not be threshed out in Europe. Instead of this, the English colonials in university and press took command at the start, and we became an intellectual Hungary where thought was subject to an effective process of Magyarization. The reputable opinion of the American intellectuals became more and more either what could be read pleasantly in London, or what was written in an earnest
effort to put Englishmen straight on their war-aims and war-technique. This Magyarization of thought produced as a counter-
reaction a peculiarly offensive and inept German apologetic, and the two partisans divided the field between them. The great
masses, the other ethnic groups, were inarticulate. American public opinion was almost as little prepared for war in 1917 as it
was in 1914.

The sterile results of such an intellectual policy are inevitable. During the war the American intellectual class has produced
almost nothing in the way of original and illuminating interpretation. Veblen's "Imperial Germany;" Patten's "Culture and War,"
and addresses; Dewey's "German Philosophy and Politics;" a chapter or two in Weyl's "American Foreign Policies;" - is there
much else of creative value in the intellectual repercussion of the war? It is true that the shock of war put the American
intellectual to an unnatural strain. He had to sit idle and think as spectator not as actor. There was no government to which he
could docily and loyally tender his mind as did the Oxford professors to justify England in her own eyes. The American's training
was such as to make the fact of war almost incredible. Both in his reading of history and in his lack of economic perspective he
was badly prepared for it. He had to explain to himself something which was too colossal for the modern mind, which outran any
language or terms which we had to interpret it in. He had to explain his sympathies to the breaking-point, while pulling the past
and present into some sort of interpretative order. The intellectuals in the fighting countries had only to rationalize and justify
what their country was already doing. Their task was easy. A neutral, however, had really to search out the truth. Perhaps
perspective was too much to ask of any mind. Certainly the older colonials among our college professors let their prejudices at
once dictate their thought. They have been comfortable ever since. The war has taught them nothing and will teach them
nothing. And they have had the satisfaction, under the rigor of events, of seeing prejudice submerge the intellects of their
younger colleagues. And they have lived to see almost their entire class, pacifists and democrats too, join them as apologists for
the "gigantic irrelevance" of war.

We had had to watch, therefore, in this country the same process which so shocked us abroad - the coalescence of the intellectual
classes in support of the military programme. In this country, indeed, the socialist intellectuals did not even have the grace of
their German brothers and wait for the declaration of war before they broke for cover. And when they declared for war
they showed how thin was the intellectual veneer of their socialism. For they called us in terms that might have emanated from any
bourgeois journal to defend democracy and civilization, just as if it was not exactly against those very bourgeois democracies and
capitalist civilizations that socialists had been fighting for decades. But so subtle is the spiritual chemistry of the "inside" that all
this intellectual cohesion - herd-instinct - which seemed abroad so hysterical and so servile, comes to us here in highly rational
terms. We go to war to save the world from subjugation! But the German intellectuals went to war to save their culture from
barbarization! And the French to save international honor! And Russia, most altruistic and self-sacrificing of all, to save a small
State from destruction! Whence is our miraculous intuition of our moral spotlessness? Whence our confidence that history will
not unravel huge economic and imperialist forces upon which our rationalizations float like bubbles? The Jew often marvels that
his race alone should have been chosen as the true people of the cosmic God. Are not our intellectuals equally fatuous when they
tell us that our war of all wars is stainless and thrillingly achieving for good?

An intellectual class that was wholly rational would have called insistently for peace and not for war. For months the crying need
has been for a negotiated peace, in order to avoid the ruin of a deadlock. Would not the same amount of resolute statesmanship
thrown into intervention have secured a peace that would have been a subjugation for neither side? Was the terrific bargaining
final settlement these principles of international order? Could we have afforded, if our war was to end war by the establishment
of a league of honor, to risk the defeat of our vision and our betrayal in the settlement? Yet we are in the war, and no such solemn
agreement was made, nor has it even been suggested.

The case of the intellectuals seems, therefore, only very speciously rational. They could have used their energy to force a just
peace or at least to devise other means than war for carrying through American policy. They could have used their intellectual
energy to ensure that our participation in the war meant the international order which they wish. Intellect was not so used. It
was used to lead an apathetic nation into an irresponsible war, without guarantees from those belligerents whose cause we were saving. The American intellectual, therefore has been rational neither in his hindsight, nor his foresight. To explain him we must look beneath the intellectual reasons to the emotional disposition. It is not so much what they thought as how they felt that explains our intellectual class. Allowing for colonial sympathy, there was still the personal shock in a world-war which outraged all our preconceived notions of the way the world was tending. It reduced most of the humanitarian internationalism and democratic nationalism which had been the emotional thread of our intellectuals’ life. We had suddenly to make a new orientation. There were mental conflicts. Our latent colonialism strove with our longing for American unity. Our desire for peace strove with our desire for national responsibility in the world. That first lofty and remote and not altogether unsound feeling of

The intellectual state that could produce such things is one where reversion has taken place to more primitive ways of thinking.

Simple syllogisms are substituted for analysis, things are known by their labels, our heart’s desire dictates what we shall see. The doctrine of a League of Peace. But this agile resolution of the mental conflict did not become a higher synthesis, to be creatively developed. It gradually merged into a justification for our going to war. It petrified into a dogma to be propagated. Criticism flagged and emotional propaganda began. Most of the socialists, the college professors and the practitioners of literature, however, have not even reached this high-water mark of synthesis. Their mental conflicts have been resolved much more simply. War in the interests of democracy! This was almost the sum of their philosophy. The primitive idea to which they regressed became almost insensibly translated into a craving for action. War was seen as the crowning relief of their indecision. At last action, irresponsibility, the end of anxious and torturing attempts to reconcile peace-ideals with the drag of the world towards Hell. An end to the pain of trying to adjust the facts to what they ought to be! Let us consecrate the facts as ideal! Let us join the League of Peace provides a dogma to jump to. With war the world becomes motor again and speculation is brushed aside like cobwebs. The blessed emotion of self-defense intervenes too, which focused millions in Europe. A few keep up a critical pose after war is begun, but since they usually advise action which is in one-to-one correspondence with what the mass is already doing, their criticism is little more than a rationalization of the common emotional drive.

The results of war on the intellectual class are already apparent. Their thought becomes little more than a description and justification of what is going on. They turn upon any rash one who continues idly to speculate. Once the war is on, the conviction spreads that individual thought is helpless, that the only way one can count is as a cog in the great wheel. There is no good holding back. We are told to dry our unnoticed and ineffective tears and plunge into the great work. Not only is everyone forced into line, but the new certitude becomes idealized. It is a noble realism which opposes itself to futile obstruction and the
 cowardly refusal to face facts. This realistic boast is so loud and sonorous that one wonders whether realism is always a stern and intelligent grappling with realities. May it not be sometimes a mere surrender to the actual, an abdication of the ideal through a sheer fatigue from intellectual suspense? The pacifist is roundly scolded for refusing to face the facts, and for retiring into his own world of sentimental desire. But is the realist, who refuses to challenge or criticize facts, entitled to any more credit than that which comes from following the line of least resistance? The realist thinks he at least can control events by linking himself to the forces that are moving. Perhaps he can. But if it is a question of controlling war, it is difficult to see how the child on the back of a mad elephant is to be any more effective in stopping the beast than is the child who tries to stop him from the ground. The ex-humanitarian, turned realist, sneers at the snobbish neutrality, colossal conceit, crooked thinking, dazed sensibilities, of those who are still unable to find any balm of consolation for this war. We manufacture consolations here in America while there are probably not a dozen men fighting in Europe who did not long ago give up every reason for their being there except that nobody knew how to get them away.

But the intellectuals whom the crisis has crystallized into an acceptance of war have put themselves into a terrifying strategic position. It is only on the craft, in the stream, they say, that one has any chance of controlling the current forces for liberal purposes. If we obstruct, we surrender all power for influence. If we responsibly approve, we then retain our power for guiding. We will be listened to as responsible thinkers, while those who obstructed the coming of war have committed intellectual suicide and shall be cast into outer darkness. Criticism by the ruling powers will only be accepted from those intellectuals who are in sympathy with the general tendency of the war. Well, it is true that they may guide, but if their stream leads to disaster and the frustration of national life, is their guiding any more than a preference whether they shall go over the right-hand or the left-hand side of the precipice? Meanwhile, however, there is comfort on board. Be with us, they call, or be negligible, irrelevant. Dissenters are already excommunicated. Irreconcilable radicals, wringing their hands among the debris, become the most despicable and impotent of men. There seems no choice for the intellectual but to join the mass of acceptance. But again the terrible dilemma arises, - either support what is going on, in which case you count for nothing because you are swallowed in the mass and great incalculable forces bear you on; or remain aloof, passively resistant, in which case you count for nothing because you are outside the machinery of reality.

Is there no place left then, for the intellectual who cannot yet crystallize, who does not dread suspense, and is not yet drugged with fatigue? The American intellectuals, in their preoccupation with reality, seem to have forgotten that the real enemy is War rather than Imperial Germany. There is work to be done to prevent this war of ours from passing into popular mythology as a holy crusade. What shall we do with leaders who tell us that we go to war in moral spotlessness, or who make "democracy" synonymous with a republican form of government? There is work to be done in still shouting that all the revolutionary by-products will not justify the war, or make war anything else than the most noxious complex of all the evils that afflict men. There must be some to find no consolation whatever, and some to sneer at those who buy the cheap emotion of sacrifice. There must be some irreconcilables left who will not even accept the war with walrus tears. There must be some to call unceasingly for peace, and some to insist that the terms of settlement shall be not only liberal but democratic. There must be some intellectuals who are not willing to use the old discredited counters again and to support a peace which would leave all the old inflammable materials of armament lying about the world. There must still be opposition to any contemplated "liberal" world-order founded on military coalitions. The "irreconcilable" need not be disloyal. He need not even be "impossibilist." His apathy towards war should take the form of a heightened energy and enthusiasm for the education, the art, the interpretation that make for life in the midst of the world of death. The intellectual who retains his animus against war will push out more boldly than ever to make his case solid against it. The old ideals crumble; new ideals must be forged. His mind will continue to roam widely and ceaselessly. The thing he will fear most is premature crystallization. If the American intellectual class rivets itself to a "liberal" philosophy that perpetuates the old errors, there will then be need for "democrats" whose task will be to divide, confuse, disturb, keep the intellectual waters constantly in motion to prevent any such ice from ever forming.

Our Notes:

1. "Appeal to the Civilized World" was published in October, 1914, by ninety-three German writers and teachers. In it they defended Germany's war effort and praised its military establishment.
2. German general and military historian, Friedrich von Bernhardi, whose 1912 book, "Germany and the Next War", advocated a war of conquest for Germany. The book was used for propaganda purposes by the allies.
4. The League to Enforce Peace, organized as a non-partisan group, advocated a post-war league of nations to employ economic sanctions or military force against any member waging war.
5. The references are to Lord Balfour, British Foreign Secretary and former prime minister, and to Elihu Root. Balfour headed the British war mission to the U.S. in April 1917. Root was appointed in the same month to head an American mission to revolutionary Russia.
The Social Possibilities Of War
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the direction of a federated world government and a variety of

freely experimenting and freely co-operating peoples.

sincerely hope for the last, the ultimate sanction of democracy, for which we are fighting.
By the time the United States entered World War I, the belligerent powers were approaching total warfare, pitting their entire societies against one another. American leaders believed their country must do the same; yet the obstacles to mobilizing a united American society were formidable. This essay discusses the ways by which the United States government sought to overcome those obstacles, particularly how it attempted to unify the home front and to convert the nation’s economy for war. It considers the interaction between government and elements of the society it sought to mobilize, examines the effectiveness of mobilization, and looks at precedents the war created for later emergencies.

Unity was a crucial requirement for success. Yet America in 1917 was far from unified. Race riots, lynchings, and increasing segregation characterized its racial system. Decades of business consolidation and industrial violence had left the nation’s middle class citizens wary both of radical labor organizations and of the economic and political power of large corporations. With millions of Americans connected by ancestry to the warring nations, ethnic conflict threatened to tear the United States apart once it joined the Allies. And ominous signs were appearing that American women might divide over the war. Women had been prominent in the prewar peace movement. The first woman elected to congress voted against entering the war, and militant women suffragists had begun to picket the White House, publicizing the gaps between government slogans about making the world safe for democracy and a political system in which millions of women could not vote.1

There were other threats to unity on the eve of war. Although some Americans—particularly those with ancestral ties to the Allies—were willing and perhaps even eager to fight the Central Powers, other intellectuals and religious organizations strenuously opposed intervention. Pacifism, isolationism, antimilitarism, and apathy were so widespread that in the fall of 1916, President Woodrow Wilson ran for reelection with the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War.”

To develop the support needed to mobilize America, the United States government followed several approaches. It directed massive propaganda at the American people and imprisoned those who openly challenged its war policies. Yet it often used a softer method, what one of its leaders called “engines of indirection”, 2 to encourage rather than compel Americans to pay for the war, conserve scarce resources, and participate in home front activities. It offered rewards to those who cooperated and withheld benefits from those who declined to go along. The result was a wartime welfare state that benefited millions of Americans, especially those with the power, resources, and organization needed to induce the federal government to respond to their needs. In the America of 1917-1918 self-sacrifice, idealism and patriotism existed side by side with efforts to reap private gain from the war, with government management of interest groups, and with efforts by those groups to manipulate the government that sought to control them.

Foremost among the wartime propaganda agencies was the Committee on Public Information (CPI), headed by the journalist and social reformer George Creel. This committee sought to meld all Americans into what its director called “one white-hot mass ... with fraternity, devotion, and deathless determination” to support an Allied victory. It deluged the country with press releases and pamphlets, newspaper and magazine advertisements, and organized scores of pageants and parades. The CPI had educators explain to students the official reasons for fighting, stimulate their patriotism, and enhance their admiration for American and Allied armed forces. It told immigrants in their own languages why they owed it to America to assist it against its enemies. To those who could not read, the committee communicated with billboards, posters, motion pictures, and an army of patriotic speakers.

Although Creel’s committee sometimes allowed its audience to know that the government was addressing them, it frequently followed an indirect or covert approach. It set up front organizations, such as the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, led by conservative labor union leader Samuel Gompers, that opposed radicalism and pacifism among workers. Its own name was a euphemism, suggesting that it conveyed, not propaganda, but simply information. The head of the committee’s film division observed that one of the CPI’s objectives was to spread “telling propaganda which at the same time would not be obvious propaganda, but will have the effect we desire to create.”

Among the CPI’s great variety of messages, certain themes appeared repeatedly. One was the notion that the enemies were vicious, subhuman monsters who had committed unspeakable atrocities and were preparing to bring horror and devastation to America. Thus one wartime poster showed lower Manhattan in flames, a decapitated Statue of Liberty, and enemy warplanes hovering overhead. Another depicted Germany as a spike-helmeted slobbering ape-like creature standing on the American shore. A second theme was the crusade motif, that America was engaged in a holy war to avenge those atrocities, safe-guard democracy and assure lasting peace. Third, there was the theme that Americans of all classes, national origins, occupations, and genders must stand together to support that crusade.

Like other warring nations, the United States used forceful methods, along with exhortation, to control the way its people felt. Although President Wilson expressed concern that war would deeply curtail American freedoms, his administration rarely hesitated to crack down on dissenters. With the authority of legislation, such as the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, it denied the mails to publications it believed would embarrass or hamper it in the prosecution of the war. It jailed members of a radical labor organization, the Industrial Workers of the World, that threatened to disrupt production of war materials. It imprisoned a former Socialist candidate for president, Eugene V. Debs, and hundreds of other persons for statements that government prosecutors claimed would interfere with the government’s war programs. At times, the administration also stifled dissent subtly and indirectly, as when the CPI urged editors to censor themselves or face penalties, without specifying what would cause the government to silence their publications.

In its efforts to clamp down on pacifists, radicals and persons too friendly to the enemy, the federal government allied itself with state and private groups. It sponsored a quarter million volunteer members of the American Protective League, who sought to root out opponents of war. State governments authorized councils of defense that not only assisted mobilization in positive ways but also attacked persons the councils considered pro-German, antiwar, or too favorable toward social reform. Other groups, some of them nameless organizations, or just mobs, joined in the repression of alleged internal enemies.
While many Americans felt intense exhilaration and national pride during this war, a large number experienced it as a time of terror. People spied on one another; intimidated those who seemed slow to purchase government war bonds or to join the military; forced suspected pro-Germans to kiss the American flag or painted them yellow; threatened; tortured; and, in two cases, murdered those who seemed to oppose the war. Citizens and governments attacked the country's German American subculture, suppressed German music, threatened German American religious sects, forbade the speaking and teaching of the German language, and sought to remove words of German origin from American speech, turning "frankfurters" into "liberty sausages" and "dachshunds" into "liberty dogs".

Some of these actions were an outgrowth of the patriotism that led Americans to volunteer spontaneously for military service, to enter war industries, to roll bandages or become Red Cross nurses, to join local home defense leagues, and to buy government bonds. Some were responses to government propaganda that encouraged suspicion of strangers or reactions to fear of sabotage at home or to the loss or potential loss of loved ones overseas. Repressive activities on the home front sometimes grew from long-standing ethnic conflicts, were ways of settling old scores, or represented efforts to secure political power under the guise of patriotism or to use the war to secure economic advantages. Much of the war hysteria grew from a community of interest between the United States Government and those who used the war for their own purposes. This interplay of public and private interests similarly characterized the mobilization of the economy.

The experience of other belligerents and early breakdowns in American economic systems showed that conversion for total war would be difficult and made clear that there had to be some kind of centralized control of economic mobilization. But who would do it? The armed forces lacked the capacity; yet to give them enough power to control the economy would be to emulate Germany. People called it "Prussianization." Large industrial and financial corporations might have the skills and organization to run a war economy, but many citizens thought they had too much power to begin with. Although some government regulatory agencies had developed before the war, there was as yet no large civil service to guide mobilization, and the notion of creating a war bureaucracy troubled businessmen and other Americans who believed in limited government.

The solution, which responded both to fears of excessive government regulation and of expanded corporate influence, was an improvised administrative apparatus, staffed largely by volunteer "dollar-a-year" persons on leave from their companies, designed to self-destruct once the war ended. When the national transportation system collapsed in the winter of 1917-1918 the U.S. government created a Railroad Administration to coordinate and manage the important lines. Actual running of the railroad system was assigned to former private railroad executives under temporary government direction. Volunteer food industry executives ran the Food Administration. Staffed with thousands of American women, the FA promoted food production and conservation and saw that food supplies were sent where the government considered them most needed. Such people were unlikely to perpetuate a government food bureaucracy.

The leading economic mobilization agency was the War Industries Board (WIB), which arranged for American industries to supply Allied and American armed forces and civilians with industrial products. Like most other economic mobilization agencies, it was dominated by volunteers from American businesses. Its powers evolved gradually. The Wilson administration, reflecting prewar public distrust of the power of big business, continued to keep those powers in check, leaving the board's legal authority vague and permitting the War Department to retain substantial control over military procurement.

The WIB typified the operations of the wartime welfare state. It often used an indirect approach, inducing companies to produce voluntarily what the government wanted them to provide. Together with cooperating businesses that supplied materials needed for production and with government agencies that regulated labor supplies, fuel and transportation, it developed a priority system, the essential mechanism for regulating wartime businesses. If a company chose to produce essential items it received high priorities for what it needed. If it decided to make items deemed nonessential, its priorities dropped to the bottom of the list.

Many businessmen contributed to the war with pride and patriotism. Also, they were offered tangible incentives for converting to war work, such as the priorities that enabled them to keep their companies operating. The fact that the people who negotiated with them for the government were executives from their own industries rather than uninformed bureaucrats was bound to reassure them. And finally they had the incentive of substantial profit, particularly for companies that sold something the government badly needed. In the steel industry, for instance, prices were set high enough for inefficient producers to make money. For efficient producers, the returns were awe inspiring. An excess profits tax was supposed to recapture some of these returns but ways were found to limit its effects.

For certain business leaders the war government provided special incentives. Executives of leading companies were allowed to set priorities for their own industries because only they knew enough about those industries to assess priority requests. These corporate leaders really ran much of industrial mobilization in the government's name. For one group of businessmen the wartime system of business self-regulation, cooperation, and government sanctioned profitability offered a model for the future. These men wanted to replace competitive capitalism with a permanent welfare state for business.

The war brought benefits to other groups that served America at home. Emerging professions gained recognition for wartime activities—psychiatrists, for example, for treating victims of battle stress, and psychologists for testing the mental capacity of recruits. Intellectuals, in a country that rarely paid attention to them and often scorned them, found opportunities to serve their nation by writing propaganda or lecturing on the war. Wheat farmers benefitted from government price supports. Conservative, prowar labor unions won government endorsement for collective bargaining and improved wages, hours, and working conditions by arguing that these benefits would increase productivity at a time when labor shortages hindered mobilization. Housing reformers developed model towns for workers near shipyards and war factories.

A number of the wartime programs helped advance reforms of special interest to women. Suffragists drew a variety of arguments from the war for granting women the right to vote—for example, women should be rewarded for their patriotic service on the home
front, and that in a "war to make the world safe for democracy," it was absurd to deny women the vote. Advocates of temperance, including many women, successfully argued against producing alcoholic beverages that took grain supplies needed to make bread for soldiers and civilians. A government sponsored program to close brothels near army camps and provide troops with healthy sports and clean entertainment as a substitute for sex, also appealed to women in the vice reform movement.

War also brought economic benefits to women and their families. Labor shortages enabled more than one million women to find work in arms factories and in other occupations previously closed to them. It created what amounted to a system of "mothers pensions". To sustain families whose male wage earners were in uniform and to free the troops from some anxiety over their families' financial conditions, the federal government arranged for service personnel to buy cheap life and disability insurance. It withheld money from the pay of enlisted men, sending it to their dependents along with direct government allowances for wives and children. It also aided war widows and orphans.

Yet not all groups were strong enough and influential enough to secure rewards from the war welfare state. Some African American leaders, such as the scholar and editor W. E. B. Du Bois, encouraged blacks to support the war on the ground that fighting for democracy abroad would advance racial equality at home. African Americans did make certain wartime gains, but in ways limited by the existing color line. For instance, they were allowed to fight for their country, but were segregated and shunted mainly into noncombatant roles requiring physical labor. By threatening that color line, the war may have made racial conflict even more intense. The prospect of trained and armed black soldiers returning home after living in France, a less racist society, troubled many white Americans. The allotments and allowances the federal government sent to female dependents of black troops disturbed the prewar racial equilibrium by making those women less willing to accept low-wage jobs. Wartime demand for labor drew African Americans, who were already migrating from the rural South, to the cities and to the North where they competed for jobs and living space with white workers. That competition helped set off an explosion of race riots during and just after the war. Such events left Du Bois and other blacks deeply dissatisfied by the "war to make the world safe for democracy."

How well did the American home front achieve the American government's objectives? If the measure is unity of thought and behavior, the answer is well enough. There was general support for the war by the time of the Armistice, although continuing resistance to the draft suggests that some Americans had not been welded into "one white-hot mass" in support of victory. If the criterion is production and delivery of war materials, the results were also mixed. By 1918, more than one-fifth of the nation's Gross National Product reflected war spending. Yet the GNP as a whole rose by less than four percent from 1916 through 1918. Although the country spent some seven billion dollars for ordnance, American forces in Europe commonly used French artillery and projectiles. Aircraft manufacturers consumed millions of dollars, but produced only sixteen thousand planes during 1917-1918, far fewer than government projections. As David Lloyd George, the British prime minister noted, "one of the inexplicable paradoxes of history" was that "the greatest machine-producing nation on earth failed to turn out the mechanism of war after 18 months of sweating and toiling and hustling...." Still, it might be argued that the fighting ended too soon for the United States to reach full war production.

The most important contribution America made to the defeat of its enemies was its armed forces, or more exactly, the notion of what those armed forces could do if the war continued. To German leaders, the prospect that a huge American army would soon join the doughboys already fighting alongside the Allies, made an early armistice seem prudent. By helping to motivate those troops to volunteer or accept conscription, by supporting them morally once they were in uniform, by helping to pay for them and to arm, clothe, feed and equip them, the home front did much to make that armistice possible.

The World War I home front provided important precedents for future crises. To fight the Great Depression, the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations employed wartime ideas, like business self-regulation, publicity campaigns like those used in wartime, and restyled wartime agencies, such as the National Recovery Administration. Finally, the Wilson administration's efforts to create unity on the home front left a problematic legacy for civil liberties in future wars, raising the question of whether the United States Government could be strong enough to defend the nation without destroying American freedoms.

Notes
5. For the war component of GNP, see Paul A. C. Koistinen, Mobilizing for Modern War: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1865-1919 (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 265.

THE ESPIONAGE ACT OF 1917
Act of June 15, 1917, ch. 30, title I, §3, 40 Stat. 219,
amended by Act of May 16, 1918, ch. 75, 40 Stat. 553-54,
reenacted by Act of Mar. 3, 1921, ch. 136, 41 Stat. 1359,
current version codified at 18 U.S.C. §2388

Sec. 3. Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully make or convey false reports or false
statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the
United States or to promote the success of its enemies and whoever, when the United States is at war,
shall willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the
military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment
service of the United States, to the injury of the service or of the United States, shall be punished by a
fine of not more than $10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.

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SEDITION ACT OF 1918

1918 AMENDMENTS TO §3 OF THE ESPIONAGE ACT OF 1917
Act of May 16, 1918, ch. 75, 40 Stat. 553-54
(repealed by Act of Mar. 3, 1921, ch. 136, 41 Stat. 1359)

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress
assembled, That section three of title one of the Act entitled "An Act to punish acts of interference with
the foreign relations, the neutrality, and the foreign commerce of the United States, to punish
espionage, and better to enforce the criminal laws of the United States, and for other purposes,"
approved June fifteenth, nineteen hundred and seventeen, be, and the same is hereby, amended so as
to read as follows:

"Sec. 3. Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully make or convey false reports or false
statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the
United States, or to promote the success of its enemies, or shall willfully make or convey false reports or
false statements, or say or do anything except by way of bona fide and not disloyal advice to an investor
or investors, with intent to obstruct the sale by the United States of bonds or other securities of the
United States or the making of loans by or to the United States, and whoever, when the United States is
at war, shall willfully cause or attempt to cause, or incite or attempt to incite, insubordination, disloyalty,
mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct
or attempt to obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States, and whoever, when the
United States is at war, shall willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or
abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United
States, or the military or naval forces of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the
uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States, or any language intended to bring the form of
government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United States, or the military or naval forces
of the United States, or the flag of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United
States into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute, or shall willfully utter, print, write, or publish any
language intended to incite, provoke, or encourage resistance to the United States, or to promote the
cause of its enemies, or shall willfully display the flag of any foreign enemy, or shall willfully by
utterance, writing, printing, publication, or language spoken, urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of
production in this country of any thing or things, product or products, necessary or essential to the
prosecution of the war in which the United States may be engaged, with intent by such curtailment to
cripple or hinder the United States in the prosecution of the war, and whoever shall willfully advocate,
teach, defend, or suggest the doing of any of the acts or things in this section enumerated, and whoever
shall by word or act support or favor the cause of any country with which the United States is at war or
by word or act oppose the cause of the United States therein, shall be punished by a fine of not more
than $10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both: Provided, That any employee or
official of the United States Government who commits any disloyal act or utters any unpatriotic or
disloyal language, or who, in an abusive and violent manner criticizes the Army or Navy or the flag of
the United States shall be at once dismissed from the service. Any such employee shall be dismissed by
the head of the department in which the employee may be engaged, and any such official shall be
dismissed by the authority having power to appoint a successor to the dismissed official."
ASSERT YOUR RIGHTS!

Article 6, Section 2, of the Constitution of the United States says: "This Constitution shall be the supreme law of the Land."

Article 1 (Amendment) says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

Article 9 (Amendment) says: "The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparge others retained by the people."

The Socialist Party says that any individual or officers of the law entrusted with the administration of conscription regulations, violate the provisions of the United States Constitution, the Supreme Law of the Land, when they refuse to recognize your right to assert your opposition to the draft.

If you are conscientiously opposed to war, if you believe in the commandment "thou shalt not kill," then that is your religion, and you shall not be prohibited from the free exercise thereof.

In exempting clergymen and members of the Society of Friends (popularly called Quakers) from active military service, the examination boards have discriminated against you. If you do not assert and support your rights, you are helping to "deny or disparage rights" which it is the solemn duty of all citizens and residents of the United States to retain.

Here in this city of Philadelphia was signed the immortal Declaration of Independence. As a citizen of "the cradle of American Liberty" you are doubly charged with the duty of upholding the rights of the people.

Will you let cunning politicians and a mercenary capitalist press wrongly and untruthfully mould your thoughts? Do not forget your right to elect officials who are opposed to conscription.

In lending tacit or silent consent to the conscription law, in neglecting to assert your rights, you are helping to condone and support a most infamous and insidious conspiracy to abridge and destroy the sacred and cherished rights of a free people. You are a citizen, not a subject!

You delegate your power to the officers of the law to be used for your good and welfare, not against you. They are your servants. Not your masters. Their wages come from the expenses of government which you pay. Will you allow them to unjustly rule you? The fathers who fought and bled to establish a free and independent nation here in America were so opposed to the militarism of the old world from which they had escaped; so keenly alive to the dangers and hardships they had undergone in fleeing from political, religious and military oppression, that they handed down to us "certain rights which must be retained by the people."

They held the spirit of militarism in such abhorrence and hate, they were so apprehensive of the formation of a military machine that would insistently and secretly advocate the invasion of other lands, that they limited the power of Congress over the militia in providing only for the calling forth of "the militia to execute laws of the Union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions." (See general powers of Congress, Article 1, Section 8, Paragraph 15.)

No power was delegated to send our citizens away to foreign shores to shoot up the people of other lands, no matter what may be their internal or international disputes.

The people of this country did not vote in favor of war. At the last election they voted against war. To draw this country into the horrors of the present war in Europe, to force the youth of our land into the shambles and bloody trenches of war-crazy nations, would be a crime the magnitude of which defies description. Words could not express the condemnation such cold-blooded ruthlessness deserves.

Will you stand idly by and see the Melch of Militarism reach forth across the sea and fasten its tentacles upon this continent? Are you willing to submit to the degradation of having the Constitution of the United States treated as a "mere scrap of paper"?

Do you know that patriotism means a love for your country and not hate for others?

Will you be led astray by a propaganda of jingoism masquerading under the guise of patriotism?

No specious or plausible pleas about a "war for democracy" can cloud the issue. Democracy cannot be shot into a nation. It must come spontaneously and purely from within.

Democracy must come through liberal education. Upholders of military ideas are unit teachers. To advocate the prosecution of other peoples through the prosecution of war is an insult to every good and wholesome American tradition.

"These are the times that try men's souls."

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

You are responsible. You must do your share to maintain, support and uphold the rights of the people of this country.

In this world crisis where do you stand? Are you with the forces of liberty and light or war and darkness?

(OVER)
LONG LIVE THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES
Wake Up, America! Your Liberties Are in Danger!

The 13th Amendment, Section 1, of the Constitution of the United States says: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

The Constitution of the United States is one of the greatest bulwarks of political liberty. It was born after a long, stubborn battle between king-rule and democracy. (We see little or no difference between arbitrary power under the name of a king and under a few misnamed ‘representatives.’) In this battle the people of the United States established the principle that freedom of the individual and personal liberty are the most sacred things in life. Without them we become slaves.

For this principle the fathers fought and died. The establishment of this principle they sealed with their own blood. Do you want to see this principle abolished? Do you want to see despotism substituted in its stead? Shall we prove degenerate sons of illustrious sires?

The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, quoted above, embodies this sacred idea. The Socialist Party says that this idea is violated by the Conscription Act. When you conscript a man and compel him to go abroad to fight against his will, you violate the most sacred right of personal liberty, and substitute what Daniel Webster called “despotism in its worst form.”

A conscript is little better than a convict. He is deprived of his liberty and of his right to think and act as a free man. A conscripted citizen is forced to surrender his rights as a citizen and become a subject. He is forced into involuntary servitude. He is deprived of all freedom of conscience in being forced to kill against his will.

Are you one who is opposed to war, and were you misled by the venal capitalist newspapers, or intimidated or deceived by gang politicians and registrars into believing that you would not be allowed to register your objection to conscription? Do you know that many citizens of Philadelphia insisted on their right to answer the famous question twelve, and went on record with their honest opinion of opposition to war, notwithstanding the deceitful efforts of our rulers and the newspaper press to prevent them from doing so? Shall it be said that the citizens of Philadelphia, the cradle of American liberty, are so lost to a sense of right and justice that they will let such monstrous wrongs against humanity go unchallenged?

In a democratic country each man must have the right to say whether he is willing to join the army. Only in countries where uncontrolled power rules can a despot force his subjects to fight. Such a man or men have no place in a democratic republic. This is tyrannical power in its worst form. It gives control over the life and death of the individual to a few men. There is no man good enough to be given such power.

Conscription laws belong to a bygone age. Even the people of Germany, long suffering under the yoke of militarism, are beginning to demand the abolition of conscription. Do you think it has a place in the United States? Do you want to see unlimited power handed over to Wall Street’s chosen few in America? If you do not, join the Socialist Party in its campaign for the repeal of the Conscription Act. Write to your congressman and tell him you want the law repealed. Do not submit to intimidation. You have a right to demand the repeal of any law. Exercise your rights of free speech, peaceful assemblage and petitioning the government for a redress of grievances. Come to the headquarters of the Socialist Party, 1326 Arch street, and sign a petition to congress for the repeal of the Conscription Act. Help us wipe out this stain upon the Constitution!

Remember, “eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.
Down with autocracy!
Long live the Constitution of the United States! Long live the Republic!

Books on Socialism for Sale at
SOCIALIST PARTY BOOK STORE AND HEADQUARTERS

1326 ARCH ST. Phone, Filbert 3121

OVER
Mr. Justice HOLMES delivered the opinion of the Court.

This is an indictment in three counts. The first charges a conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917 . . . by causing and attempting to cause insubordination, &c., in the military and naval forces of the United States, and to obstruct the recruiting and enlistment service of the United States, when the United States was at war with the German Empire, to-wit, that the defendant wilfully conspired to have printed and circulated to men who had been called and accepted for military service under the [Conscription] Act of May 18, 1917, a document set forth and alleged to be calculated to cause such insubordination and obstruction. The count alleges overt acts in pursuance of the conspiracy, ending in the distribution of the document set forth. The second count alleges a conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States, to-wit, to use the mails for the transmission of matter declared to be non-mailable by . . . the Act of June 15, 1917 . . . . The third count charges an unlawful use of the mails for the transmission of the same matter and otherwise as above. The defendants were found guilty on all the counts. They set up the First Amendment to the Constitution forbidding Congress to make any law abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, and [bring] the case here on that ground . . . .

The document in question upon its first printed side recited the first section of the Thirteenth Amendment, said that the idea embodied in it was violated by the conscription act and that a conscript is little better than a convict. In impassioned language it intimated that conscription was despotism in its worst form and a monstrous wrong against humanity in the interest of Wall Street's chosen few. It said, 'Do not submit to intimidation,' but in form at least confined itself to peaceful measures such as a petition for the repeal of the act. The other and later printed side of the sheet was headed 'Assert Your Rights.' It stated reasons for alleging that any one violated the Constitution when he refused to recognize 'your right to assert your opposition to the draft,' and went on, 'If you do not assert and support your rights, you are helping to deny or disparage rights which it is the solemn duty of all citizens and residents of the United States to retain.' It described the arguments on the other side as coming from cunning politicians and a mercenary capitalist press, and even
silent consent to the conscription law as helping to support an infamous conspiracy. It
denied the power to send our citizens away to foreign shores to shoot up the people of other
lands, and added that words could not express the condemnation such cold-blooded
ruthlessness deserves, &c., &c., winding up, 'You must do your share to maintain, support
and uphold the rights of the people of this country.' Of course the document would not have
been sent unless it had been intended to have some effect, and we do not see what effect it
could be expected to have upon persons subject to the draft except to influence them to
obstruct the carrying of it out. . . .

. . . We admit that in many places and in ordinary times the defendants in saying all that
was said in the circular would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character
of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done. The most stringent
protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theatre and
causing a panic. . . . The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such
circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will
bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent. It is a question of
proximity and degree. When a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of
peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as
men fight and that no Court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right. It
seems to be admitted that if an actual obstruction of the recruiting service were proved,
liability for words that produced that effect might be enforced. The statute of 1917 in
section 4 punishes conspiracies to obstruct as well as actual obstruction. If the act,
(speaking, or circulating a paper,) its tendency and the intent with which it is done are the
same, we perceive no ground for saying that success alone warrants making the act a crime.
. . .

It was not argued that a conspiracy to obstruct the draft was not within the words of the Act
of 1917. The words are 'obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service,' and it might be
suggested that they refer only to making it hard to get volunteers. Recruiting heretofore
usually having been accomplished by getting volunteers the word is apt to call up that
method only in our minds. But recruiting is gaining fresh supplies for the forces, as well by
draft as otherwise. It is put as an alternative to enlistment or voluntary enrollment in this
act. The fact that the Act of 1917 was enlarged by the amending Act of May 16, 1918, c.
75, 40 Stat. 553, of course, does not affect the present indictment and would not, even if the
former act had been repealed.

Judgments affirmed.
MR. JUSTICE HOLMES dissenting.

This indictment is founded wholly upon the publication of two leaflets which I shall describe in a moment. The first count charges a conspiracy pending the war with Germany to publish abusive language about the form of government of the United States, laying the preparation and publishing of the first leaflet as overt acts. The second count charges a conspiracy pending the war to publish language intended to bring the form of government into contempt, laying the preparation and publishing of the two leaflets as overt acts. The third count alleges a conspiracy to encourage resistance to the United States in the same war, and to attempt to effectuate the purpose by publishing the same leaflets. The fourth count lays a conspiracy to incite curtailment of production of things necessary to the prosecution of the war and to attempt to accomplish it by publishing the second leaflet, to which I have referred.

The first of these leaflets says that the President's cowardly silence about the intervention in Russia reveals the hypocrisy of the plutocratic gang in Washington. It intimates that "German militarism combined with allied capitalism to crush the Russian Revolution" -- goes on that the tyrants of the world fight each other until they see a common enemy -- working class enlightenment, when they combine to crush it, and that now militarism and capitalism combined, though not openly, to crush the Russian revolution. It says that there is only one enemy of the workers of the world, and that is capitalism; that it is a crime for workers of America, &c., to fight the workers' republic of Russia, and ends "Awake! Awake, you Workers of the World, Revolutionists!" A note adds

It is absurd to call us pro-German. We hate and despise German militarism more than do you hypocritical tyrants. We have more reasons for denouncing German militarism than has the coward of the White House.

The other leaflet, headed "Workers -- Wake Up," with abusive language says that America together with the Allies will march for Russia to help the Czecko-Slovaks in their struggle against the Bolsheviks, and that this time the hypocrites shall not fool the Russian emigrants and friends of Russia in America. It tells the Russian emigrants that they now must spit in the face of the false military propaganda by which their sympathy and help to the prosecution of the war have been called forth, and says that, with the money they have lent or are going to lend, "they will make bullets not only for the Germans, but also for the Workers Soviets of Russia," and further,

Workers in the ammunition factories, you are producing bullets, bayonets, cannon, to murder not only the Germans, but also your dearest, best, who are in Russia and are fighting for freedom.

It then appeals to the same Russian emigrants at some length not to consent to the "inquisitionary expedition to Russia," and says that the destruction of the Russian revolution is "the politics of the march to Russia." The leaflet winds up by saying "Workers, our reply to this barbaric intervention has to be a general strike!" and, after a few words on the spirit of revolution, exhortations not to be afraid, and some usual tall talk ends, "Woe unto those who will be in the way of progress. Let solidarity live! The Rebels."
No argument seems to me necessary to show that these pronouncements in no way attack the form of government of the United States, or that they do not support either of the first two counts. What little I have to say about the third count may be postponed until I have considered the fourth. With regard to that, it seems too plain to be denied that the suggestion to workers in the ammunition factories that they are producing bullets to murder their dearest, and the further advocacy of a general strike, both in the second leaflet, do urge curtailment of production of things necessary to the prosecution of the war within the meaning of the Espionage Act of May 16, 1918, c. 75, 40 Stat. 553, amending § 3 of the earlier Act of 1917. But to make the conduct criminal, that statute requires that it should be “with intent by such curtailment to cripple or hinder the United States in the prosecution of the war.” It seems to me that no such intent is proved. . . .

. . . In this case, sentences of twenty years' imprisonment have been imposed for the publishing of two leaflets that I believe the defendants had as much right to publish as the Government has to publish the Constitution of the United States now vainly invoked by them. Even if I am technically wrong, and enough can be squeezed from these poor and puny anonymities to turn the color of legal litmus paper, I will add, even if what I think the necessary intent were shown, the most nominal punishment seems to me all that possibly could be inflicted, unless the defendants are to be made to suffer not for what the indictment alleges, but for the creed that they avow -- a creed that I believe to be the creed of ignorance and immaturity when honestly held, as I see no reason to doubt that it was held here, but which, although made the subject of examination at the trial, no one has a right even to consider in dealing with the charges before the Court.

Persecution for the expression of opinions seems to me perfectly logical. If you have no doubt of your premises or your power, and want a certain result with all your heart, you naturally express your wishes in law, and sweep away all opposition. To allow opposition by speech seems to indicate that you think the speech impotent, as when a man says that he has squared the circle, or that you do not care wholeheartedly for the result, or that you doubt either your power or your premises. But when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas -- that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out. That, at any rate, is the theory of our Constitution. It is an experiment, as all life is an experiment. Every year, if not every day, we have to wager our salvation upon some prophecy based upon imperfect knowledge. While that experiment is part of our system, I think that we should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death, unless they so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country. I wholly disagree with the argument of the Government that the First Amendment left the common law as to seditious libel in force. History seems to me against the notion. I had conceived that the United States, through many years, had shown its repentance for the Sedition Act of 1798, by repaying fines that it imposed. Only the emergency that makes it immediately dangerous to leave the correction of evil counsels to time warrants making any exception to the sweeping command, “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech.” Of course, I am speaking only of expressions of opinion and exhortations, which were all that were uttered here, but I regret that I cannot put into more impressive words my belief that, in their conviction upon this indictment, the defendants were deprived of their rights under the Constitution of the United States.

MR. JUSTICE BRANDEIS concurs with the foregoing opinion.