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How The War Came To America

(Issued by The Committee on Public Information—The Secretary of State, The Secretary of War, The Secretary of the Navy, George Creel Washington, D. C. June 25, 1917.)

The outbreak of war in 1914 caught this Nation by surprise. The peoples of Europe had had at least some warnings of the coming storm, but to us such a blind, savage onslaught on the ideals of civilization had appeared impossible.

The war was incomprehensible. Either side was championed here by millions living among us who were of European birth. Their contradictory accusations threw our thoughts into disarray, and in the first chaotic days we could see no clear issue that affected our national policy. There was no direct assault on our rights. It seemed at first to most of us a purely European dispute, and our minds were not prepared to take sides in such a conflict. The President's proclamation of neutrality was received by us as natural and inevitable. It was quickly followed by his appeal to

"the citizens of the Republic."

"Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality," he said, "which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness to all concerned."

It will be easy to excite passion and difficult to allay." He expressed the fear that our Nation might become divided in camps of hostile opinion. "Such divisions among us 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 counsels of peace and accommodation, not as a partisan, but as a friend."

This purpose—the preservation of a strict neutrality in order that later we might be of use in the great task of mediation—dominated all the President's early speeches.

"We are the mediating Nation of the World," he declared in an address on April 20, 1915. "We are compounded of the nations of the world. We mediate their blood, we mediate their traditions, we mediate their sentiments, their tastes, their passions; we are ourselves compounded of those things. We are, therefore, able to understand them in the compound, not separately as partisans, but unitedly as knowing and comprehending and embodying them all. It is in that sense that I mean that America is a mediating Nation."

American neutrality, in those first months of the great war, was beyond any question real.

But the spirit of neutrality was not easy to maintain. Public opinion was deeply stirred by the German invasion of Belgium and by reports of atrocities there. The Royal Belgian Com-

mission, which came in September, 1914, to lay their country's cause for complaint before our National Government, was received with sympathy and respect. The President in his reply reserved our decision in the affair. It was the only course he could take without an abrupt departure from our most treasured traditions of noninterference in Old World disputes. But the sympathy of America went out to the Belgians in their heroic tragedy, and from every section of our land money contributions and supplies of food and clothing poured over to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which was under the able management of our fellow countrymen abroad.

Still, the thought of taking an active part in this European war was very far from most of our minds. The Nation shared with the President the belief that by maintaining a strict neutrality we could best serve Europe at the end as impartial mediators.

But in the very first days of the war our Government foresaw that complications on the seas might put us in grave risk of being drawn into the conflict. No neutral nation could foretell what violations of its vital interest at sea might be attempted by the belligerents. And so, on August 6, 1914, our Secretary of State dispatched an identical note to all the powers then at war, calling attention to the risk of serious trouble arising out of this uncertainty of neutrals as to their maritime rights and proposing that the Declaration of London be accepted by all nations for the duration of the war.

But the British Government's response, while expressing sympathy with the purpose of our suggestion and declaring their "keen desire to consult so far as possible the interests of neutral countries," announced their decision "to adopt generally the rules of the Declaration in question, subject to certain modifications and additions which they judge indispensable to the efficient conduct of their naval operations." The Declaration had not been indorsed by any power in time of peace, and there was no legal obligation on Great Britain to accept it. Her reply, however, was disappointing, for it did nothing to clarify the situation. Great Britain recognized as binding certain long accepted principles of international law and sought now to apply them to the peculiar and unforeseen conditions of this war. But these principles were often vague and therefore full of dangerous possibilities of friction.

Controversies soon arose between Great Britain and this Nation. In practice their ruling sometimes seemed to our Government inconsistent with the spirit of international law, and especially with the established precedents which they invoked. But painful as this divergence of opinion sometimes was, it did not seriously threaten our position of neutrality, for the issues that arose involved only rights of property and were amply covered by the arbitration treaty signed only a short time before by Great Britain and the United States.

And this controversy led to a clearer understanding on our part of the British attitude toward our ideal of the freedom of the seas. They were not willing to accept our classification of the seas as being distinct from the Old World. We had confined our interest to matters affecting rights at sea and had kept carefully aloof from issues affecting the interests of European nations on land. The British were interested in both. They explained that they had participated in the London naval conference in the hope that it would lead to a sound and liberal entente in the interest of the rights of all nations on the sea and on the land as well, and that they had refused to ratify the London Declaration because no compensating accord on the Continent had resulted. They could not afford to decrease the striking power of their navy unless their powerful neighbors on land agreed to decrease their armies.

That this attitude of England deeply impressed our Government is shown by the increasing attention given by the United States to the search for ways and means of insuring at the end of the war, a lasting peace for the world. The address of our President, on May 27, 1916, before the League to Enforce Peace was a milestone in our history. He outlined the main principles on which a stable peace must rest, principles plainly indicating that this Nation would have to give up its position of isolation and assume the responsibilities of a world power. The President said:

"So sincerely do we believe these things that I am sure that I speak the mind and wish of the people of America when I say that the United States is willing to become a partner in any feasible association of nations formed in order to realize these objects and make them secure against violation."

It was a new and significant note in our foreign policy. But the mind of America had learned much in the long bitter months of war. Future historians will make charts of this remarkable evolution in our public opinion; the gradual abandonment of the illusion of isolation; the slow growth of a realization that we could not win freedom on sea—for us a vital interest—unless we consented to do our share in maintaining freedom on land as well, and that we could not have peace in the world—the peace we loved and needed for the perfection of our democracy—unless we were willing and prepared to help to restrain any nation that wilfully endangered the peace of the whole world family. Had this address of the President

HERE ARE THE NUMBERS.

(Continued From Page Four)

- 1186—Cecil Stearns
1187—Clay Robert Woods
1188—Alonzo Penewell
1189—James D. Fitzgerald
1190—William Raymond Hunt
1191—Heber Herbert Allen
1192—Joe Walmer
1193—Fred B. Read
1194—Floyd Heagy
1195—George William Wilde
1196—Joseph Arthur Denning
1197—Charles Frederick Beldin
1198—John Charles Thompson
1199—Charles Raymond Hainey
1200—Edwin James Leasy
1201—Verne E. Cox
1202—Claude William Eaton
1203—Clarence Dell Hartzell
1204—Lester Perry Kingsley
1205—Erich Elmer Neilson
1206—Ralph Leon Pidcock
1207—Harvey Valentine Campbell
1208—John Oliver Chapman
1209—Thomas Arthur Plummer
1210—Ralph Emery White
1211—Lester Allen Wilson
1212—William Wina
1213—Irvin McKinzie
1214—Chester Arthur Canaday
1215—Ruben Donald Langmo
1216—William Cullen Davis
1217—George Walker
1218—Robert Spencer
1219—Tony Lponz
1220—Walter Alfred Pohrman
1221—Roy Vigle Pohrman
1222—Robert Lee Northcott
1223—Albert L. Eaton
1224—Clark Allen
1225—Frank S. Armstrong
1226—Earl Miles
1227—Archie Low
1228—John Frederick White
1229—Reuben Miller Beveridge
1230—Fred C. Birnbaum
1231—Fred Wiseman
1232—George W. Perry
1233—Edward Pfel
1234—Harry Giltner
1235—Louis Pfel
1236—Leighton Sion
1237—Horace Jacob Nelson
1238—George Earl Stoddard
1239—Ichiji Kokubu
1240—Oliver McCabe
1241—Walter Clark
1242—Walter Lee Wakefield
1243—Archibald C. Stoddard
1244—Guy Melvin McMillan
1245—Albert Roy Coalwell
1246—Gilbert Heber Ballantyne
1247—Harry M. Hansen
1248—Grant Pike
1249—Maurice Van De Keere
1250—Camel De Bel
1251—Raymond Stark Pierson
1252—Archie E. Kelly
1253—Walter Scott Murphy
1254—Walter Victor Thompson
1255—Henry James Allen
1256—Walter Edward Young
1257—Charles David Gossett
1258—Ray Arthur Sion
1259—Jay R. Robertson
1260—Franklin Fremont McMurren
1261—Robert Stanley Shaw
1262—William Jackson O'Bryant
1263—Nick Santomoro
1264—Roy Kingsley Graham
1265—James Hartwell York
1266—Theron Spyker Maxwell
1267—Frank Oscar Harris
1268—Stone Arthur Bowen
1269—Albert Gorham Angell
1270—William Earnest Watkins
1271—Charley Edgar Harris
1272—William Karl Sylvest
1273—John Clarence Tally
1274—Linwood Burt Russell
1275—Perry Richard Duke
1276—Melvin Gerhard Olson
1277—Oley Knute
1278—Frank Nelson Cassell
1279—Charles Ellis Hess
1280—Chester Leo Oliver
1281—Norman Russel Hogan
1282—James Arthur Hansen
1283—Darl Denning
1284—Carl Linville
1285—Charles Grant Watkins
1286—Albert Franklin Bowman
1287—Brooks Campbell
1288—Harvey Hue Grout
1289—Floyd Brant
1290—Gale Gibbons
1291—Albert Richard Hutchinson
1292—John Grout
1293—William Albert Daugherty
1294—Ormal David Scott
1295—Leroy Ross Jones
1296—Arthur Lee Gorham
1297—John Lawrence Jones
1298—William Frederick Nice
1299—Robert William Tally
1300—George Irvin Hess
1301—John Brant, Jr.
1302—Earnest James Simonis
1303—Arthur Vard Olson
1304—Olaf Rodger Olson
1305—Norval Gothfred Olson
1306—Alfred Leslie Olson
1307—Charles Fred Knautz
1308—Tillman August Olsen
1309—John Arvid Dahlstrom
1310—Earl Smith
1311—Paul Flemming Dahlstrom
1312—Per Gustav Person
1313—Parley William Newman
1314—James Lee Dalton
1315—William David Dalton
1316—George Edward MacDonald
1317—Oeyvind Carvosso Lee
1318—Harry Abram Lindley
1319—Edgar Wheeler Hollinger

come before the war, there would have arisen a storm of protest from all sections of the land. But in May, 1916, the Nation's response was emphatic approval.

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1327—Grover Cleveland Mercer
1328—Joe Iwas Fukuda
1329—George Kosuke Ito
1330—William Harrison Lovern

- 1331—Jesse Clarence Mills
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1333—Goldman Anthony
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1338—Homer Maxwell Carnes
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(Continued on Page Seven)

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