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How the War Came to America ---A Bit of Diplomatic History

By the Committee of Public Information

Even at this late day there are some Americans who have lost sight of the important facts which lead up to the declaration of a state of war between the United States and the Imperial German Government. To refresh the memory of Americans and to refute the slanders of those whose heart is with the German cause this series of articles by the committee on Public Information is being presented. The next issue will carry the history of German transgressions of the laws of nations further.

And judging the German Government now in the light of our own experience through the long and patient years of our honest attempt to keep the peace, we could see the great Autocracy and read her record thru the war. And we found that record damnable. Beginning long before the war in Prussian opposition to every effort the waratarrafamfamarm cryeffort that was made by other nations and our own to do away with warfare, the story of the Autocracy has been one of vast preparations for war combined with an attitude of arrogant intolerance toward all other points of view, all other systems of Government, all other hopes and dreams of men. With a fanatical faith in the destiny of German culture as the systems that must rule the world, the Imperial Government's actions have through years of boasting, double-dealing, and credit tended toward aggression upon the rights of others. And it there still be any doubt as to which nation began this war, there can be no uncertainty as to which one was most prepared, most exultant at the chance, and ready instantly to march upon other nations—even those who had given no offense. The wholesale depredations and heinous atrocities in Belgium and in Serbia where doubtless part parcel with the Imperial Government's purpose to terrize small nations into abject submission for generations to come. But in this the Autocracy has been blind. For its record in those countries, and in Poland and in northern France, has given not only to the Allies, but to liberal peoples throughout the world the conviction that this menace to human liberties everywhere must be utterly shorn of its power for harm.

For the well it has effected has ranged far out of Europe—out upon the open seas, where its submarines in defiance of law and the concepts of humanity have blown up neutral vessels and covered the waves with the dead and dying, men and women and children alike. Its agents have conspired against the peace of neutral nations everywhere, sowing the seeds of dissension, coarsely endeavoring by tortuous methods of deceit, of bribery, false promises, and intimidation, to stir up brother nations one against the other, in order that the liberal world might not be able to unite, in order that the Autocracy might emerge triumphant from the war.

All this we know from our own experience with the Imperial Government. As they have dealt with Europe, so they have dealt with us and with all mankind. And so out of these years the conviction has grown that until the German Nation is divested of such rulers democracy cannot be safe.

There remained but one element to edofate the issue. One other great Autocracy, the Government of the Russian Czar, has long been hostile to free institutions; it has been a stronghold of tyrannies reaching far back into the past; and its presence among the Allies had seemed to be in discord with the great liberal principles they were upholding in this war. Russia had been a source of doubt. Repeatedly during the conflict between the Kaiser and the Czar.

But now at this crucial time for our nation, on the eve of our entrance into the war, the free men of all the world were thrilled and heartened by the news that the people of Russia had risen to throw off their Government and found a new democracy; and the torch of freedom in Russia had lit up the last dark phase of the

situation abroad. Here indeed was a fit partner for the League of Honor. The conviction was finally crystallized in American minds and hearts that this war across the sea was no mere conflict between opponents but a stupendous civil war of all the world; a new campaign in the age-old war, the prize of which is liberty. Here at last was a struggle in which all who love freedom have a stake. Further neutrality on our part would have been a crime against our ancestors, who had given their lives that we might be free.

"The world must be made safe for democracy."

On the 2nd of April, 1917, the President read to the Congress his message, in which he asked the Representatives of the Nation to declare the existence of a state of war, and in the early hours of the 6th of April the House by an overwhelming vote accepted the joint resolution which had already passed the Senate:

"Whereas the Imperial German Government has committed repeated acts of war against the Government and the people of the United States of America; Therefore be it

"Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of United States of America in Congress assembled, That the state of war between the United States and the Imperial German Government, which has thus been thrust upon the United States is hereby formally declared; and that the President be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to employ the entire naval and military forces of the United States and the resources of the Government to carry on war against the Imperial German Government; and to bring the conflict to a successful termination all the resources of the country are hereby pledged by the Congress of the United States."

Neutrality was a thing of the past. The time had come when the President's proud prophecy was fulfilled: "There will come that day when the world will say, 'This America that we thought was full of a multitude of contrary counsels now speaks with the great volume of the heart's accord and that great heart of America has behind it the supreme moral force of righteousness and hope and the liberty of mankind.'"

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