

## WHY WE ARE AT WAR WITH GERMANY

By  
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"The object of this war is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment controlled by an irresponsible government, which, having secretly planned to dominate the world, proceeded to carry out the plan without regard either to the sacred obligations of treaty or the long-established practices and long-cherished principles of international action and honor. . . . This power is not the German people. It is the ruthless master of the German people. . . . It is our business to see to it that the history of the rest of the world is no longer left to its handling."  
—President Wilson, August 27, 1917.

### THE NATION AND MORAL DUTIES

The rulers of Germany believe that they have the right to prevail over all other nations. They also believe that the power of the state is the only object for which its rulers should struggle. Still further, they believe that moral principles and ideas have no place in determining the actions of the state, since the sole duty of the state is to get power. This is German political philosophy. American political philosophy, from the very beginning of our institutions, has opposed this theory, and now in this war is fighting against it. For the German theory necessarily carries with it utter denial of the claims of moral feeling, of international right, of human decency and chivalry.

The German historian, Treitschke, at whose feet princes and rulers sat, eagerly absorbing his teachings, devoted his life to spreading this gospel of Power. It is true, he said sneeringly, that "a stock of inherited conceptions of integrity and morality is a necessity for government," (useful, that subjects of the state be obedient), but "the end all and be all of a state is Power." "The state is the sole judge of the morality of its own actions. It is, in fact, above morality, or, in other words, whatever is necessary is moral."

From this it follows, in international relations, that there is no rule or guide to conduct except self-interest. In this present war a follower of Treitschke, one of the leading common-school educators of Germany, Kirschensteiner of Munich, drives home the theory. "The great lesson which the German people has had to learn is to think in terms of power."

Let no one here say that small states, too, can have a national life of their own. True, so long as the great states around them allow them to exist. But any day may see the end of their existence, in spite of all treaties to the contrary. Neither alliances nor treaties provide the least security. . . . There are

no ethical friendships between states in our day. . . . There are only friendships of convenience. And friendships of convenience last just as long as the convenience itself."

Professor Eulenberg of Leipzig sums it up, "All ethical considerations are completely alien to the state and the state must therefore resolutely keep them at arm's length."

Can we wonder that the German Foreign Secretary spoke of the broken treaty with Belgium as a "scrap of paper?" or that the school children of Germany celebrated the sinking of the Lusitania? or that German agents in America, smoothly friendly in appearance, secretly plotted, before we were in the war, to destroy our industries, our railways, even our lives?

Is there no such thing any more as a common humanity—no "decent respect to the opinion of mankind," as Thomas Jefferson stated it in the Declaration of Independence? Is our ideal of righteousness, yes, even of unselfishness, impossible in international politics? This war, if Germany is defeated, may decide these questions, but if Germany wins, the struggle has but just begun.

This American democracy of our day, and has always denied, the German theory; it asserts that the laws which formulate the duties of men toward each other are binding upon nations equally with individuals. For centuries civilization has been slowly advancing from ignorance, prejudice, and selfishness toward sympathy, understanding, and a desire to see justice done, whether between individuals or nations. The "be all and end all" of a state is not Power—it is Justice.

And the German government has left us in no doubt as to the results of her theory, in application. That government has broken a solemn treaty with Belgium, ordered the murder of innocent hostages, bombarded unfortified towns, torpedoed unarmed passenger ships, destroyed works of art where they could not be carried to Germany, plotted secret war against neutral nations—all of them actions she once pledged herself to forego—has lost, in short, all sense, apparently, that she is dragging the former good name of the German people through a mire of dishonor, the stain of which will not be removed for generations. Against this mad philosophy and mad government the war must be waged, until they are defeated, or there is no safety for men or nations.

This is the third of a series of ten articles by Professor Adams.

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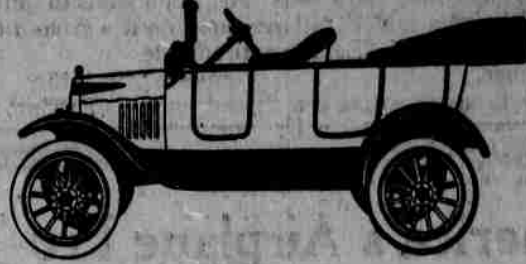
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