

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.

DEMOCRACY VERSUS AUTOCRACY

It is commonly said that this war is one in which America was forced to take part in order to "make the world safe for democracy." What does the phrase mean?

The theories and acts of the German military autocracy definitely deny the right of the people of a state to rule themselves. The German people, in spite of forms of government that make a pretense of popular control, have no such actual control over their governors as exists in democratically organized nations. In those nations the governors can be removed by a vote of the people in a general election; in Germany the people have not this power.

The aristocracy of Germany understand this difference, and are afraid of the spread of democracy in Germany. The whole, much-admired "efficiency" of Germany is primarily due to a desperate and constant effort by Germany's rulers to divert the German people from thoughts of self-government, by offering them material prosperity. And the rulers have succeeded. One of the causes of this war was the necessity, by still further "glorious acquisitions of territory," to hush the murmurings of political discontent in Germany. Victory in war, every so often, is a necessity of the German system. "It is for social as much as for national and political reasons that we must fix our minds incessantly upon war." "Success is necessary to gain influence over the masses," wrote Bernhardi; and General Von Bissing, just before his death, wrote a "Political Testament," since largely circulated in Germany, in which he argued for the retention of Belgium, because, unless it were annexed, the prestige of the military autocracy would receive a fatal blow.

Are we—the Allies—then fighting to impose upon Germany a different system; is that the meaning of "making the world safe for democracy?"

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Elihu Root says that American democratic ideals include "liberty not for themselves alone but for all who are oppressed." Lord George asserts that if all countries had been democratically organized, this war would not have taken place; that this war will determine not merely international relations, but will affect the lives of peoples within their own nations, for generations to come; that this war is to end in "international democracy," i. e., in liberty, equality, and fraternity, between nations, great and small. General Smuts, formerly a soldier against Great Britain in South Africa, says that the essence of this war is the question whether governments should be founded on military might or on "principles of equity, justice, fairness and equality."

Various writers have depicted this war as a test of democracy, to determine whether democracy can adjust itself to an emergency so that by sheer efficiency it shall at least equal the efficiency of a military autocracy, and assert that on this ground alone the future government of all the nations of the world is at stake. Will Crooks, the British labor leader, says this war "is a people's war. We are all in it, the man at the village pump and in the fields, the blacksmith, the carpenter and joiner, the shipwright, and the man of leisure. We are standing together because we are fighting for liberty."

Yes, this war is one in which ideals of government, of individual liberty, of civilization itself are in conflict. Democracy is lined up against autocracy. The war is in absolute fact a war of ideals. But we are not fighting to impose our ideals upon any nation. What we are fighting for, in "making the world safe for democracy," is to prevent a military autocracy from imposing its authority and its ideals upon us. We are ready to keep on minding our own business, and to let other nations do the same. A military autocracy that proposes to conquer the world must be defeated, to the point where it renounces meddling with other nations, great or small, or there is no peace in the world. That is the issue at stake, and in it rests our safety and the safety of the world.

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

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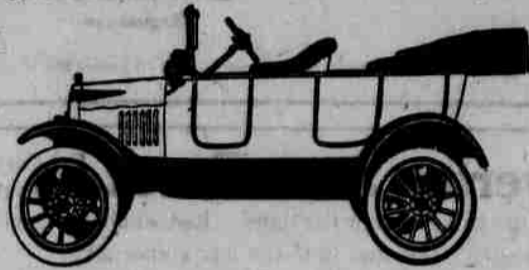
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Otto Erickson

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St. Cecelia's Parish Locals.

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matter there, with the assurance that the War Garden, having been duly initiated and appropriately named, would sustain no further damage in the future.

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The Annual May dinner will be served by the ladies of the parish and amusements will be

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