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America and the War, August 1914

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AMERICA AND THE WAR.

I.

Patriotic Duty.

I rode across the Andes into La Paz, Bolivia, with a friend, a German cavalry officer, and learned that the war had begun a week before. To the first person who asked me "On which side are your sympathies?" I answered, "My sympathies are purely American." I heard a bull-fighter ask the Steward on a Spanish steamer if he was not for the Germans. He replied in the same natural way, "Soy Español!" If a man takes his citizenship seriously, he must be a nationalist. No man can serve two masters.

There is only one loyalty, and that is exclusive. Most of us do not have to be told this. Those not born here were solemnly told it in the oath which was the honorable condition of their naturalization. The burden of proof is upon the new-made citizen. He should be the most careful of all.

The campaign to "organize" the Americans of a certain blood or birth into "an army of shouters" for the country, right or wrong, which they swore to cast off when they had the honor to take the oath of allegiance to the United States of America, is outrageous enough to warrant the sharp reproof of the American Government and of the American people it is that Government's duty to stand for. Why? Because, first of all, a partizanship, to be justified, must be based on love of America, devotion to America's

high interest, and it must be spontaneously American. As for transcendant moral considerations, America's worthy interests will be on their side too.

Apparently some of our newer citizens are forgetting these things. They are agitating because of love of a foreign power, not because of anxiety for the good of America. And while that group of citizens are drawn into this alien agitation, the mouths of the vast majority are more or less closed by proclamations beseeching them to an utter neutrality which they cannot be expected to feel. Now a country is a jealous mistress. Those of us who are Nationalists by nature must remind our fellowcitizens who are, in this excitement, forgetting themselves, that they must be nationalists too, and Americans not alone in name.

As for the public propaganda by high personages sent by foreign Governments to try to create in our country imperium in imperio, a cabal of our citizens to serve their alien policies, it is hard to believe that our Government and our public opinion have so far tolerated them. The open and above-board export of arms is lawful. The organization of an expedition for alien warlike purposes, within our jurisdiction, is unlawful. The moral wrong of the thing lies in its alien purpose to use our country for an alien war. Is there any difference, morally, between a shooting expedition and a "shouting" expedition for a purpose alien to America's interests?

In 1888 interference in American domestic affairs

brought to an abrupt end Sackville-West's Embassy to Washington, and he has not been the only one. Can there be a grosser interference in our domestic affairs than that publicly reported propaganda of Bernsdorff and Dernberg? Is there a more sacredly and purely American affair than the direct moulding of our opinion and policy in the delicate position we occupy in this war? A few dignified statements would pass, - but propaganda, an appeal to the racial feeling of a small minority, an attempt to "organize" our citizens! As to the substance of the propaganda, the German Government has no case for appeal to Americans on grounds of our interests or of morality. Otherwise they would scarcely dare to try to manipulate us through the racial prejudice of a part of our citizens.

It is to be hoped that the vote of a group with foreign sympathies does not make our Government fear to be boldly American. If so, it is time to prohibit all immigration for a while. It is time to organize an American party, - a Nationalist Party or League of the vast majority of us who with proper leadership will think nationally, not as the tools of alien influence, and who will in our everyday concerns think nationally, not parochially. If existing political parties have not the hardihood to be nationalist, let them then be relegated to local politics.

The future is long. The war opens for us great possibilities in South America. In the countries of the now accessible belligerents we have the chance to replace the products of those not now exporting, and later to supply much also to those

countries which will be loath to buy from their late enemies. Our trade potentialities loom in dazzling richness in the years to come, - if our business men build for all the to-morrows instead of just for to-day, and if our Government gives them efficient support and intelligent direction. The British have a law to direct the national financial strength where it shall benefit the nation, they are encouraging enterprises to replace their enemies' industrial specialties for export everywhere. The efficiency of German methods is almost proverbial. Have we a long-sighted plan from Washington? Are our Government, capital, and skill co-operating to avail, not of the paltry gambler's chances of to-day, but of the huge profits of the long future? If not, then in those quarters our serious nationalist duty to our great country is being ignored or sacrificed to opportunism, as it is in other quarters being sacrificed to a wrong or illegal double allegiance. From smuggling to honest but greedy and shortsighted shifts, whether to export or to buy a merchant marine, - all this would be unworthy of a deep patriotism.

II.

Diplomatic Questions.

Before discussing the attitude naturally taken by the overwhelming majority of patriotic Americans towards the war, it is perhaps well to discuss a little the questions which have arisen with Great Britain. Until the "German" Americans have sobered down, i.e., been freed from foreign tutelage, plain Americans must take exclusive charge of these. The South is very purely American, but naturally wants to export its cotton. It ought to want a policy that will take care of next year's crop for all time; not for to-day only. Copper, also, will keep without being put in the ici-box. Greed, like racial sympathy, must bow to patriotism and foresight. National rights † rightful national interests = policy. We will not see a valuable right taken nor even a useless one rudely flouted. But let us not too dogmatically stand on the quicksands of international law. It is not worth while, for such law is only, thus far, the equity of strong nations. Its whole history is an adaptation to changing conditions. The conditions of the law of "effective blockade", for example, have just now passed away with the demonstration of the submarine. Otherwise, it is evident that the British Navy would now effectively blockade every German port. The British Navy may possibly feel that these changed conditions must be met by such an adjustment as international law always makes to new conditions. It is futile as well as bad policy to strain and strive too far for international legalities, because nothing in them is permanent but their morality and their equitable

p. 27, 33 principles. The British, for example, might perhaps say that now, since the submarine does away with the old-fashioned "effective blockade," the effective blockade out at sea of a trade-route should suffice. Our own coast line is so long that to admit this principle, properly hedged about, could not hurt and might help us in a future war. Such a possible theory may be mentioned because to find a formula to reconcile the intent of the doctrine of "effective blockade" with the new conditions created by the submarine is a definite problem. We must not let our ideas get frozen in past formulae, nor must we heed propagandists in the pay of foreign Governments. So much for Britain's right literally to starve her enemies. As for British treatment of our ships destined to the ports of neutrals contiguous to their enemies, the standing of the doctrine of Continuous voyages is sufficient to justify careful scrutiny of neutral ships bound to such ports.

Not clear what consignments to a neutral port
As to contraband and conditional contraband, her rights are clear enough. We are, on the other hand, quite right in seeing that those rights shall be exercised in a considerate manner.

Now there arise other difficult questions. We need not be surprised. Of course there must arise hard questions. The point is to let no interested persons excite us about them and to solve them calmly, with conciliation, and will. We must keep our "eye on the ball". And the ball is the long run, ultimate advantage and honor of our country. Here are the questions: the

purchase by us of German ships during the war; and, second, the placing of such ships, under our flag, on trade routes to Germany or to countries which are gate-ways to Germany. Trade from a neutral to a belligerent has been sanctioned by international law. But it is subject to the right of search, to blockade and to the risk of seizure of conditional or absolute contraband. If the German ship was in Germany we could not buy it and get delivery, because it would be seized at sea as enemy property. But the ships are in American harbors. They are protected from British capture by our hospitable asylum. Such ships may be of a quasi public character, due to potential armament, partial government ownership, or other cause. In that case they are to be considered interned. It may well be argued that the idea of interning is to preserve the status quo of the ships until the end of the war; that what is interned is in the custody, as a trust, of the interning Government. For a neutral Government to buy ships interned with it, (as perhaps contemplated by the indefensible ship purchase bill) would be so unusual as hardly to be consistent with friendly comity towards the other belligerent. It would be a little like its interning an army and then paying all the cost. To put ships so bought on trade routes favorable to the belligerent seller would be a little like taking on the interned army as mercenaries against the other belligerent. For a neutral Government to buy purely private belligerent ships laid up for asylum, although not interned, with it, would be a degree less questionable.

The Declaration of London, which we helped frame, intimates something, I think, on this subject. At any rate, according to the Declaration of London, ships for warlike use are absolute contraband and all ships are conditional contraband. So is money. If bought by private persons a belligerent's ships must be guaranteed against the possibility of again becoming the belligerent's. It is bad enough if their use, by supplying him, gives the same belligerent one advantage of ownership. As for Government purchase of belligerent ships, of course a neutral's citizen may loan money, subject, morally, to his own country's interests, but what of the neutral Government's making a direct or indirect financial contribution to the belligerent? In trying out, on the European trade routes, the rights of neutrals on the sea under conditions so changed by the submarine and air craft as to tend to change international law itself, let us do so with American private owned vessels with no taint of previous belligerent ownership. Let us start no fresh "wooden nutmegs' fable. If the ships are quasi public, and so interned, their purchase is a financial contribution by a neutral Government to a belligerent Government. If the ships are private, and so merely laid up in the protected asylum of our harbors, their purchase by a neutral Government is a financial contribution, by the neutral Government, to the belligerents' great shipping investors. They, in turn, are relieved financially and can contribute the more to the war. The head of one of these great shipping trusts is reported to be in charge of

the German army's food transport. Suppose the ships theoretical-ly private. Our private citizens can buy the buildings of a belligerent on Manhattan Island. But these ships, he would buy owe their existence to the political protection of asylum in our harbors.

The rights of neutrals are intended to safeguard their ordinary activities. In legitimately taking advantage of a war situation, they should consider whether the effect upon the war of swift reversals of policy by themselves is morally neutral. With all the seas to roam, such a ship is placed on a trade route favorable to a belligerent. All right, but it is enough like changing the conditions after the game started to make the shipowner's Government patient and reasonable in his international law contentions. Let us get a merchant marine as soon as possible, but let us do it without starting another "wooden nutmeg" legend.

The Trust relation created by interning or laying up belligerent ships in our harbors makes us, as trustees, responsible to our cestiquitrust (Germany) to see that those ships be not molested in our harbors. It makes us responsible to the other cestiquitrust (Great Britain) to see that our harbors be not made a basis for the use of those ships against Great Britain. Then say we buy them and put them on routes to serve Germany. The purchase price is money for Germany's war: the trade route is food supply, directly or indirectly, for Germany's army. One cestiquitrust eats his cake and keeps it. What does the other cestiquitrust get?

*Very good
Robert*

Great Britain must not, of course, appeal to our sense of justice while harboring even incidentally the motive or desire to keep us off the seas as her future rival in the carrying trade. She must treat us no more as she did in her unsound or grasping contentions in the Panama tolls question. We want American private owned ships. Frank negotiation can find a way. Conditions and times of deferred payments, proposed trade routes, all such matters are suitable subjects for trustee and cestiquitrustent to discuss and adjust. Also, even such questions as an option, for Americans to buy desired ships, at an agreed price at the close of the war. England would be willing to promise much in return for consideration now.

III.

America's attitude and Interests.

America's attitude during this war should be dictated by American interests, morally, first; materially second.

Among our interests, three questions stand out. None of these questions properly concern any persons who have American citizenship and who yet are swayed by the love of any other country rather than by the love of America. Our citizens of German blood are here because they prefer our ways and our ideals to those of Germany. In preferring our ways and our ideals they perforce prefer the "Anglo Saxon" ways and ideals, for there is no evading the fact that our "language, institutions, and laws" are British. Our nursery rymes are British: so are our old books. Our foundations, the first seeds of our nation, are British. A building cannot disregard its foundations nor a garden its seeds. After all the years, in ideals and ways we are still more on the British than on any other pattern. If we think that we ought to survive, then we cannot help thinking that those we most resemble should survive. German Americans and all cannot deny that they prefer the

Anglo-Saxon idea of liberty to the new Germany's idea that might makes right and that any means whatever is justified by ambition. Therefore we would rather be confronted by British than by German overgrown power. And therefore it is to the interest of America that the Allies win.

The second question is: what is going to be to our interest after the war? Probably an Anglo-American understanding. With the objects of promoting peace, making war between the two countries as unlikely as possible, and, incidentally, perhaps making some adjustments of spheres of interest. For example the Philippine Islands might enter into a bargain whereby we should acquire more appropriate territories in and about the Carribean. As for giving away the Philippines. How could that be done honestly unless by a majority elected party which had stood clearly on that policy or by a referendum to the people whose blood and treasure bought them? An Anglo-American understanding may conceivably be the basis of a practical arrangement for universal peace. It may form a to which other powers would join their policy and the police force of their arms. At least, it holds as good a hope as any in sight.

The third question is what friends and what enemies is our attitude during the war to make us? It will certainly be very stupid if we succeed in gaining no friends but in rather irritating all the Powers concerned.

And are we not headed just that way ? The Germans know that American feeling and thought naturally favor the Allies. There would in no case, then, be any question of gaining the friendship of the Germany of to-day. The Germany of to-morrow may be very different.

And the Allies ? Neither our Government nor even a member of Congress demands to know about Germany's known violation of Hague conventions to which we and Germany are parties, or about the alleged or even the proved and known German atrocities. In time of peace we do not hear, without a murmur our conventions reported violated. We at least investigate the Congo and the Putumayo. It is not that we should assume conclusions injurious to Germany; but we should demand to know; we should throw our weight for the right when there are loud report of wrong.

We give the Allies the curious silence first mentioned. Then the export of sections of submarines to them was disallowed through a far-fetched citation of the Alabama case. There was wild talk, in which the influence of the peace propaganda was visible, of changing the neutrality laws.

To change the rules of the game after the game has started would be the grossest violation of fair play. The rules can only be changed after the game has started if new conditions, not contemplated by those rules, require their modification in order that permanent principles may find application to new

Very
supported if not in-
spired by German
Americans

conditions.

silent before reported German violations of conventions signed with ourselves, silent before reported German atrocities, we at first leaned backwards in discouraging the export of war materials when Britain's costly fleet has, in the regular course of the war game, created a situation in which the Allies would chiefly benefit by that trade.

It is really much to be hoped that the intelligent self-interest of the United States will regard the broad aspects of the future in the formulation of policy, and will not be concentrated upon temporary material advantages or upon the shifting sands of ephemeral international legalities.

It is only by good fortune that Germany made war in Europe instead of attempting to annex, say, Brazil, or Venezuela and Columbia. The British and Americans dislike one another less than either dislikes any other people. As among nations, that is a great deal. The heart of the mass of Americans, like their interest, is with Great Britain and the Allies. The triumph of British ideas is more palatable and safer for us than the triumph of German ideas. If we were shrewd we might join the war, gaining friendships and advantages while supporting the ideas that stand nearest to our own. At least let us think of the future and not gain the hate of the Allies as well as the dislike of the Germans. Self-interest points us, in this, where our heart is too.
