

**FAITH, WAR, AND POLICY;  
ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS  
ON THE EUROPEAN WAR**

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Faith, War, and Policy; Addresses and Essays on the European War by Gilbert Murray

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**GILBERT MURRAY**

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**This One**



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# FAITH, WAR, AND POLICY

## ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS ON THE EUROPEAN WAR

BY

GILBERT MURRAY



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## PREFACE

SUCH interest as this book may possess will be, I think, in large part historical. Changes have assuredly been wrought in the minds of all thoughtful people throughout Europe by the experiences of these three shattering years. And it seems worth while to have a record of the mind of a fairly representative English Liberal, standing just outside the circle of official politics. Consequently I have arranged the various papers in order of time rather than in groups according to subject, and I have not altered a sentence.

The papers treat of the faith in which the British Government and nation entered the war, and in which for my part I still continue; of the war itself and the human problems raised by it and the impossibility, at two given dates, of immediate peace; lastly, of certain questions of international policy, such as the possibility of democratic control in foreign affairs, the action of Great Britain at sea, our attitude towards Ireland and India, and our relations with the United States.

I have said nothing about home politics, because, in the first place, if I wished to exhort or to criticize my own Government, I should naturally do so at home and not in America; and in the second place, because, in spite of a number of minor issues which have caused acute feeling, there has not risen as yet any cardinal division between our main political parties. The policy with which we entered the war still holds the field, and the unity of the nation, though at times dangerously

threatened, is still maintained. Most Conservatives will, I think, agree with me in considering that a large part of this all-important result has been due to the wisdom and magnanimity, both in office and out of office, of the Liberal leader, Mr. Asquith.

There are, however, two grave problems ahead, which must needs be settled and which may possibly shatter that unity. One is the Irish Question. It may be that before these words are printed, Home Rule will be a fact, combined with whatever arrangement for Ulster the Ulstermen may desire. It may be that this present attempt at settlement, for which the House of Commons is calling in so resolute and sympathetic a spirit, will end in failure like its predecessors. The task is without doubt a difficult one. But a Government which permanently failed to deal with this flagrant danger to the Empire, and made the appearance of remaining content to hold down its own citizens with army corps which are needed against the Germans, could not, I think, long maintain itself in the respect of the nation.

The other question, when it comes, will be even more vital. I mean the question of Peace.

The only pure Peace candidate who has yet stood, a good speaker and a man much respected in the constituency, Mr. Backhouse, obtained about 500 votes to his opponent's 7000. That is a conclusive defeat. We entered into the war for certain objects, and it is clear to the whole nation that we have not yet won them. I am inclined myself to believe that the greatest object of all is probably secured; I think we have proved to the world in general, and to Germany in particular, that the policy of aggressive and unscrupulous militarism is a policy that does not pay. But the Prussian dynasty



stands unbroken. We have not defeated Germany in the field. We have not secured the evacuation of France, the restoration of the injured nations, or the expulsion of the Turks from Europe. Consequently we cannot yet think of making peace.

But a time will come when we shall have to think of it.

It is not likely that we shall be defeated in this war; on the other hand, it is not at all probable that we shall win an absolute and crushing victory. We could not force unconditional surrender upon the Boers, though our Government prolonged the war for a year in the hope of doing so. We shall certainly not succeed in forcing it upon the Germans. No responsible soldier, no responsible politician, expects such a thing. No one expects it except the most violent section of the press and the most credulous elements among the public. The question is therefore bound to arise sooner or later whether enough of our full purpose has been gained to justify us in accepting peace, or — more exactly — whether, once certain results have been attained, our cause is more likely to gain or to lose by further fighting. The handling of this question will be the crucial test of British statesmanship.

For my own part I am prepared to approve of every item in the Allied Programme as stated, somewhat obscurely, in the joint note to President Wilson and explained in Mr. Balfour's covering letter. Every item is, I believe, in itself desirable. But they vary both in importance and in expensiveness. If the main objects can be achieved this year or next year, to go on fighting indefinitely, *à la* Northcliffe, for the whole complete programme would be the action not only of wicked men, but

of fools. This is, I feel confident, the belief, spoken or unspoken, of the overwhelming majority of the nation, whether in the army or out of it. The problem, of course, will be to choose the best moment, neither too soon nor too late.

Since the last of these papers was written, two events have occurred, so vast and beneficent, at least in their present appearances, that hitherto one had hardly dared to pray for them. The long-dreamed-of Russian Revolution, for which through generation after generation so many martyrs have died, is at last a reality. One of the most gifted nations in the world, comprising a hundred and forty millions of human beings, after being held down for centuries under the worst despotism in the civilized world, is now free. This is marvellous, and we cannot yet take it in.

The effect of the revolution on the fortunes of the war is, of course, still doubtful. It may be conclusive. It may, conceivably, provoke a similar movement in Germany and bring down that Prussian despotism which Mr. Lloyd George, in memorable words, has described as "the only obstacle to peace." It may, again, result in utter disaster; in civil war or prolonged disorder at home, and with the Hohenzollerns in Petrograd restoring the Romanoffs. Most likely the new order will, in spite of friction and difficulty, maintain itself, and the Russian people will fight on with the more resolution as they realize the more clearly that this war is the war of their own emancipation. All England is anxious and realizes the risk. But we take the risk gladly. I confess it made me proud of my country to see how universal was the welcome with which almost all classes here greeted the

revolution. No anxiety about our own fortunes could check that immense and instinctive outburst of happiness.

In the second place, America has entered the war. I should like to explain why I rejoice at this event, which must seem to many of my American friends as, at best, a grievous necessity.

America has come in most reluctantly and with extreme slowness. That is natural. She hates war as much as England does, and her provocations have been infinitely less. She has not come in as our ally. She has come in to repel her own injuries. We have certainly no responsibility for dragging her into the war.

But, once in, she must needs fight at our side, and thereby create some new national memories to temper, if not to obliterate, those of the past. Her two wars against England will be matched by one far greater war by the side of England. To me, as an Englishman who loves America, that is a great source of satisfaction. Of course we cannot tell yet what sort of action America means to take; but for our part the more fully and generously she accepts her share in the world's burden the better the result will be.

But there is something else at stake also. This war is deciding an issue more momentous than any duel between the Entente and the Central Powers, more momentous even than the restoration of the injured nations. It is deciding which of two fundamental principles is to rule the world— Democracy or Despotism, Freedom or Compulsion, Consent or the Power of the Sword. It would have been surely an unspeakable calamity if, in that world-ordeal, the greatest of democratic nations