

**BRITAIN'S CASE AGAINST
GERMANY: AN EXAMINATION
OF
THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
OF THE GERMAN ACTION IN 1914**

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Britain's Case Against Germany: An Examination of the Historical Background of the German Action in 1914 by Ramsay Muir

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An Examination of the Historical Background
of the German Action in 1914

BY

RAMSAY MUIR,

Professor of Modern History in the University of Manchester

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PREFACE

DESPITE the difficulty of maintaining an attitude of aloofness and impartiality during a great war, I have honestly tried in this little book to see the facts plainly, and never to tamper with them. My main purpose is to show that the great issue for which we are now fighting is no new thing, and has not emerged suddenly out of diplomatic difficulties in the Balkans. It is the result of a poison which has been working in the European system for more than two centuries, and the chief source of that poison is Prussia. Accordingly, I have tried to show (1) that the action of Germany in 1914 is due to a theory of international politics which has taken possession of the minds of the German people since the middle of the nineteenth century; (2) that this theory is the outcome of the traditional policy of the Prussian state during the last two hundred and fifty years; (3) that it had to fight against a far nobler and more inspiring ideal, the ideal of the Germany of Goethe, of Stein and of Dahlmann, and only the dazzling success of the Prussian policy as pursued by Bismarck made possible its victory; (4) that the German Empire of to-day is so organised as to ensure the dominion of the Prussian military monarchy and of Prussian ideas and methods over the rest of Germany; and

(5) that the policy of this Empire during the last quarter of a century has been the natural sequel of earlier Prussian action, and has found its inevitable culmination in the monstrous war of 1914.

But over against the Prussianised German State, with its poisonous belief in brute force, I have tried to show that there has been growing up in the rest of the civilised world a far nobler and saner view of the way in which international relations should be conducted. This view, increasing steadily in strength, has expressed itself in the development of the Concert of Europe, in the establishment of treaties for the protection of small states, in the growth of international arbitration, and in the whole remarkable movement which culminated in the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907. Germany has been throughout the most determined opponent of this whole movement; Britain has been throughout its strongest and most strenuous supporter.

In the British Empire, indeed, and in all that it increasingly stands for, we may reasonably claim to see the absolute antithesis of the German ideal, its belief in self-government, in freedom, in variety over against the German belief in military monarchy, rigid discipline and uniformity; its belief in peace over against the German praise of war; its belief that Freedom and Justice, and not mere physical Power, are the supreme ends and justification of the state. Perhaps this sharp conflict of ideals may provide part of the explanation for the