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THE THREAT OF GERMAN WORLD-POLITICS;  
NO. 2. AMERICANS AND THE WORLD-CRISIS;  
NO. 3. DEMOCRACY THE BASIS FOR WORLD-  
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Chicago University

# The University of Chicago War Papers

No. 1

## THE THREAT OF GERMAN WORLD-POLITICS

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## THE THREAT OF GERMAN WORLD-POLITICS

### THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE WAR ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES

The United States has been driven into war with Germany by the entry of that power into a policy of piracy on the high seas. Within the area of the Atlantic Ocean, some fifteen hundred miles long and six hundred miles wide, and within nearly all of the Mediterranean Sea notification has been duly given that vessels will be sunk by German submarines without regard to nationality and without regard to the purpose of their voyage.

The joint resolution adopted by Congress in April, 1917, declared a state of war to exist with Germany. Eighteen American ships had already been sunk by German attacks, and two hundred thirty-seven Americans had been killed. The attacks were not only on vessels of the United States. Piratical raids were uniformly aimed at everybody. One-third of the Norwegian commercial marine had been destroyed. In May, 1915, the "Lusitania," a passenger ship, was sunk without warning, without giving any chance for the safety of those on board. More than one thousand persons were drowned. Over one hundred of these were Americans, many of them women and little children.

In these German attacks on neutral rights and safety there was no remote resemblance to the acts of the British navy. While it is true that American commerce with Germany was hindered and in a large measure prevented by the British naval blockade, at the same time not one American life had been lost, not one American ship had been destroyed. It was wholly a matter of property. Each claim on the British government resulting from the blockade could be settled by courts of law, and damages could be paid in money. The only immediate effect on American prosperity was perhaps that the profits of American business might be double rather than threefold what they had been before the war. Further, the question as to the unlawfulness of the British blockade at best was in doubt. Very likely a suit before a court of arbitration on that ground would have gone against the United States.

A government which does not protect the rights of its citizens on the high seas will presently have no rights left. If we permit Germany to

forbid navigation within twenty miles of the coast of Spain, presently we may expect to have that navigation forbidden twenty miles from the coast of the United States.

In short, a government which peaceably submits to such outrages will have and will deserve to have the contempt of the world.

The lawless acts of the German navy under the specific orders of the German imperial government constituted war upon the United States. The joint resolution of Congress in April did not begin war, but recognized a state of war as already existing by the act of Germany.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE DEEPER CAUSES OF THE WORLD-WAR

We now realize clearly that the world-war, however, has much deeper causes than the mere attempt to blockade the Entente Allies by a submarine campaign. This deeper cause in its essence is a world-wide piratical attack by Germany on nations which have what Germany wants. The word "piracy" is here used in a larger sense than its technical application in international and criminal law. In this larger sense it means seizing by force what belongs to another nation, whether by land or sea. We have learned that there is a scheme, the result of decades of careful and elaborate planning, for subjecting the entire world, sooner or later, to the domination of the German Empire. There is a scheme for seizing coveted lands and coveted dominion in every quarter of the globe. It is in this conflict for the liberty of the world that our country is now deeply concerned. Should the submarine policy itself be withdrawn, it would be idle for us to put a stop to hostilities. We must stay in the fight until these deeper causes of the Great War are destroyed, and until there are adequate securities against their early recurrence.

In reality, then, this war on the part of the United States is, in the first place, a war of self-defense and, in the second place, a war for the defense of all the other democracies of the world.

#### THE GERMAN EMPIRE AN ENEMY OF THE WORLD

The German Empire as now organized and as now administered is an enemy of the world by reason, first, of its controlling forces; by reason, secondly, of the far-reaching, piratical aims of those forces; by reason, thirdly, of the methods by which the imperial government of Germany seeks to attain these ends.

<sup>1</sup> "War Information Series": *How the War Came to America*, pp. 22-23.



I. THE CONTROLLING FORCES IN GERMANY

The controlling forces in question are perhaps five:

1. The first is the virtually autocratic government of the empire. The constitution of the German Empire is such that the will of the king of Prussia finds easy expression and is only with great difficulty to be resisted. While nominally a constitutional monarch, virtually he is an autocrat.

In these days monarchy is by no means always equivalent to autocracy. In the British monarchy, for instance, it is true that the king succeeds by heredity in the limits of a certain family. However, this succession was determined by act of Parliament, and act of Parliament may set aside the royal family altogether, or any king within the royal family. The British ministers and the Cabinet in England are responsible, not to the king, but to the elective House of Commons. In other words, Parliament through a freely elected House of Commons actually governs the country. The king reigns, but he does not rule. The House of Commons is chosen by what we may call universal suffrage, and in itself has the power under certain customary conditions, not merely to enact new legislation, but even to change the fundamental laws of the country. In short, the British monarchy is a real representative democracy. It is a monarchy only in name.

In Prussia the monarchy is quite different. Here the king also succeeds by heredity and in a certain family, but that succession is independent of parliament or constitution. It is claimed by the king that he succeeds by divine right and not by the will of the people. The Prussian constitution was not made by the Prussian people. It is a grant from the king, who may at any time revoke it. The Prussian ministry is responsible, not to the Prussian parliament, but to the king, who appoints and removes his ministers without regard to parliament or to the popular will. The upper house of the Prussian legislature consists of members who succeed by heredity, and of others appointed by the king. The lower house of the Prussian parliament is, to be sure, elective, but elective by the people on the three-class system. The electorate is divided into three classes according to the amount of taxes paid. The first class, electing one-third of the members, contains approximately 4 per cent of the population. The second class, electing another third of the members, contains about 14 per cent of the population. The third class, also electing one-third of the members, contains about 82 per cent of the population.

In other words, in the Prussian government the king, the hereditary nobility, and the possessors of wealth govern the country. The masses are very nearly helpless.

In the German Empire the king of Prussia, by virtue of being king of Prussia, is German emperor. The ministers are responsible to the emperor, not to the parliament, the chancellor and other members of the ministry being appointed and removed without regard to the desire of parliament or to the popular will excepting in so far as the emperor sees fit. The upper house of the parliament, the Council of the Empire, consists of the delegates appointed by the governments of the 25 states in the federal empire. In this body of 61 delegates there are 17 Prussians; that is, they are virtually appointed by the king of Prussia; and 3 others whom the German emperor, that is, the king of Prussia, controls. These delegates must vote as directed by those who appoint them. Further, no change in the fundamental law of the empire can be made against the votes of 14 members of the Council. Thus the king of Prussia, or in other words the emperor, can prevent any constitutional amendment.

The lower house of parliament—the Reichstag—is elected by universal suffrage, the electors being not less than twenty-five years of age. However, the original apportionment was made in 1871 and there has been no change since. A deputy from Berlin represents on an average about 125,000 voters, while a deputy from the districts of East Prussia, which contain the Prussian landed aristocracy, represents only about 24,000 voters. Legislation is virtually determined by the Council of the Empire, and the Council of the Empire is controlled by the emperor and by the other hereditary princes.

The German Empire is far from being a democracy, whether direct or representative. The power to declare war is in the emperor with the assent of the Council, but when the emperor sees fit to consider the war a defensive one he may declare war without the consent of the Council. That is just what happened in 1914, when the Emperor declared war—and thus is wholly responsible for bringing on the great world-war in which we are now engaged.

2. Another of the controlling forces is the Prussian military caste, arrogant, exclusive, and determined on domination.

The Prussian nobility, at least by custom, has so managed affairs that it has a practical monopoly of appointments to office in the army. In the reserve, sons of great commercial magnates are allowed minor positions, but the control of the army is for the nobles. Their power in politics, especially in eastern Prussia, owing to semi-feudal conditions

and to archaic election laws, is very great. Thus a mediaeval noble class, military and political in power, depending on the emperor for its prestige and in turn supporting the emperor as a God-given monarch, is one of the controlling forces in the German Empire, and a force sinister and baleful in the extreme. The members of this class believe implicitly in the divine right of the noble to flout the common man and of Prussianized Germany to flout the world. Arrogant, insolent, domineering, they go far to make and to keep Germany a bitter enemy to free democratic institutions through all the world.

3. Still another of the controlling forces is found in those who direct the manufacturing and commercial life of the German Empire. They are determined to spread their enterprises throughout the world, not merely by ordinary competition, but by force wherever competition in itself is not sufficient. Years ago it was said repeatedly to a thoughtful American at that time visiting in Germany that Germany must shortly have a war with the United States, the reason being that the United States had begun to attempt to secure a share in the world-markets. This attempt, it was said, must be met with cannon, because those markets belonged to Germany.

4. The fourth great controlling force is the Pan-German organizations. These organizations have been actively at work in definite form since about 1894. Their aims cover the world, and have been expressed in a series of pamphlets, articles, and books with which Germany in the last two or three decades has been flooded. While ostensibly private organizations, it is very clear that their aims are essentially the aims of the other controlling forces in the Empire, and must be reckoned with by the rest of the world, therefore, not as the mere vaporings of irresponsible individuals, but as the deliberate plan which Germany as a whole is determined on carrying out.<sup>1</sup>

5. Another of the ruling influences in Germany is a strange philosophy of the state which seems generally accepted. There is no law of right but that of power, if the state is a party. In short, ethics, as commonly understood in the rest of the world, in Germany apparently applies, if at all, only as between individuals. The state is not bound by any standard but its own advantage. Laws, treaties, solemn governmental engagements, cease to be binding as soon as they cease to be advantageous. Chivalry, courtesy, humanity, are of no account at all if the state otherwise orders. To be sure, this is a code of ethics which is appropriate for pirates; but it is a code which is unquestionably

<sup>1</sup> Chéradame, chap. i.