

**OUTLINE OF THE COURSE ON ISSUES
OF THE WAR FOR THE STUDENT ARMY
TRAINING CORPS. PART I. HISTORICAL
AND ECONOMIC CAUSES OF THE
WAR. SECOND INSTALMENT**

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Outline of the Course on Issues of the War for the Student Army Training Corps. Part I.
Historical and economic causes of the war. Second Instalment by E. M. Sait

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**Outline of the
Course on Issues of the War for the
Student Army Training Corps**

**PART I
Historical and Economic Causes of the War**

Second Instalment

Given by George Herbert Mead

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III

HOW THE UNITED STATES CAME TO ENTER THE WAR

Prepared by Professor E. M. Sait

I. America's First Reactions to the War

1. Attitude of amazement. Consternation at the actual outbreak of hostilities; moral sense of the community shocked.
2. Explanation of this attitude: to many people permanent peace had seemed so near attainment. Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907; their influence in promoting arbitration and a better understanding of the principles and rules of international law. Leadership of the United States in the world peace movement. The Bryan treaties, which provide for a year's delay, pending inquiry by an international commission into differences between states; among important states Germany and Austria-Hungary alone hold back.

This plan provides for treaties by which the United States shall institute with other nations a system of permanent international commissions of inquiry, on the general principle of the commission adopted by the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, but with certain advanced features which these conventions do not contain. The Bryan plan, like article three of the arbitration treaties of President Taft, provides that in case diplomacy has failed to adjust any international difference, the dispute may be taken to a permanent international commission of inquiry for impartial investigation. The plan provides for a commission of five members, one from each contracting country, one chosen by each contracting country from some other country, and one chosen by these four. It gives the commission authority to take the initiative. While a question is being considered by the commission, governments which are parties to the dispute shall neither declare war nor increase their armaments, but the clause in regard to the truce of armaments will not apply if one of the countries becomes menaced in a dispute with a third country. *American Year Book, 1913, p. 113*

References:

How the War Came to America, pp. 1-6 (Series No. 1, War Information, No. 1)

HULL, W. I.: *The New Peace Movement*

OGG: *National Progress*, pp. 325-328

TAFT, W. H.: *The United States and Peace*, Chaps. III and IV

II. American Neutrality*(A. Y. B., 1914, pp. 41-43)*

1. President Wilson's proclamation of neutrality. This proclamation, issued on August 4 and affecting the five belligerent powers, was repeated as other states entered the war. The Government takes a stricter view of its neutral obligations than the letter of the law would require; for example, Secretary Bryan regarding a proposed loan by private bankers to France: "Loans to any foreign nation which is at war is inconsistent with the spirit of neutrality."
2. The President's Address of February 6, 1916. The United States should keep out of the war "at the sacrifice of everything except the single thing upon which her character and history are grounded—her sense of humanity and justice." (*A. Y. B.*, 1916, p. 15.)
3. The President's course conforms with traditional American policy of non-intervention.
 - a. Washington's Farewell Address:

Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities. Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course.

(This utterance did not imply that the United States should not engage in war with a European power upon sufficient provocation.)
 - b. Jefferson's First Inaugural:

Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.
 - c. The Monroe Doctrine as illustrating our policy of isolation.
 - d. American Attitude at the Hague Conferences:

Nothing contained in this convention shall be so construed as to require the United States of America to depart from its traditional policy of not intruding upon, interfering with, or entangling itself in the political questions or policy or internal administration of any foreign state.

- e. Attitude at Algeciras, 1906. American delegates to the conference, which regulated the affairs of Morocco, explicitly announced that the United States assumed no responsibility for the enforcement of the treaty.
- f. Reference: As to the policy of isolation see *John Bassett Moore, International Law Digest*, Vol. VI.

III. Germany's Ruthless War on Land. Justice and Humanity, as Well as Treaty Obligations, Disregarded

- 1. Belgian neutrality violated (see First Instalment of Outline).

- 2. Germany bound by the Hague conventions.

These conventions seek to confine the evils of warfare to the combatants. For example (Articles 46, 50, 52):

Family honors and rights, the lives of persons, and private property, as well as religious convictions and practices, must be respected. Private property cannot be confiscated.

No general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, shall be inflicted upon the population on account of the acts of individuals for which they cannot be regarded as jointly and severally responsible.

Requisitions in kind and services shall not be demanded from municipalities or inhabitants except for the needs of the army of occupation. They shall be in proportion to the resources of the country, and of such a nature as not to involve the inhabitants in the obligation of taking part in military operations against their own country.

Quoted in *German War Practices (Committee on Public Information)*, p. 41

- 3. Barbarous and illegal conduct of the German invaders.

- a. Summary of the charges made by the Belgian Commission:

- 1. That thousands of unoffending civilians, including women and children, were murdered by the Germans.
- 2. That women had been outraged.
- 3. That the custom of the German soldiers immediately on entering a town was to break into wineshops and the cellars of private houses and madden themselves with drink.
- 4. That German officers and soldiers looted on a gigantic and systematic scale, and, with the connivance of the German authorities, sent back a large part of the booty to Germany.
- 5. That the pillage had been accompanied by wanton destruction and by bestial and sacrilegious practices.
- 6. That cities, towns, villages, and isolated buildings were destroyed.
- 7. That in the course of such destruction human beings were burnt alive.

8. That there was a uniform practice of taking hostages and thereby rendering great numbers of admittedly innocent people responsible for the alleged wrongdoings of others.

9. That large numbers of civilian men and women had been virtually enslaved by the Germans, being forced against their will to work for the enemies of their country, or had been carried off like cattle into Germany, where all trace of them had been lost.

10. That cities, towns, and villages had been fined and their inhabitants maltreated because of the success gained by the Belgian over the German soldiers.

11. That public monuments and works of art had been wantonly destroyed by the invaders.

12. And that generally the Regulations of the Hague Conference and the customs of civilized warfare had been ignored by the Germans, and that amongst other breaches of such regulations and customs, the Germans had adopted a new and inhuman practice of driving Belgian men, women, and children in front of them as a screen between them and the allied soldiers.

Quoted in *German War Practices*, p. 22

b. Deliberate and systematic massacres of civilians in Belgium and France to prevent and punish resistance; even mutilation and torture.

In the night of August 18-19 the village of Saint-Maurice was punished for having fired on German soldiers by being burnt to the ground by the German troops (two regiments, the 12th Landwehr and the 17th). The village was surrounded, men posted about a yard from one another, so that no one could get out. Then the Uhlans set fire to it, house by house. Neither man, woman, nor child could escape; only the greater part of the live stock was carried off, as that could be used. Anyone who ventured to come out was shot down. All the inhabitants left in the village were burnt with the houses. (From the diary of Private Karl Scheufele, of the Third Bavarian Regiment of Landwehr Infantry.)

Quoted in *German War Practices*, p. 27

ORDER

To the People of Liège:

The population of Andenne, after making a display of peaceful intentions towards our troops, attacked them in the most treacherous manner. With my authorization, the General commanding these troops has reduced the town to ashes and has had 110 persons shot.

I bring this fact to the knowledge of the people of Liège in order that they may know what fate to expect should they adopt a similar attitude.

Liège, 22nd August, 1914

General VON BÜLOW

Quoted in *German War Practices*, p. 31

During the execution of about forty inhabitants of Dinant, the Germans placed before the condemned their wives and children. It is thus that Madame Albin who had just given birth to a child, three days previously, was brought on a mattress by German soldiers to witness the execution of her husband; her cries and supplications were so pressing that her husband's life was spared.

American Minister to Belgium
Quoted in *German War Practices*, p. 32

But whether their hands were cut off or not, whether they were impaled on bayonets or not, children were shot down, by military order, in cold blood. In the awful crime of the Rock of Bayard, there overlooking the Meuse below Dinant, infants in their mothers' arms were shot down without mercy. The deed, never surpassed in cruelty by any band of savages, is described by the Bishop of Namur himself:

"One scene surpasses in horror all others; it is the fusillade of the Rocher Bayard near Dinant. It appears to have been ordered by Colonel Meister. This fusillade made many victims among the nearby parishes, especially those of des Rivages and Neffe. It caused the death of nearly ninety persons, without distinction of age or sex. Among the victims were babies in arms, boys and girls, fathers and mothers of families, even old men."

American Minister to Belgium
Quoted in *German War Practices*, p. 33

- c. Civilians, including women and children, used to screen German forces from attack. "I saw the Germans advancing on hands and knees towards our positions; they were in close formation and had a line of women and children in front of their front rank." (Report of the "Bryce Committee," appendix, p. 118.)
- d. Pillage and wanton destruction ordered and countenanced by officers.

Over all this area, that is in the country lying about Visé, Liège, Dinant, Namur, Louvain, Vilverde, Malines, and Aerschot, a rich agricultural region dotted with innumerable towns, villages and hamlets, a land of contented peace and plenty, during all that month of August there were inflicted on the civilian population by the hordes that overran it deeds of such ruthless cruelty and unspeakable outrage that one must search history in vain for others like them committed on such a prodigious scale. Towns were sacked and burned, homes were pillaged; in many places portions of the population, men, women, and children, were massed in public squares and mowed down by *mitrailleuses*, and there were countless individual instances of an amazing and shameless brutality. The stories of these deeds gradually filtered into Brussels in ever increasing numbers as the days went by, brought by the refugees, who, in crowds, fled the stricken