

# AN OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

BY HENRY W. MASSINGHAM

It would, I think, be true to say that while British feeling about America's relation to the war has varied from time to time, it has had one characteristic element: the desire to secure and retain your sympathy. I distinguish this sentiment from an appeal for material help. This it has never consciously been. The British public is not an expert witness of American opinion or even of American institutions. No country ever so estimates another. But, even if it believed in a German victory, it would know that the political habits of your people and the judgment of your greatest men bound you to avoid the entanglement of European alliances. This entanglement you have avoided. You were not a party to the Treaty of 1839, under which Britain came to the rescue of Belgium. Still less were you concerned in our moral and material engagements with France. So with many of the indirect issues of the war. Let us say that the Allies desire, for definite military reasons, the coöperation of Italy, Roumania, and Bulgaria. Here lie some well-defined concerns of European politics, the key to which is in the treaties and wars of the last century and of this. These matters, we know, are and must remain remote from you.

Equally do we recognize that some European problems in which America has a keen moral interest do not, like your work for the Christian populations of the Near East, run on the precise lines of the Triple Entente. Your sympathy for the Jews of Eastern Europe

is one of these questions. Still less do we ask you to contribute to the decision of such difficulties as Hungary's treatment of the Croats, or the race-problems involved in the resettlement of the coast of Dalmatia. All this is old, tough material of diplomacy, which our continental statesmanship must throw into shape. Each nation is the guardian of its honor and interests; each has its separate sphere of direct responsibility.

I assume, therefore, that the hope of the British peoples has been for an assurance, not of an alliance with the United States, but of what diplomatic phrasing calls 'benevolent neutrality' and the average man calls 'sympathy.' As a nation, we have, I think, failed to realize what this has already meant for us, in help for our nationals and care for our prisoners, and in the magnificent effort to feed the starving people of Belgium. Your diplomatic service is in one way modeled on our own; but within the last few months we have had good cause to admire its unequalled efficiency and public spirit. Outside your official circles, Mr. Hoover has accomplished the unprecedented feat of softening the hard heart of German militarism. The lives of over a million Belgians, which lay beyond hope of succor from the allied forces, have for months depended on his care.

No country but yours could have conceived and executed such a work of disinterested humanity. Not a tithe of the civilized and assuaging intercourse that has been carried on even between

subjects of the belligerents would have been possible but for the intervention of the American ambassadors and consuls. You have established some of the best hospitals, and organized the noblest charities of the war.

So far, therefore, as the exercise of moral force is concerned, Britain's attitude can only be one of gratitude to the American government and nation, and of relief that so powerful a neutral force is available to save the older world from some of the worst consequences of the war. But permit me to say that at this point we in Europe reach new and crucial issues. This is a conflict, not between armies but between nations, or rather between two governing systems and their dependencies in five continents. It involves non-combatants to an extent unknown even in the Napoleonic wars; and being a war by sea as well as by land, — an effort at attrition hardly less than at superiority by armed force, — it affects the entire course of international sea-trade and the dependent and very delicate system of international credit. Germany, in waging war with us, wages it with New York and Copenhagen as well; and it is fair to say the same of us and of our allies.

America, therefore, was 'in the war' from the moment the first gun was fired. Her commerce, her credit, her international obligations, were all caught up in its fatal whirl. Subject to her general reserve as to the avoidance of entangling alliances, she was a party to the Hague Conventions of 1907; and she has been something more than a party, she has been the spiritual leader, in the movement for international arbitration which has suffered so disastrous an eclipse. She has naturally been the chief guardian of neutral interests in maritime commerce, and she has already defined her own interests in a series of notes to the belligerents.

Therefore her neutrality has never been a silent neutrality. On the contrary, it has been much the most active national factor in the world-situation which this strife of civilization has brought about. America cannot depose herself. All eyes are turned on her, because all parties are conscious of her strength.

Equally impossible, as it seems to us, is it for your people to be indifferent to the results of the war. Assume that the conflict ends in a deadlock of forces so complete that, by economic exhaustion or by the imminence of internal revolution, a compromise is forced on the belligerents, which leaves the balance of European power much as it stands today. Recovery could not be immediate, but when it came, the renewal of the conflict would be inevitable. Russia and Germany would dispute the unsettled leadership of the Near East, and the possession of Asia Minor. The Balkan States would renew their desperate and uncomposed rivalries. On the almost inconceivable hypothesis that we left the battle for the mastery of the Belgian coasts unfought, and allowed Belgium to sink into hopeless ruin, and Turkey to fall under the control of a power able to dispute our rule in India and Egypt, we should merely engage ourselves for an early arbitrament of these capital issues, losing in the preparation for it the boon of voluntary military service. There is nothing in American history enabling her to realize the physical desolation of such a struggle. But its political consequences would soon be brought home to her statesmen, as well as to her bankers and merchants, and we can well imagine the immense moral effort to which it would impel her.

But inconclusiveness cannot well be the mark of this war. The organization planned by the greatest bureaucratic power the world has ever known will either smash its way through Western

democracy, or will break itself against the superior numbers and moral force of the Allies. In spite of our association with Russia, we believe that a victory for the Allies carries with it new promise of ideas and forms of political life with which you are in sympathy; and that in the event of a German success, those principles and institutions will be discredited, and others will take their place.

We have our jingoes, but they do not deflect the main stream of our energies, which are pacific and industrial. The years which saw Germany's attempt to denationalize Prussian Poland also witnessed the grant of autonomy to South Africa and Ireland. Britain's world-power rests on her fleet and her sea-commerce. These forces are wielded by an uncrowned republic. So long as our free-trade system holds, they cannot be inimical to the development of international trade or of political liberty. On the other hand, Germany's organization rests on three supports: autocracy, protection, militarism. To-day it is militarism without sea-power; on the morrow of Germany's victory it would be militarism plus navalism, applied not merely to the European situation, which she would dominate from Antwerp to Constantinople, but to her colonial possessions and ambitions.

Sea-power is no longer expressed in battleships and cruisers. Submarines, aeroplanes, waterplanes, — conveyed on warships, or acting within wider and wider sea-areas, — and incendiary and explosive bombs, — these are its auxiliaries and promise to become its master-weapon. Who, in the event of a German success, will direct this weapon? Not an essentially commercial and conservative power, like ourselves, content with what it has and resting on voluntary military service for well-defined objects of imperial policy, but a

new, expanding, aggrandizing state, using science for far-reaching ends of conquest. America cannot desire such a displacement. She cannot wish to see the diffused, multifiform purposes which democracies, federal or unitary, possess, giving way to the unified central will directed by a military group, which the German system requires. Such a redistribution of forces must impose fresh military and naval responsibilities on America. So long as the Dutch and Belgian and French coasts of the Channel remain in their existing ownership, America sees the western flank of Europe held by the nations whose history and institutions are the nearest akin to her own. These conditions will cease with a German tenure of Calais and Antwerp.

Take another aspect of the war. Germany is of all the great powers the one which has had least recourse to the Hague Tribunal, and which prepared us, through her military writers, for her complete repudiation of it in action. In the result, the Conventions are swept away. Once disowned and flouted, their force, which was purely moral, is gone. War has been rebarbarized. The system of guaranteeing treaties, under which many of the smaller European powers enjoy their independence, also disappears on the day when Belgium becomes a German state. Holland falls in due time, by force of economic pressure, achieved through the German possession of Antwerp; and the Scandinavian countries, delivered from the fear of Russia, will not delay to make terms with the mistress of the Baltic and the North Sea. It would be hard to exaggerate the extent to which fear — fear of the might of organization, fear of the 'frightfulness' with which Germany makes war, fear of her aggressive, penetrating commercialism, fear of her ships and tariffs — would dominate a Europe which had seen the

overthrow of a weak moral defense of neutral and non-combatant rights, of the territorial independence of inferior states, and generally of law unsupported by force. These things have been struck at without protest from any strong neutral power.

What does that imply? Quite possibly that the method of the Hague Conventions was radically wrong. They were of the nature of voluntary law, in itself the main basis of international regulation. Fenced round with many weak concessions extorted by the military agents of the signatory powers, they yet appealed to conduct, to propriety, to the average feelings of humanity, premising that though these bonds were weaker than those governing individual morals, Christian civilization, working through the minds of the great international jurists, had progressed far enough to insure respect for them.

Six points of the Hague Conventions — the sanctity of neutral territory; the vetoes on collective punishments for supposed individual offenses; on the crushing of a community by exorbitant fines, levies and requisitions; on the slaughter of non-combatants, and the wholesale and needless destruction of their property by fire or pillage; on the bombardment of undefended places; and on the burning or shelling of churches and public buildings — were broken within the first few weeks of the war. All these acts have passed *sub silentio*. Protests by belligerents could not avail; but was not the opinion of neutrals — of the greatest of all the neutrals — free to express itself, as soon as the facts could be collected, without proper cause of offense to the guilty party? To assume the contrary is surely to say that international law is without real sanction; and that from the moment of the declaration of war, all its instruments lapse, and we tend to revert, at

Germany's instance, to the anarchy of unregulated force.<sup>1</sup>

I think we understand what America's answer may be to the plea for her intervention as the champion of the Hague Conventions. She may have considered that the evidence as to facts was inconclusive, or could not be fully obtained at the period when her interference might have been most useful; and that when the case had been sufficiently made out by the admissions of the culprits, the evil was beyond repair. Her government may well have calculated that if she exhausted her moral force as a neutral at too early a stage of the war, it would be of no avail later on, or that she might even be forced to appear as a belligerent, against her will and against her interests and those of humanity.

We give due weight to these arguments. Only it seems to some of us that they carry with them a great responsibility for the future. It is clear that the method of the Hague Conferences is at an end. No tribunal can sit merely as a mourner over those sacked and ravaged conventions, to which must now, in effect, be added the Declarations of Paris, of St. Petersburg, and of London. The world has in fact reverted, so far as maritime law in war is concerned, to a vague body of customs and decisions by great international lawyers, which one belligerent breaks when she chooses, while the other improvises a provisional code, to which no neutral can owe formal, or moral, obedience. The submarine has already rendered the old idea of blockade untenable. The near

<sup>1</sup> See Shelley's 'Masque of Anarchy':—

Last came Anarchy: he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

And he wore a Kingly Crown,  
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;  
On his brow, this mark I saw,—  
I AM GOD, AND, KING, AND LAW!

future may reveal it as the mistress of the seas, or reduce its power to nothingness. But its appearance has already torn a huge rent in international sea-law in time of war. The same may be said of the substitution of the armed nation for the professional army. Germany has in theory and in practice abandoned the idea of war as a series of acts directed merely against armies and navies. She imagines and directs it as an assault on the whole 'intellectual and material resources' of a people. The present code of law was not framed to meet these gigantic infringements of might on the rights and privileges of humanity. Could its fabric as it stood in 1909 have been upheld, if only in form, by the whole body of neutral states, led by America, it might possibly have been built up again with renewed solidity after this war.

But it is now clear that Europe and the world need something more than a bundle of paper laws, across which any dominant force can write its *non placet*. The older civilization has come to grief because it has not really been built up on a conception of a world-state, or on a rule of toleration for the rights of minorities, of subject populations, of small states; because in a word the true meaning of a general civilized order, of local autonomy, of a liberal federalism, is unknown to it, or is but feebly practised.

In a word there has been no Europe, no true continental system, only a rivalry of jealous powers. But this distracted Europe did endeavor to build barriers against war. They have broken down, being in effect a system of conciliation for powers that would not or could not be conciliated. Your great country might have stood aloof from these militarized pacifists. But she did not, and a state of world-war having supervened, she can hardly see the system which she helped to create sink to

nothingness without an effort to replace it.

Let America try to imagine the end of the war. Exhaustion, famine, plague, lack of money, lack of confidence, lack of faith in God and man will follow in its train. From the impoverished and heavy-laden nations, robbed of the flower of their manhood, will arise a passionate demand for guaranties against its renewal. The diplomatists will then get to work. Two processes will, it is possible to hope, be set up. The belligerents will arrange the general terms of peace. But their initial arrangements will probably leave over many questions for final settlement. New boundary lines must be drawn. New arrangements must be devised between central powers and autonomous dependents. As it is a continent — or rather a world — which calls for resettlement, many points of interpretation will arise, calling for judicial decisions.

It is possible to suppose that these disputes may be referred to a reconstituted and strengthened Hague Tribunal. But there will be a further range of questions not open to settlement by a body of jurists,— questions of policy, of the relations between powers desperately inflamed with each other, but not, it may be presumed, anxious to reopen the floodgate of war. How are these to be dealt with? Here we must look for some new and permanent body representative of the powers, great and small, European and non-European. Such a body could not well be identical with the governments from which it would proceed. But it must obviously be in close relation with them and must have the power of preliminary dealing with disputes that threaten the general tranquillity.

Here then you would have two new forces enlisted in the cause of peace, — one of judicial arbitration, the other of

conciliation. What actual power should they possess of staying a fresh visitation of the scourge of war? It would seem to be almost useless for the powers to set up fresh machinery without assuring themselves in advance against the contemptuous rejection of its work. No belligerent nation, for example, dreamed of using the Hague Tribunal as a means of assuring an examination of its case before proceeding to ordeal by battle. Is it too much for the world powers to decree that such an examination shall be held in critical hours, and that the power refusing it, or declining to abide by its results, shall be the subject of common pressure by all the rest? In a word, does not Europe want the kind of police force which it has exercised in (or against) the interest of small powers visibly bent on war,<sup>1</sup>— a force based on law, which shall act in behalf of the nations against the common offender?

Coalitions of powers against other powers or groups of powers we have had. They produced the curse of the armed peace, followed by the greater curse of the war of nations. Is it not time to resort to the opposite conception of a union of all for the good of all? That conception in its turn invites the restoration of the reign of law, resting on a minimum of force, as against the establishment of force, based on a minimum of law.

<sup>1</sup> Against Greece, in the case of Crete, for instance. — THE AUTHOR.

It is at this point that I believe a general recourse will be had to the good offices of your government and country. The lines of European state-life are and must long be sundered by mutual hate and suspicion. No magic balm is available for their reunion. We may not always retain our present allies or confront our existing enemies. But so long as the doctrine of the balance governs European politics, and the peace is based merely on ingenious readjustments of it, the old passions, reduced but not expelled in the hour of exhaustion, must return. New moral forces must arise, a new wave of faith, hope, mutual toleration, probably a new passionate intervention of the peoples whose lives have been so fatally remortgaged to want and ill-rewarded toil. Then the call to the newer western world, equipped with a great system the two keys of which are federalism and free state government, may come almost automatically from all parties to the war.

But if America responds, she too will be called on to lay her offering on the altar. She will not expect to come into our state-world as its arbiter. The summons will be to a comradeship of responsibility and effort. We believe that the event which gradually drew us out of our later policy of isolation will in its sequence exercise the same attraction on you; for the modern world is one, and no part of it can be lost or saved for itself alone.

# THE AFRICAN ROOTS OF WAR

BY W. E. BURGHARDT DUBOIS

## I

'SEMPER novi quid ex Africa,' cried the Roman proconsul; and he voiced the verdict of forty centuries. Yet there are those who would write world-history and leave out this most marvelous of continents. Particularly to-day most men assume that Africa lies far afield from the centres of our burning social problems, and especially from our present problem of World War.

Yet in a very real sense Africa is a prime cause of this terrible overturning of civilization which we have lived to see; and these words seek to show how in the Dark Continent are hidden the roots, not simply of war to-day but of the menace of wars to-morrow.

Always Africa is giving us something new or some metempsychosis of a world-old thing. On its black bosom arose one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of self-protecting civilizations, and grew so mightily that it still furnishes superlatives to thinking and speaking men. Out of its darker and more remote forest fastnesses, came, if we may credit many recent scientists, the first welding of iron, and we know that agriculture and trade flourished there when Europe was a wilderness.

Nearly every human empire that has arisen in the world, material and spiritual, has found some of its greatest crises on this continent of Africa, from Greece to Great Britain. As Mommsen says, 'It was through Africa that Christianity became the religion of the world.' In Africa the last flood of Germanic in-

vasions spent itself within hearing of the last gasp of Byzantium, and it was again through Africa that Islam came to play its great rôle of conqueror and civilizer.

With the Renaissance and the widened world of modern thought, Africa came no less suddenly with her new old gift. Shakespeare's *Ancient Pistol* cries, —

'A foutre for the world, and worldlings base!  
I speak of Africa, and golden joys.'

He echoes a legend of gold from the days of Punt and Ophir to those of Ghana, the Gold Coast, and the Rand. This thought had sent the world's greed scurrying down the hot, mysterious coasts of Africa to the Good Hope of gain, until for the first time a real world-commerce was born, albeit it started as a commerce mainly in the bodies and souls of men.

So much for the past; and now, to-day: the Berlin Conference to apportion the rising riches of Africa among the white peoples met on the fifteenth day of November, 1884. Eleven days earlier, three Germans left Zanzibar (whither they had gone secretly disguised as mechanics), and before the Berlin Conference had finished its deliberations they had annexed to Germany an area over half as large again as the whole German Empire in Europe. Only in its dramatic suddenness was this undisguised robbery of the land of seven million natives different from the methods by which Great Britain and France got four million square miles each, Portugal three quarters of