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Alexander Berkman
To The Youth of America
1917

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To The Youth of America

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Tyranny must be opposed at the start.

Autocracy, once secured in the saddle, is difficult to dislodge.

If you believe that America is entering the war “to make democracy safe,” then be a man and volunteer.

But if you know anything at all, then you should know that the cry of democracy is a lie and a snare for the unthinking. You should know that a republic is not synonymous with democracy, and that America has never been a real democracy, but that it is the vilest plutocracy on the face of the globe.

If you can see, hear, feel, and think, you should know that King Dollar rules the United States, and that the workers are robbed and exploited in this country to the heart’s content of the masters.

If you are not deaf, dumb, and blind, then you know that the American bourgeois democracy and capitalistic civilization are the worst enemies of labor and progress, and that instead of protecting them, you should help to fight to destroy them.

If you know this, you must also know that the workers of America have no enemy in the toilers of other countries. In-

deed, the workers of Germany suffer as much from their exploiters and rulers as do the masses of America.

You should know that the interests of Labor are identical in all countries. Their cause is international.

Then why should they slaughter each other?

The workers of Germany have been misled by their rulers into donning the uniform and turning murders.

So have the workers of France, of Italy, and England been misled.

But why should *you*, men of America, allow yourselves to be misled into murder or into being murdered?

If your blood must be shed, let it be in defense of your own interests, in the war of the workers against their despoilers, in the cause of real liberty and independence.