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The Promoters of the War Mania

Emma Goldman

March 1917

AT THIS most critical moment it becomes imperative for every liberty-loving person to voice a fiery pro- test against the participation of this country in the European mass-murder. If the opponents of war, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, would immediately join their voices into a thunderous No!, then the horror that now menaces America might yet be averted. Unfortunately it is only too true that the people in our so-called Democracy are to a large extent a dumb, suffering herd rather than thinking beings who dare to give expression to a frank, earnest opinion.

Yet it is unthinkable that the American people should really want war. During the last thirty months they have had ample opportunity to watch the frightful carnage in the warring countries. They have seen universal murder, like a devastating pestilence, eat into the very heart of the peoples of Europe. They saw cities destroyed, entire countries wiped off the map, hosts of dead, millions of wounded and maimed. The American people could not help witnessing the spread of insane, motiveless hatred among the peoples of Europe. They must realize the extent of the famine, the suffer-

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ing and anguish gripping the war stricken countries. They know, too, that while the men were killed off like vermin, the women and children, the old and the decrepit remained behind in help- less and tragic despair. Why then, in the name of all that is reasonable and humane, should the American people desire the same horrors, the same destruction and devastation upon American soil?

We are told that the “freedom of the seas” is at stake and that “American honor” demands that we protect that precious freedom. What a farce! How much freedom of the seas can the masses of toilers, or the disinherited and the unemployed, ever enjoy? Would it not be well to look into this magic thing, “the freedom of the seas,” before we sing patriotic songs and shout hurrah?

The only ones that have benefitted by the “freedom of the seas” are the exploiters, the dealers in munition and food supplies. The “freedom of the seas” has served these unscrupulous American robbers and monopolists as a pretext to pilfer the unfortunate people of both Europe and America. Out of international carnage they have made billions; out of the misery of the people and the agony of women and children, the American financiers and industrial mag- nates have coined huge fortunes.

Ask young Morgan. Will he dare admit his tremendous pecu- niary gain from the export of munition and food supplies? Of course not. But the truth will out, sometimes. Thus a financial expert recently proved that even old Pierpont Morgan would be astounded could he see the dazzling profits gathered in by his son through war speculations. And, incidentally, do not let us forget that it is this speculation in murder and destruction which is responsible for the criminal increase in the cost of living in our own land. War, famine and the capitalist class are the only gainers in the hideous drama called nationalism, patriotism, national honor and freedom of the seas. Instead of putting a stop to such monstrous crimes, war in America would only increase the opportunities of the profit mongers. That and only that will be

the result if the American people will consent to thrust the United States into the abyss of war.

President Wilson and other officials of the administration assure us that they want peace. If that claim held even one grain of truth, the government would have long ago carried out the suggestion of many true lovers of peace to put a stop to the export of munition and food stuffs. Had this shameful trade with the implements of slaughter been stopped at the beginning of the war, the good results for peace would have been manifold.

First, the war in Europe would have been starved out through the stoppage of food exports. Indeed, it is no exaggeration when I say that the war would have been at an end long ago, had the American financiers been prevented from investing billions in war loans and had the American munition clique and food speculators not been given the opportunity to supply warring Europe with the means to keep up the slaughter.

Second, an embargo on exports would have automatically taken out American ships from the war and sub-marine zones, and would have thus eliminated the much discussed "reason" for war with Germany.

Third, and most important of all, the brazen, artificial increase in the cost of living, which condemns the toiling masses of America to semi-starvation, would be an impossibility were not the great bulk of American products shipped to Europe to feed the fires of war.

Peace meetings and peace protests have no meaning whatever unless the government is challenged to stop the continuance of exports. If for no other reason, this ought to be insisted upon, be it only to prove that Washington is capable of nice phrases, but that it has never made a single determined step for peace. That will help to demonstrate to the American people that the government represents only the capitalists, the International War and Preparedness-Trust, and not the workers. Are then, the people of America good enough only to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the thieving

trusts? That is all this wild clamor for war means as far as the masses are concerned.

The attempt to light the torch of the furies of war is the more monstrous when one bears in mind that the people of America are cosmopolitan. If anything, America should be the soil for international understanding, for the growth of friendship between all races. Here, all narrow, stifling national prejudices should be eradicated. Instead, the people are to be thrown into the madness and confusion of war, of racial antagonism and hatred.

True, there never was much love wasted in this country on the unfortunate foreigner, but what about the boast that the Goddess of Liberty holds high the beacon to all oppressed nations? What about America as the haven of welcome? Should all this now become the symbol of national persecution? What can result from it but the pollution of all social relationship? Think of it, war in this country is at present only a possibility, and already the Germans and the Austrians are being deprived of employment, ostracized and spied upon, persecuted and hounded by the jingoes. And that is only a small beginning of what war would bring in its wake.

I do not have to emphasize that I entertain not a particle of sympathy with the Germany of the Hohenzollern or the Austria of the Hapsburgs. But what have the Germans and the Austrians in America—or in their own country, for that matter—to do with the diplomacy and politics of Berlin or Vienna? It is nothing but blind, cruel national and patriotic madness which would make these people, who have lived, toiled and suffered in this country, pay for the criminal plans and intrigues in Berlin and Vienna palaces.

These millions of Germans and Austrians who have contributed more to the real culture and growth of America than all the Morgans and Rockefellers are now to be treated like enemy aliens, just because Wall Street feels itself checked in its unlimited use of the seas for plunder, robbery and theft from suffering America and bleeding Europe.

and their mouthpiece, the press, this most degenerate criminal of all criminals. They all stand by the flag. Oh, yes; it's a profitable emblem that covers a multitude of sins.

It is still time to stem the bloody tide of war, by word of mouth and pen and action. The promoters of war realize that we have looked into their cards and that we know their crooked, criminal game. We know they want war to increase their profits. Very well, let them fight their own wars. We, the people of America, will not do it for them. Do you think war would then come or be kept up? Oh, I know it is difficult to arouse the workers, to make them see the truth back of the nationalistic, patriotic lie. Still we must do our share. At least we shall be free from blame should the terrible avalanche overtake us in spite of our efforts.

I for one will speak against war so long as my voice will last, now and during war. A thousand times rather would I die calling to the people of America to refuse to be obedient, to refuse military service, to refuse to murder their brothers, than I should ever give my voice in justification of war, except the one war of all the peoples against their despots and exploiters—the Social Revolution.

Militarism and reaction are now more rampant in Europe than ever before. Conscription and censorship have destroyed every vestige of liberty. Everywhere the governments have used the situation to tighten the militaristic noose around the necks of the people. Everywhere discipline has been the knout to whip the masses into slavery and blind obedience. And the pathos of it all is that the people at large have submitted without a murmur, though every country has shown its quota of brave men that would not be deluded.

The same is bound to take place in America should the dogs of war be let loose here. Already the poisonous seed has been planted. All the reactionary riff-raff, propagandists of jingoism and preparedness, all the beneficiaries of exploitation represented in the Merchants and Manufacturers' Association, the Chambers of Commerce, the munition cliques, etc., etc., have come to the fore with all sorts of plans and schemes to chain and gag labor, to make it more helpless and dumb than ever before.

These respectable criminals no longer make a secret of their demand for compulsory military training. Taft, the spokesman of Wall Street, expressed it cynically enough that now, in face of the war danger, the time has come to demand the introduction of compulsory militarism. Subserviently echoing the slogan, principals and superintendants of our schools and colleges are hastening to poison the minds of their pupils with national "ideals" and patriotic forgeries of history to prepare the young generation for "the protection of national honor," which really means the "glory" of bleeding to death for the crooked transactions of a gang of legalized, cowardly thieves. Mr. Murray Butler, the lick-spittle of Wall Street, is in the lead and many others like him are crawling before the golden calf of their masters. Talk about prostitution! Why, the unfortunate girl in the street is purity itself compared with such mental degeneration.

Added to this process of poisoning are the huge appropriations rushed through by Congress and the state legislatures for the na-

tional murder machinery. Sums reaching into the hundreds of millions for the Army and Navy fly through the air within such enticing reach that the Steel Trust and other corporations manufacturing ammunition and war supplies are dissolving in patriotic sentiment and enthusiasm and have already offered their generous services to the country.

Hand in hand with this military preparedness and war mania goes the increased persecution of the workers and their organizations. Labor went wild with enthusiasm and gratitude to the President for his supposed humanity in proclaiming the eight-hour law before election, and now it develops that the law was merely a bait for votes and a shackle for labor. It denies the right to strike and introduces compulsory arbitration. Of course it is common knowledge that strikes have long since been made ineffective by anti-picketing injunctions and the prosecution of strikers, but the Federal eight-hour law is the worst parody on the right to organize and to strike and it is going to prove an additional fetter on labor. In connection with this arbitrary measure goes the proposition to give the President full power in case of war to take control of the railroads and their employees, which would mean nothing less than absolute subserviency and industrial militarism for the workers.

Then there is the systematic, barbarous persecution of radical and revolutionary elements throughout the land. The horrors in Everett, the conspiracy against labor in San Francisco, with Billings and Mooney already sacrificed,—are they mere coincidences? Or do they not rather signify the true character of the war which the American ruling class has been waging against labor?

The workers must learn that they have nothing to expect from their masters. The latter, in America as well as in Europe, hesitate not a moment to send hundred thousands of the people to their death if their interests demand it. They are ever ready that their misguided slaves should have the national and patriotic banner over burning cities, over devastated country-sides, over homeless and starving humanity, just as long as they can find enough unfortu-

nate victims to be drilled into man-killers, ready at the bidding of their masters to perform the ghastly task of bloodshed and carnage.

Valuable as the work of the Women's Peace Party and other earnest pacifists may be, it is folly to petition the President for peace. The workers, they alone, can avert the impending war; in fact, all wars, if they will refuse to be a party to them. The determined anti-militarist is the only pacifist. The ordinary pacifist merely moralizes; the anti-militarist acts; he refuses to be ordered to kill his brothers. His slogan is: "I will not kill, nor will I lend myself to be killed."

It is this slogan which we must spread among the workers and carry into the labor organizations. They need to realize that it is monstrously criminal to voluntarily engage in the hideous business of killing. It is terrible enough to kill in anger, in a moment of frenzy, but it is still more so to blindly obey the command of your military superiors to commit murder. The time must come when slaughter and carnage through blind obedience will not only not receive rewards, monuments, pensions and eulogies, but will be considered the greatest horror and shame of a barbaric, blood-thirsty, greed-obsessed age; a dark, hideous blotch upon civilization.

Let us understand this most valuable truth: A man has the power to act voluntarily only as long as he does not wear the uniform. Once you have donned the garb of obedience, the "voluntary" soldier becomes as much a part of the slaughter machine as his brother who was forced into military service. It is still time in our land to decide against militarism and war, to hold out determinately against compulsory military service for the murder of your fellow men. After all, America is not yet like Germany, Russia, France or England in the throes of a military regime with the mark of a Cain upon her brow. The determined stand which the workers can take individually, in groups and organizations against war will still meet with ready and enthusiastic response. It would arouse the people all over the land. As a matter of fact, they want no war. The cry for it comes from the military cliques, the munition manufacturers