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# Our War Aims Clearly Stated

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BEING A REPLY TO THOSE WHO  
DEMAND THAT THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE UNITED STATES MAKE A  
CLEAR STATEMENT OF OUR AIMS  
IN THE WAR

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Issued by The American Alliance for Labor and  
Democracy and Adopted by its First National  
Conference, Minneapolis, September 6, 1917.

Delivered at  
A.S.P.  
for  
1917

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The so-called People's Council and the organizations allied with it, professing to speak in the name of the working people of America, have declared that the aims and purposes for which we are at war have not been definitely stated. These people have made a great deal of clamor, demanding that the President of the United States make a definite statement of the reasons why we are at war and the ends we seek to attain through war. We, the members of the Minneapolis Conference of the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy, declare that this demand of the People's Council and other pacifist organizations, even if made in good faith,

is entirely unwarranted. The record will show that the aims and purposes of this nation have been stated with singular lucidity and precision by the President of the United States on various occasions. In support of this statement we submit the following:

On January 22, 1917, before the United States entered the war, the President in an address to the Senate set forth the principles which should govern any peace with which the United States could associate itself. These principles of "a peace worth guaranteeing" are as follows:

1. Equality of rights as between nations. (Not to be based on old balance of power.)
2. Recognition of the principles that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed. (Poland cited as people and area about which all agree in wanting this principle applied.)
3. The right of all great peoples to a direct outlet to the sea, by territorial readjustments or neutralizations.
4. The freedom of the seas in practically all circumstances.
5. The limitation of armaments on land and sea.
6. "No nation to attempt to extend its polity over any other nation or people."

7. A concert of nations to guarantee peace and the rights of all nations. A world organized for peace, not for war. No entangling alliances creating a competition for power but a concert for peace.

Since the United States entered the war the President has upon three notable occasions clearly and explicitly set forth the American aim, the objects which must be attained by any peace to which the United States can agree. We refer especially to the War Message of April 2, 1917, the Note to Russia of May 26, and the reply to his Holiness the Pope dated August 27, 1917. The war objects thus stated by the President are as follows:

1. Recognition of the rights and liberties of small nations.
2. Recognition of the principle that government derives its power from the consent of the governed.
3. Reparation for wrongs done and the erection of adequate safeguards to prevent their being committed again.
4. No indemnities except as payment for manifest wrongs.
5. No people to be forced under sovereignty under which it does not wish to live.

6. No territory to change hands except for the purpose of securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty.
7. No readjustments of power except such as will tend to secure the future peace of the world and the future welfare and happiness of its peoples.
8. A genuine and practical cooperation of the free peoples of the world in some common covenant that will combine their forces to secure peace and justice in the dealings of nations with one another.

In his Rusisan Note and again in his address at Washington on the 14th day of June, President Wilson gave a solemn warning against the sort of peace desired by the German military power, a peace which would not only defeat the objects of the United States in entering the war but would place this nation in grave danger of future aggression from Germany. The President pointed out that the military masters of Germany planned to throw a broad belt of German military power across the very center of Europe and beyond the Mediterranean into the heart of Asia. This purpose has been nearly fulfilled through the subjection to German uses of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, and through the conquest of Serbia and Roumania. The only chance left to the masters of Germany of retaining the advantages thus gained and of perpetuating their own domination over the German people is the enact-

ment of an immediate peace upon terms favorable to themselves. Should they succeed in this their prestige and political power will be secure, America itself will be menaced, and this nation and all the rest of the world will be compelled to remain armed to the teeth to make ready for the next assault by the German military power.

In his note to the Russian Revolutionary Government, May 26, 1917, President Wilson justly said:

“The position of America in this war is so clearly avowed that no man can be excused for mistaking it. She seeks no material profit nor aggrandizement of any kind. She is fighting for no advantage or selfish object of her own, but for the liberation of peoples everywhere from the aggressions of autocratic force.”

**Amplifying this statement the President said:**

“We are fighting for the liberty, the self-government, and the undictated development of all peoples, and every feature of the settlement that concludes this war must be conceived and executed for that purpose. Wrongs must first be righted and then adequate safeguards must be created to prevent their being committed again. We ought not to consider remedies merely because they have a pleasing and sonorous sound. Practical questions can be settled only by practical means. Phrases

will not accomplish the result. Effective readjustments will; and whatever readjustments are necessary must be made.

“But they must follow a principle, and that principle is plain. No people must be forced under sovereignty under which it does not wish to live. No territory must change hands except for the purpose of securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty. No indemnities must be insisted on except those that constitute payment for manifest wrongs done. No readjustment of power must be made except such as will tend to secure the future peace of the world and the future welfare and happiness of its peoples.

“And then the free peoples of the world must draw together in some common covenant, some genuine and practical cooperation that will in effect combine their forces to secure peace and justice in the dealings of nations with one another.”

In the same note the President said:

“Of course the Imperial German Government and those whom it is using for their own undoing are seeking to obtain pledges that the war will end in the restoration of the status quo ante. It was the status quo ante out of which this iniquitous war issued forth, the

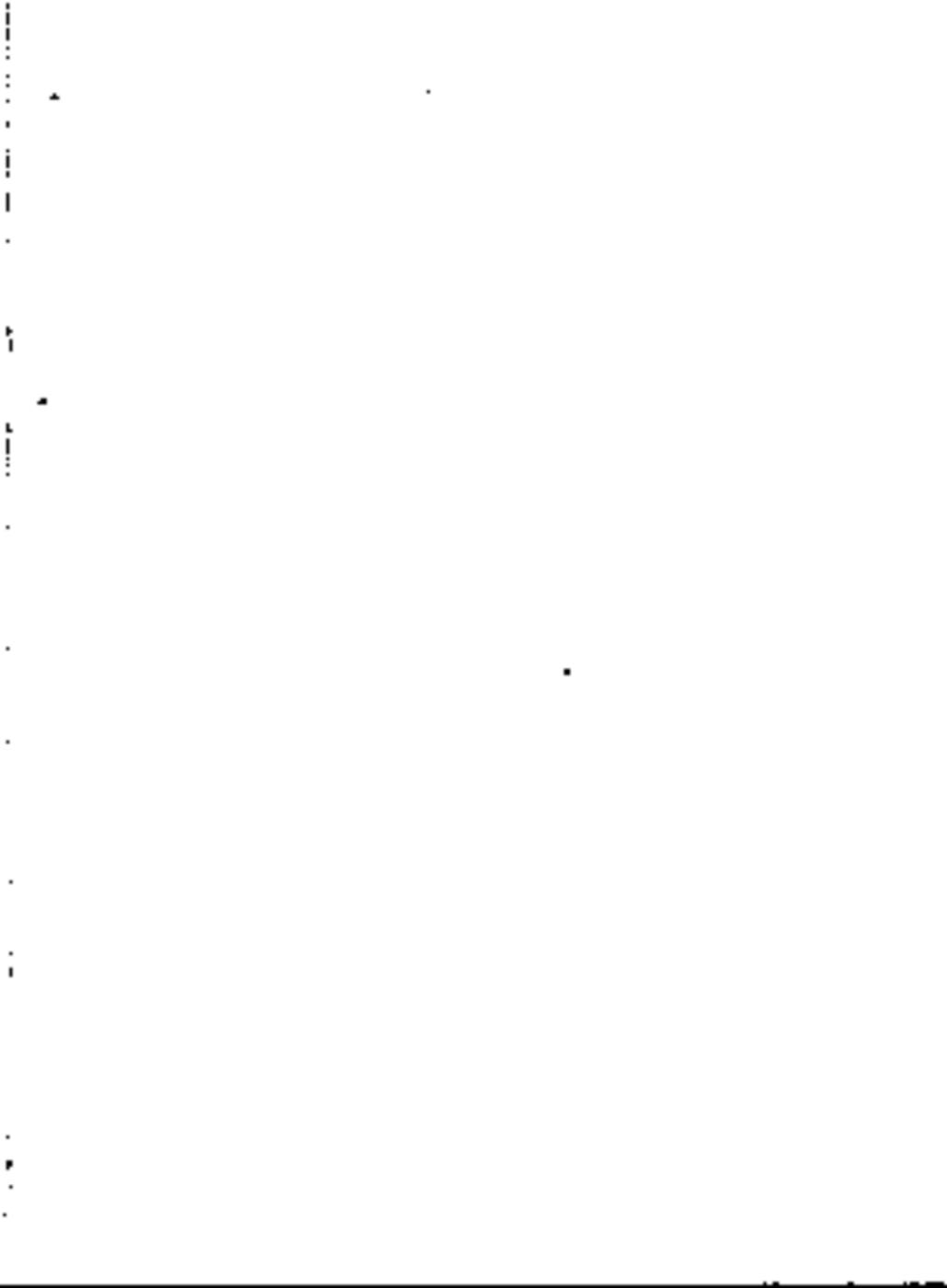
power of the Imperial German Government within the empire and its wide-spread domination and influence outside of that empire. That status must be altered in such fashion as to prevent any such hideous thing from ever happening again."

We, the men and women of the Trade Union and Socialist movements of America, in submitting this record to our fellow-citizens, assert that in all history no government has ever stated its aims on entering a war or while such war was being fought with anything approaching the definiteness, clarity and candor revealed by these utterances. We assert, moreover, that in all essential particulars the aims thus set forth are entirely consistent with the great ideals of democracy and internationalism for which the American labor movement has always stood, and which are fundamental to its being.

We rejoice at the fact that we are thus solemnly committed to the principle of the complete autonomy and independence of nations. Only upon the basis of this generous nationalism can anything like a great and worthy internationalism be established. We rejoice too that this nation is thus solemnly pledged not only to refrain from attempting to extend its own dominion over any other nation or people, but to use its great influence to the end that no nation shall "attempt to extend its polity over any other nation or people." We approve unreservedly the distinction drawn by the President between the German people and their government, and we believe that by insisting that peace cannot be

made with the Hohenzollern dynasty, but only with a democratized Germany, the President of the United States has, as befits his great station, rendered noble service to the cause of international democracy.

We affirm, then, that the aims and purposes of this nation have been stated with sufficient clearness and definiteness to satisfy every honest mind, and that it is our profound conviction that the purposes for which we are to serve and sacrifice are the great purposes of international democracy.



## A P P E N D I X

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For the further information of our friends and fellow workers we append some extracts from the utterances of the President to which we have made reference.

## FORECAST OF PEACE TERMS BY A NEUTRAL

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President Wilson's Address to the Senate

January 22, 1917

Only a peace between equals can last. Only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit. The right state of mind, the right feeling between nations, is as necessary for a lasting peace as is the just settlement of vexed questions of territory or of racial and national allegiance.

The equality of nations upon which peace must be founded if it is to last must be an equality of rights; the guarantees exchanged must neither recognize nor imply a difference between big nations and small, between those that are powerful and those that are weak. Right must be based upon the common strength, not upon the individual strength, of the nations upon whose concert peace will depend. Equality of territory or of resources there of course cannot be; nor any other sort of equality not gained in the ordinary peaceful and legitimate development of the peoples themselves. But no one asks or expects anything more than an equality of rights. Mankind is looking now for freedom of life, not for equiposes of power.

And there is a deeper thing involved than even equality of right among organized nations. NO PEACE CAN LAST, OR OUGHT TO LAST, WHICH DOES NOT RECOGNIZE AND EXCEPT THE PRINCIPLE THAT GOV-

ERNMENTS DERIVE ALL THEIR JUST POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED, AND THAT NO RIGHT ANYWHERE EXISTS TO HAND PEOPLES ABOUT FROM SOVEREIGNTY TO SOVEREIGNTY AS IF THEY WERE PROPERTY. I take it for granted, for instance, if I may venture upon a single example, that statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland, and that henceforth inviolable security of life, of worship, and of industrial and social development should be guaranteed to all peoples who have lived hitherto under the power of governments devoted to a faith and purpose hostile to their own.

\* \* \* \* \*

So far as practicable, moreover, every great people now struggling towards a full development of its resources and of its powers should be assured a direct outlet to the great pathways of the sea. Where this cannot be done by the cession of territory, it can be done by the neutralization of direct rights of way under the general guarantee which will assure the peace itself. With a right comity of arrangement no nation need be shut away from free access to the open paths of the world's commerce.

And the paths of the sea must alike in law and in fact be free. The freedom of the seas is the SINE QUA NON of peace, equality, and cooperation. No doubt a somewhat radical reconsideration of many of the rules of international practice hitherto thought to be established may be necessary in order to make the seas

indeed free and common in practice hitherto thought to be established may be necessary in order to make the seas indeed free and common in practically all circumstances for the use of mankind, but the motive for such changes is convincing and compelling. There can be no trust or intimacy between the peoples of the world without them. The free, constant, unthreatened intercourse of nations is an essential part of the process of peace and of development. It need not be difficult either to define or to secure the freedom of the seas if the governments of the world sincerely desire to come to an agreement concerning it.

It is a problem closely connected with the limitation of naval armament and the cooperation of the navies of the world in keeping the seas at once free and safe. And the question of limiting naval armaments opens the wider and perhaps more difficult question of the limitation of armies and of all programmes of military preparation. Difficult and delicate as these questions are, they must be faced with the utmost candor and decided in a spirit of real accommodation if peace is to come with healing in its wings, and come to stay. Peace cannot be had without concession and sacrifice. There can be no sense of safety and equality among the nations if great preponderating armaments are henceforth to continue here and there to be built up and maintained. The statesmen of the world must plan for peace and nations must adjust and accommodate their policy to it as they have planned for war and made ready for pitiless contest and rivalry. The question of armaments, whether on land or sea, is the most immediately and intensely practical question con-

nected with the future fortunes of nations and of mankind.

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I am proposing, as it were, that the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world: that no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.

I am proposing that all nations henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power, catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry, and disturb their own affairs with influences intruded from without. There is no entangling alliance in a concert of power. When all unite to act in the same sense and with the same purpose all act in the common interest and are free to live their own lives under a common protection.

I am proposing government by the consent of the governed; that freedom of the seas which in international conference after conference representatives of the United States have urged with the eloquence of those who are the convinced disciples of liberty; and that moderation of armaments which makes of armies and navies a power for order merely, not an instrument of aggression or of selfish violence.

These are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. And they are also the

principles and policies of forward looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind and must prevail.

## WAR MESSAGE OF APRIL 2, 1917

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### American Objects in the War.

We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretence about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included; for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. WE HAVE NO SELFISH ENDS TO SERVE. WE DESIRE NO CONQUEST, NO DOMINATION. WE SEEK NO INDEMNITIES FOR OURSELVES, NO MATERIAL COMPENSATION FOR THE SACRIFICES WE SHALL FREELY MAKE. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

\* \* \* \* \*

But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts,—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

## AMERICAN OBJECTS IN THE WAR

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### President Wilson's Note to Russia, May 26, 1917.

The position of America in this war is so clearly avowed that no man can be excused for mistaking it. She seeks no material profit or aggrandizement of any kind. She is fighting for no advantage or selfish object of her own, but for the liberation of peoples everywhere from the aggressions of autocratic force . . .

We are fighting for liberty, the self-government, and the undictated development of all peoples, and every feature of the settlement that concludes this war must be conceived and executed for that purpose. Wrongs must first be righted, and then adequate safeguards must be created to prevent their being committed again. We ought not to consider remedies merely because they have a pleasing and sonorous sound. Practical questions can be settled only by practical means. Phrases will not accomplish the result. Effective readjustments will; and whatever readjustments are necessary must be made.

But they must follow a principle, and that principle is plain. No people must be forced under sovereignty under which it does not wish to live. No territory must change hands except for the purpose of securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty. No indemnities must be insisted on except those that constitute payment for manifest wrongs done. No readjustments of power must be made except such as will

tend to secure the future peace of the world and the future welfare and happiness of its peoples.

And then the free peoples of the world must draw together in some common covenant, some genuine and practical cooperation that will in effect combine their force to secure peace and justice in the dealings of nations with one another.

## **PERIL OF A GERMAN PEACE—GERMAN INTRIGUE EXPOSED.**

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**President Wilson's Note to Russia,  
May 26, 1917.**

The war has begun to go against Germany, and in their desperate desire to escape the inevitable ultimate defeat those who are in authority in Germany are using every possible instrumentality, are making use even of the influence of groups and parties among their own subjects to whom they have never been just or fair or even tolerant, to promote a propaganda on both sides of the sea which will preserve for them their influence at home and their power abroad, to the undoing of the very men they are using.

The position of America in this war is so clearly avowed that no man can be excused for mistaking it. She seeks no material profit or aggrandizement of any kind. She is fighting for no advantage or selfish object of her own, but for the liberation of peoples everywhere from the aggressions of autocratic force. The ruling classes in Germany have begun of late to profess a like liberality and justice of purpose, but only to preserve the power they have set up in Germany and the selfish advantages which they have wrongly gained for themselves and their private projects of power all the way from Berlin to Bagdad and beyond. Government after Government has by their influence, without open conquest of its territory, been linked together in a net of intrigue directed against nothing less than the peace and

liberty of the world. The meshes of that intrigue must be broken, but cannot be broken unless wrongs already done are undone; and adequate measures must be taken to prevent it from ever again being rewoven or repaired.

Of courses, the Imperial German Government and those whom it is using for their own undoing are seeking to obtain pledges that the war will end in the restoration of the status quo ante. It was the status quo ante out of which this iniquitous war issued forth, the power of the Imperial German Government within the empire and its widespread domination and influence outside of that empire. That status must be altered in such fashion as to prevent any such hideous thing from ever happening again.

## **MENACE OF A GERMAN PEACE—THE GERMAN INTRIGUE EXPOSED.**

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**President Wilson's Address on Flag Day,  
June 14, 1917.**

The war was begun by the military masters of Germany, who proved to be also the masters of Austria-Hungary. These men have never regarded nations as peoples, men, women, and children of like blood and frame as themselves, for whom governments existed and in whom governments had their life. They have regarded them merely as serviceable organizations which they could by force or intrigue bend or corrupt to their own purpose. They have regarded the smaller states, in particular, and the peoples who could be overwhelmed by force, as their natural tools and instruments of domination. Their purpose has long been avowed. The statesmen of other nations, to whom that purpose was incredible, paid little attention; regarded what German professors expounded in their classrooms and German writers set forth to the world as the goal of German policy as rather the dream of minds detached from practical affairs, as preposterous private conceptions of German destiny, than as the actual plans of responsible rulers; but the rulers of Germany themselves knew all the while what concrete plans, what well advanced intrigues lay back of what the professors and the writers were saying, and were glad to go forward unmolested, filling the thrones of Balkan states with German princes, putting German officers at the service of Turkey to drill

her armies and make interest with her government, developing plans of sedition and rebellion in India and Egypt, setting fires in Persia. The demand made by Austria upon Servia were a mere single step in a plan which compassed Europe and Asia, from Berlin to Bagdad. They hoped those demands might not arouse Europe, but they meant to press them whether they did or not, for they thought themselves ready for the final issue of arms.

Their plan was to throw a broad belt of German military power and political control across the very center of Europe and beyond the Mediterranean into the heart of Asia; and Austria-Hungary was to be made their tool and pawn as Servia or Bulgaria or Turkey or the ponderous states of the East. Austria-Hungary, indeed, was to become part of the central German Empire, absorbed and dominated by the same forces and influences that had originally cemented the German states themselves. The dream had its heart at Berlin. It could have had a heart nowhere else! It rejected the idea of solidarity of race entirely. The choice of peoples played no part in it at all. It contemplated binding together only by force,—Czechs, Magyars, Croats, Serbs, Roumanians, Turks, Armenians,—the proud states of Bohemia and Hungary, the stout little commonwealths of the Balkans, the indomitable Turks, the subtle peoples of the East. These peoples did not wish to be united. They ardently desired to direct their own affairs, would be satisfied only by undisputed independence. They could be kept quiet only by the presence or the constant threat of armed men. They would live under a common power only by sheer compulsion and

await the day of revolution. But the German military statesmen had reckoned with all that and were ready to deal with it in their own way.

And they have actually carried the greater part of that amazing plan into execution! Look how things stand. Austria is at their mercy. It has acted, not upon its own initiative or upon the choice of its own people, but at Berlin's dictation ever since the war began. Its people now desire peace, but cannot have it until leave is granted from Berlin. The so-called Central Powers are in fact but a single Power. Servia is at its mercy, should its hands be but for a moment freed. Bulgaria has consented to its will, and Roumania is overrun. The Turkish armies, which Germany trained, are serving Germany, certainly not themselves, and the guns of German warships lying in the harbor at Constantinople remind Turkish statesmen every day that they have no choice but to take their orders from Berlin.

Is it not easy to understand the eagerness for peace that has been manifested from Berlin ever since the snare was set and sprung? Peace, peace, peace has been the talk of her Foreign Office for now a year and more; not peace upon her own initiative, but upon the initiative of the nations over which she now deems herself to hold the advantage. A little of the talk has been public, but most of it has been private. Through all sorts of channels it has come to me, and in all sorts of guises, but never with the terms disclosed which the German Government would be willing to accept. That government has other valuable pawns in its hands besides those I have mentioned. It still holds a valuable part

of France, though with slowly relaxing grasp, and practically the whole of Belgium. Its armies press close upon Russia and overrun Poland at their will. It cannot go further; it dare not go back. It wishes to close its bargain before it is too late and it has little left to offer for the pound of flesh it will demand.

The military masters under whom Germany is bleeding see very clearly to what point Fate has brought them. If they fall back or are forced back an inch, their power both abroad and at home will fall to pieces like a house of cards. It is their power at home they are thinking about now more than their power abroad. It is that power which is trembling under their very feet; and deep fear has entered their hearts. They have but one chance to perpetuate their military power or their controlling political influence. If they can secure peace now with the immense advantages still in their hands which they have up to this point apparently gained, they will have justified themselves before the German people; they will have gained by force what they promised to gain by it: an immense expansion of German power, an immense enlargement of German industrial and commercial opportunities. Their prestige will be secure, and with their prestige their political power. If they fail, their people will thrust them aside; a government accountable to the people themselves will be set up in Germany as it has been in England, in the United States, in France, and in all the great countries of the modern time except Germany. If they succeed they are safe and Germany and the world are undone; if they fail Germany is saved and the world will be at peace. **IF THEY SUCCEED, AMERICA WILL**

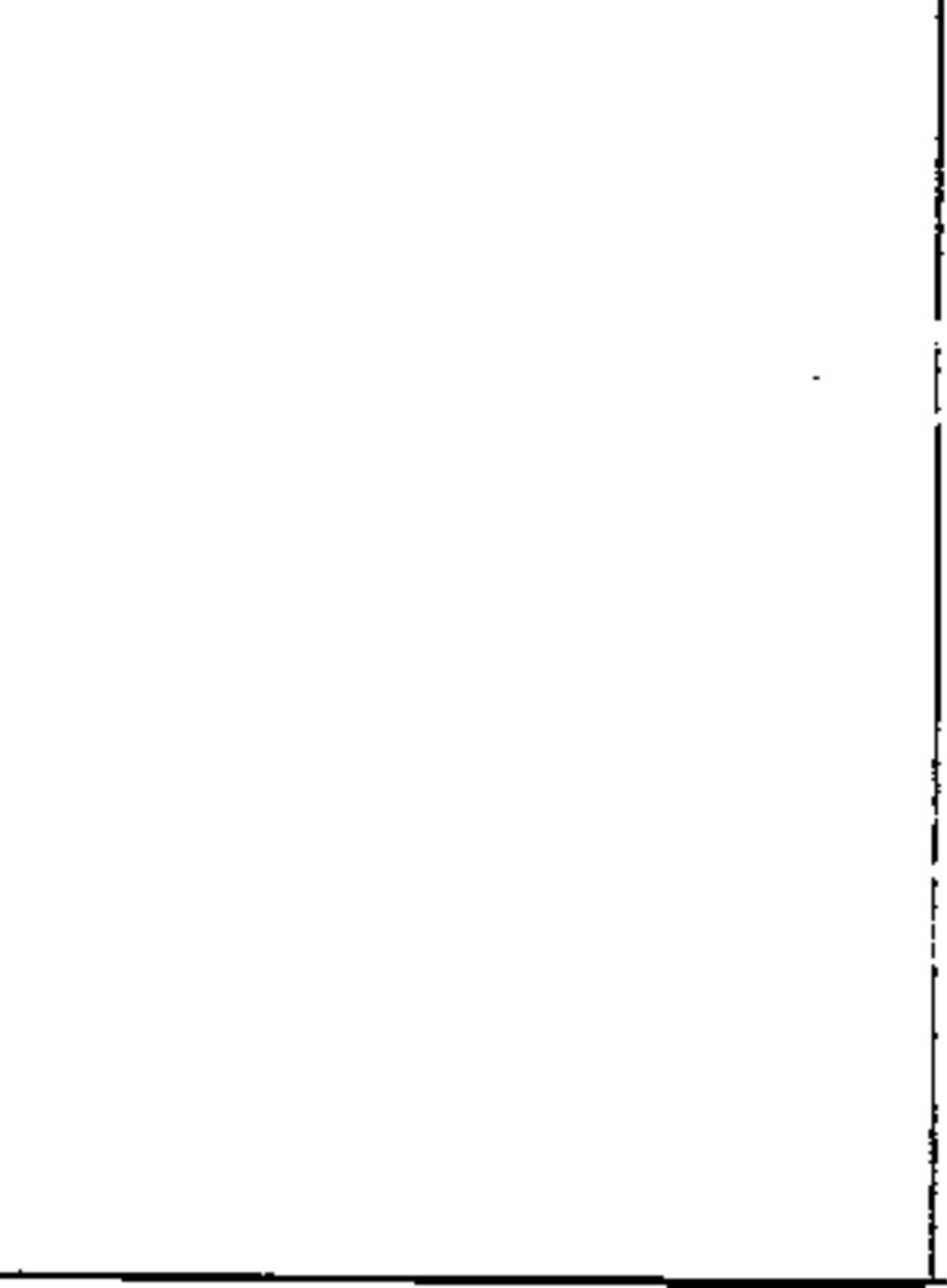
FALL WITHIN THE MENACE., WE AND ALL THE REST OF THE WORLD MUST REMAIN ARMED, AS THEY WILL REMAIN, AND MUST MAKE READY FOR THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR AGGRESSION; IF THEY FAIL, THE WORLD MAY UNITE FOR PEACE AND GERMANY MAY BE OF THE UNION.

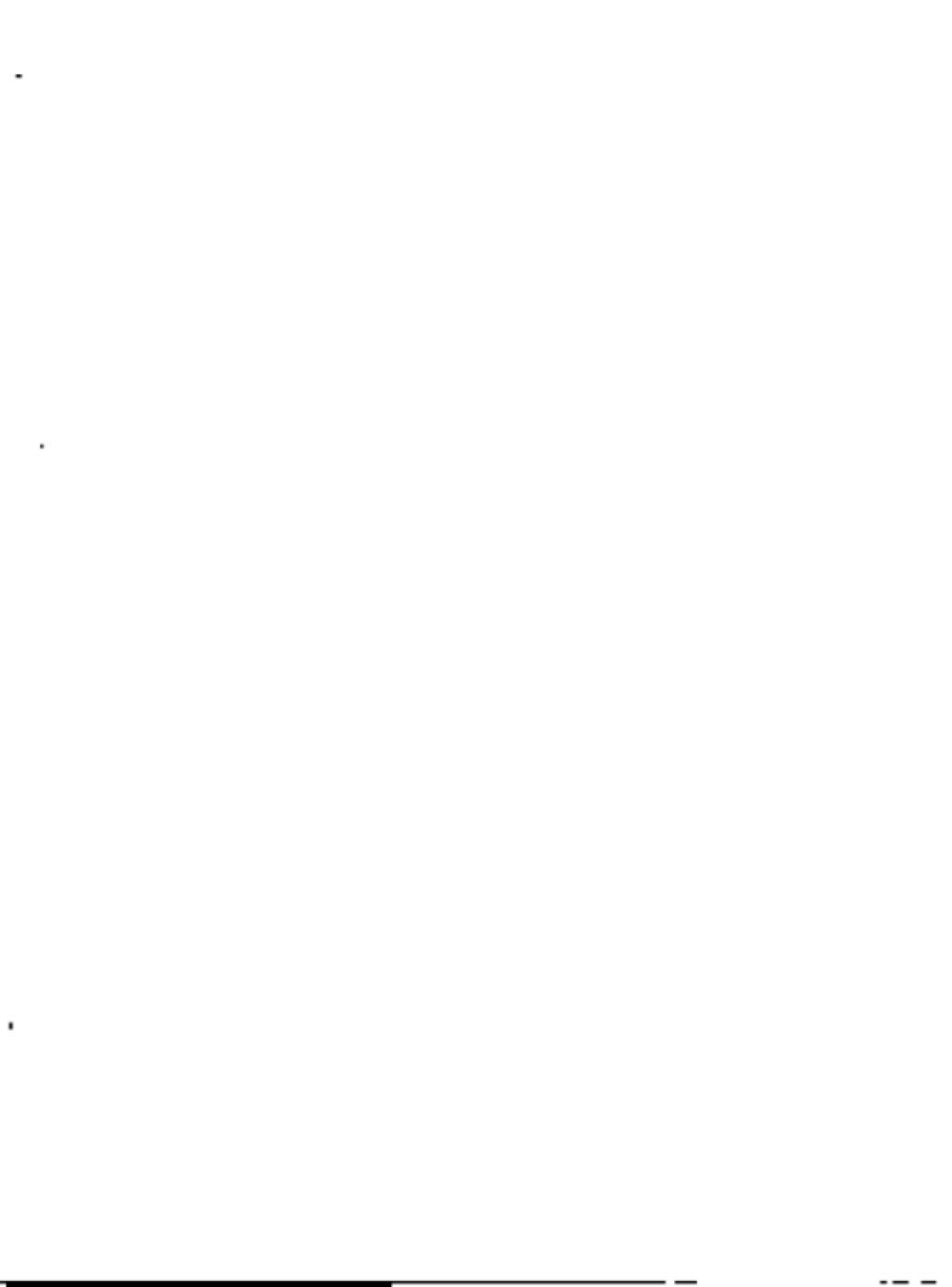
Dou you understand the new intrigue, the intrigue for peace, and why the masters of Germany do not hesitate to use any agency that promises to effect their purpose, the deceit of the nations? . Their present particular aim is to deceive all those who throughout the world stand for the rights of peoples and the self-government of nations; for they see what immense strength the forces of justice and of liberalism are gathering out of this war. They are employing liberals in their enterprise. They are using men, in Germany and without, as their spokesmen whom they have hitherto despised and oppressed, using them for their own destruction,—socialists, the leaders of labor, the thinkers they have hitherto sought to silence. Let them once succeed and these men, now tools, will be ground to powder beneath the weight of the great military empire they will have set up; the revolutionists in Russia will be cut off from all succor or cooperation in western Europe and a counter revolution fostered and supported; Germany herself will lose her chance of freedom; and all Europe will arm for the next, the final struggle.

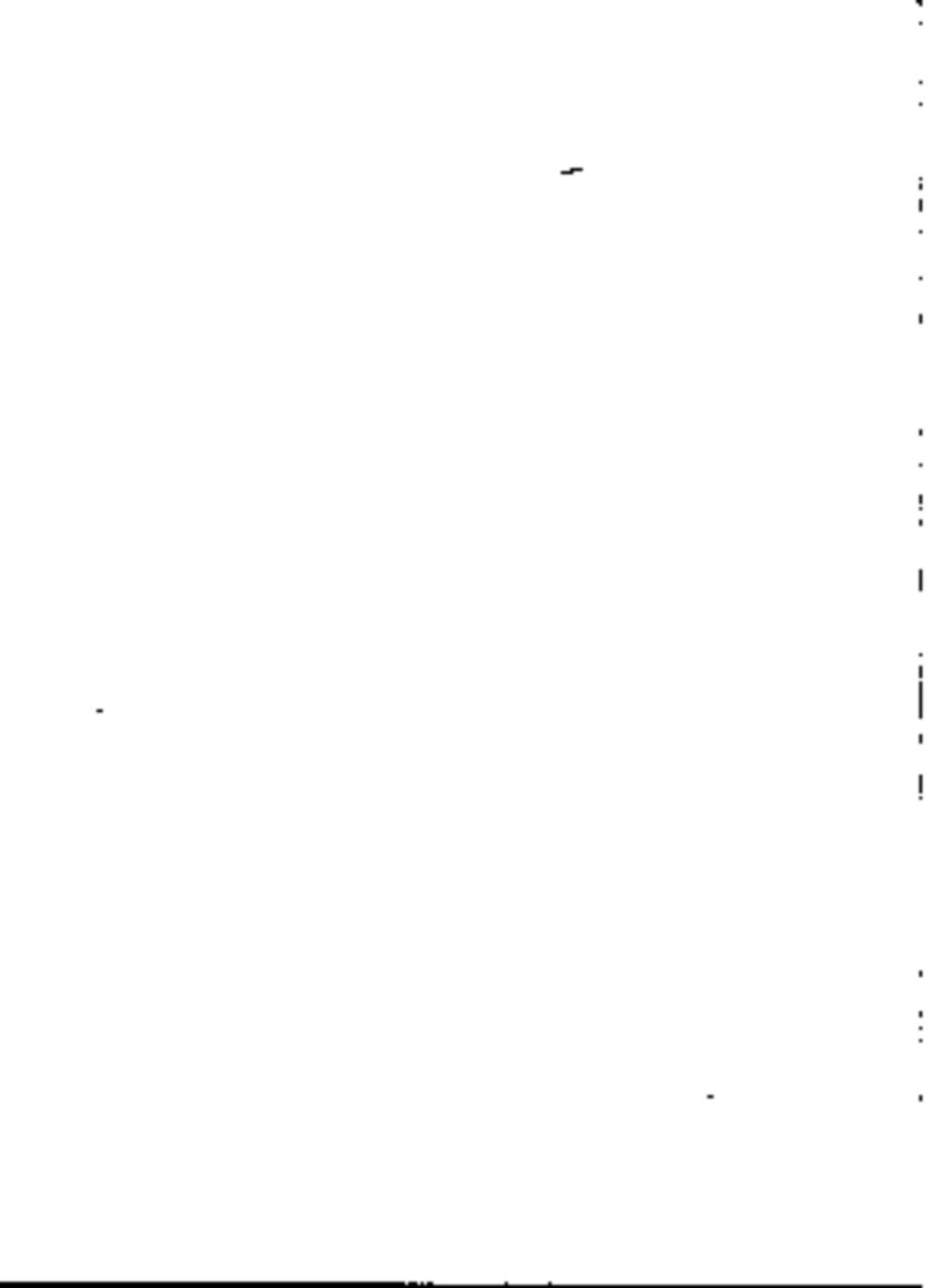
The sinister intrigue is being no less actively conducted in this country than in Russia and in every country in Europe to which the agents and dupes of the Imperial German Government can get access. That government has many spokesmen here, in places high

and low. They have learned discretion. They keep within the law. It is opinion they utter now, not sedition. They proclaim the liberal purposes of their masters; declare this is a foreign war which can touch America with no danger to either her lands or her institutions; meet England at the center of the stage and talk of her ambition to assert economic domination throughout the world; appeal to our ancient tradition of isolation in the politics of the nations; and seek to undermine the government with false professions of loyalty to its principles.









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