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WAR - PROPAGANDA.
 From The New Republic.
 The New Republic has received recently many letters from readers who are troubled by certain phases of the foreign and domestic policy of the government. These letters come almost entirely from people who favored the declaration of war against Germany last April and who have been no less in favor ever since of vigorous and wholehearted military, naval and economic co-operation with the Allies for the purpose of preventing German victory. But they do not want the vast power which their nation is now creating exerted exclusively for the purpose of preventing German victory. They were converted to the employment of such a dangerous and double-edged weapon as war partly because of President Wilson's previous propaganda in favor of international organization, and because they saw no way of effectively bringing the influence of this country to bear on behalf of lasting peace save by participation in the risks, the sacrifices and the labor of defeating German aggression. What troubles them now is a doubt whether the diplomatic management of the war by the American government, and the propaganda recently associated with it, is calculated either to promote lasting peace or to extinguish German militarism; and this doubt has been reinforced by the extent to which the government has recently been setting up a coercive censorship over public opinion. The doubters quote President Wilson's words, "Just as we fight without rancor and selfish object . . . we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and fair play; we profess to be fighting for"; and they ask in all seriousness how far the American nation is being urged to conduct its war-like operations without rancorous passion and how far its government is itself proudly and punctiliously observing its advertised principles of right and fair play. If these doubters raise any question as to the wisdom of the declaration by this country of war on Germany or as to the overwhelming importance of resisting uncompromisingly the triumph of the German military party. The New Republic has no sympathy with their criticism. The price of American participation may be heavier than was anticipated some months ago, but the increased cost is outweighed by the clearest possible testimony to its salutary consequences. When the decision had to be made, there was no way of being sure what the effect would be on the outcome of the war of an unrestricted submarine campaign. No one could certainly tell whether or not the connivance at its barbarities by this country would or would not be equivalent to an underwriting of German victory. We now know that it probably would have enabled the Germans to win. The combination of the submarine campaign, the Russian revolution and American refusal to resist the former and to support the latter would have reduced France, Great Britain and Italy to a struggle against odds which could hardly have failed to result either in a war of general extermination or in a treaty of peace favorable to Germany. Those who opposed American intervention are finally condemned by the manifest practical consequences of American abstention. By clearing the way for a triumph of the military caste in Germany it would have left democracy throughout the world with its back to the wall and condemned to adopt permanently instead of temporarily the handicap of militarism. In no country would the democratic movement have been more defenseless than in America. For we would have been isolated, distrusted and friendless in a world more than ever militarized, and we would have armed, not as at present with some hope of making a temporary use of military force contribute to enduring peace, but under the influence of a bad conscience and an overwhelming fear. In the essential respect the wisdom of American participation in the war has been brilliantly vindicated by the event. Any criticism of the government which tends to a contrary con-

clusion and which implies a willingness to acquiesce in a victory for the German government, because of a reluctance to pay the price of its defeat, must be unequivocally repudiated. But this is not the whole story. The letters of our correspondents suggest a criticism of the conduct of the war which assumes the need and value of implacable American resistance to German aggression, but which questions the means which are being adopted to make that resistance effective. They raise in doubt whether the American government is adapting its domestic policy to the need of securing the kind of support from popular opinion which is required for the success of its diplomatic campaign against the German government and for the fulfillment of its ultimate purposes in entering the war. That campaign consists essentially in our attempt to capitalize the moral superiority of the cause of the Allies, to assist military with political issue of the war in such a way as to impair German morale by undermining the defense psychology of the German people and at the same time to give increasing endurance and integrity to the morale of the enemies of Germany. But a nation which uses political weapons must conform in its own behavior to the spirit of its policy. Its people must cooperate with its government in offering to the German people the olive branch as well as the sword, and this the American nation is not doing and is not being encouraged to do by its own government. A diplomacy which depends upon a combination of coercion and conciliation is being sustained by a war propaganda which is exclusively vindictive and coercive in spirit and method. This propaganda is already compromising the success of the President's attempt to impair German morale, and unless it is checked its effect on the morale of this country is likely to be no less deplorable.

From the editorials which appear in the enormous majority of American newspapers, from the speeches which are being made by a majority of American patriotic orators, no one could possibly infer that the American government officially entertains a policy except that of a decisive military victory, which was to be obtained at any cost and which would be used for the purpose of chastising and humiliating the German people. Few newspapers and none of the speakers so much as refer to the President's alternative of a peace of reconciliation or greet with the slightest encouragement the efforts which are now being made by the liberal parties in Germany to defeat the aggressive designs of their own government. On the contrary the detestable practice of classing the whole German nation together as assassins and Huns seems to be coming into favor. Stump speakers sent out by defense societies are evoking in the name of American patriotism the most malignant and venomous passions of their audiences, not only against the whole German nation, but against everyone in this country who disagrees with their attitude and who does not share their own rancor and intolerance. Temporarily the propaganda of patriotism has been divorced from every feeling and idea which last spring reconciled so many pacifically minded Americans to participation in the war.

How is it possible to pretend that a war conducted in such a spirit can make for enduring peace? It is this headstrong and vindictive state of mind, this easy confusion of blind pugnacity with the sense of absolute righteousness which has been and always will be the most fruitful mother of wars. As a matter of fact the people who are now laboring to infect American public opinion with their own virulence always have been and still are the enemies rather than the friends of lasting peace. They were doing their best to militarize this country before it entered into the war, and they are making the best of their opportunity to continue the work, and their efforts will not cease after the war is over. When the President proclaimed in the Senate address of last January his program of constructive internationalism, they either sneered at it or denounced it. They can be counted on to resist any attempt to put it into effect. At present they are supporting him only in so far as he is making war. They are deliberately endeavoring to neutralize his attempt to accomplish in part the better objects of the war by the conciliatory methods of a democratic diplomacy. One and all they are the President's bitter and irreconcilable personal enemies. They are only waiting for a good opportunity to turn on him and rend him once again as they did during the last campaign.

The government cannot escape some measure of responsibility for the ugly and sinister mask which is being fastened on the face of American patriotism. It could not have wholly prevented this perversion of the spirit, which, according to the President, would be punctiliously observed by the nation in its conduct of the war, but it could have done much to counteract the process of demoralization. The great failure in the domestic policy of the government has consisted in its management of public opinion. It has depended too much upon the repetition of the President originally embodied his policy and has neglected the task of applying them to the concrete problems of domestic and foreign policy in a way which would increase their vitality. The official press bureau has done nothing to assist the President's diplomacy by disseminating its spirit, and by explaining its purposes and its consequences. It has done absolutely nothing to arouse the interest of public opinion in the constructive problems of the settlement. Its notion of information and propaganda has been a poor survival of the muckraking magazine. The result is that when two different kinds of agitation inimical to the success of its own policy started up, the government was placed at a grave disadvantage. It was not prepared to resist a militarist agitation which was dangerous to its work on behalf of enduring peace, and it could think of no answer to an agitation in favor of immediate peace except violent suppression. Of course the effect of suppressing the agitation for peace at any price and conniving at the agitation for war at any price has been to strengthen both extremists and weaken the supporters of its own intermediate policy. The peace propagandists rejoice in suppression because it drives agitation underground where it will become much more irresponsible, insidious and menacing. The militarist agitators are permitted without protest to impose themselves on the public as the only unadulterated American patriots.

A sufficient, although not the only, objection to such a method of managing public opinion is its tendency to impair the ultimate efficiency of our American contribution to the war. Not only does it increase the resistance, which the American military and political power will have to overcome both at home and abroad, but it will inevitably tend to dry up the fountain of American moral endurance. The American people will eventually react against a war which they were induced to enter because it was intended to safeguard democracy and to promote organized peace, but which is being too much managed by people who are opposed to organized peace, who expressly repudiate the idea that it was intended to safeguard democracy and who by all their words and acts prove an utter lack of faith in any method of dealing with enemies and opponents except that of violence. No matter how drastic the measures adopted to suppress opposition to a war conducted in a spirit of vindictive and savage hatred, that opposition will grow. Such a war would be too offensive to American national conscience. It would be too injurious to American national interest. The President, by every promise which he made to the American people in leading them into war, is committed to evoking for its support a different kind of propaganda. Otherwise he will fail in his campaign to divide the German people from the German government; the war will become more than ever one of physical and moral attrition and of competitive annihilation; the Russian republic will be submerged for a generation or more; and ultimately the connection will be severed between the government as the official engine of organized power in America and the deepest sources of American moral endurance and aspiration.

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