HARDING GLAD AMERICANS ARE A FREE PEOPLE

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make war, not a war thrust upon us, if I could choose the language of the resolution, but a war declared in response to affronts; a war that will at least put a soul into our American life; a war not for the cause of the allies of Europe; a war not for France, beautiful as the sentiment may be in reviving at least our gratitude to the French people; not precisely a war for civilization, worthy and inspiring as that would be; but a war that speaks for the majesty of a people properly governed, who finally are brought to the crucial test where they are resolved to get together and wage a conflict for the maintenance of their rights and the preservation of the covenant inherited from their fathers.

"We have given to the world the spectacle of a great nation that could make war without selfish intent. We unsheathed the sword some eighteen years ago for the first time in the history of the world, in the name of humanity, and we gave proof to the world at that time of an unselfish nation. Now, whether it is the fate, or fortune, or travail of destiny, it has come to us to unsheathe the sword again, not alone for humanity's sake—through that splendid inspiration will be involved—but to unsheathe the sword against a great power in the maintenance of the rights of the republic, in the maintenance which will give to us a new guaranty of nationality. That's the great thing, and I want it known, Mr. President and senators, that this is the impelling thought with me for one, when I cast my vote.'

For Same Guaranty Today.

"It is for that same 'guaranty of nationality' that I stand today, and shall continue to stand inflexibly, so long as I shall be permitted to live. The independence of our great republic is to me a priceless and sacred inheritance. Time was when an American did not hesitate to proclaim himself a patriot. To do so now, I am well aware, is sometimes to invite the sneers of cynicism. But why should any true American not be free to say: 'I am a patriot, wholly evoted to my country, which I hold to be God's best inspiration to man for higher attainment and the promotion of the world's best civilization?'

"But I have a special reason for making this reference today. I challenge the statement that the patriotism which holds America first comprehends either narrowness or selfishness, or as implying tacit suspicion and jealousy of other peoples.

"To assert, as some have asserted heedlessly, that those of us who honestly believe that America can best serve all mankind as America, free and untrammeled, rather than as one in a pitiable minority among many states in merged world government, lack consciousness of the rightful demands of humanity, is to utter a gross and unpardonable libel. To attribute meanness to those of us who, in the performance of our public duty, refused to participate in what we sincerely regarded as a betrayal of our own country in the interest of others, is to discredit the intelligence and discrimination of the great mass of American people who directly, by their votes, put us in our positions of trust. For myself, I yield to no man in willingness, aye, in eagerness, to render the greatest conceivable assistance to the stricken peoples of Europe. I include all of them and speak with a genuinely sympathetic heart, whether it is to mention devastated France, or sorely-tried Italy, or nobly-struggling Poland, or distracted and misguided Russia, or gallant little Belgium, or pitiably deceived Austria, or the ruthless invader, Germany, which came to the supreme tragedy through a leadership which brought disaster to her misguided people.

"It was with that feeling of sympathy and desire to serve, that most reluctantly and with grave misgivings, as I announced at the time, I with reservations designed to preserve our essential liberty of action. The record is made, and under the same conditions, confronted by the same alternative, I should vote now as I voted then.

Conditions Have Changed.

"But the conditions have changed. Experience has brought enlightenment. We know now that the league constituted at Versailles is utterly impotent as a preventive of wars. It is so obviously impotent that it has not even been tried. The original league, mistakenly conceived and unreasonably insisted upon, has undoubtedly passed beyond the possibility of restoration. The maturer judgment of the world will be that it deserved to pass for the very simple reason that, contrary to all of the tendencies developed by the civilizing processes of the world, it rested upon the power of might, not of right.

"The assertion is made frequently that through the surrender of our nationality we might have saved the life of the covenant—that is to say, that, although twenty-eight nations could not make it function, one added to the twenty-eight would have achieved a glowing success, provided, always, that the one were America.

"This pays to America the tribute of exceptional influence, but I suggest that if the world is dependent upon our action to bring about the supreme realization, then we ought to have the say about our own freedom in participating therein. But let us consider what is meant by this reliance upon America. What can it signify if not that it is to the United States, and to the United States alone, that the other twenty-eight nations look for the bone and sinew, the money, the munitions and the men to sustain the entire organization, not as an agency of peace, but as an armed force?

A Telling Admission.

"A few days ago a delegation of an organization which calls itself a Society for the Prevention of War appealed to the premier of Great Britain to unite and use the powers of the world in defense of Poland, Armenia and the Dardanelles. The British premier replied, according to his remarks quoted by the newspapers, to the effect that, while the formation of 'an international army' would be 'an ideal solution,' it could not be accomplished because the European nations could not furnish the troops and the United States had 'withdrawn from co-operation'—a polite and diplomatic phrase and more exactly meaning, of course, that the senate of the United States had not completed the partial obligation assumed by the President to do that very thing—that is, to 'furnish the troops.' Could a clearer indication of what would have been expected of this country as a member of the league be desired? Hardly. Some, too, think, or say they think, that this extraordinary service should be rendered. I do not agree with them, but, assuming that they are right, I venture to note that nothing stands in the way of performance. The President has only to call upon Congress to declare war, and to confer upon him specific authority to raise armies for the protection of the powers which, though recently associated with, are still foreign to our own republic.

"It is reasonably safe to assume, however, that the President will not pursue this course. Fortunately, he is under no 'compelling moral obligation' under the league to do so. His recent unhappy experience, moreover, in asking Congress to send American boys to police Armenia would hardly encourage repetition of a request already courteously but quite firmly declined by the Congress. What then, in like circumstances, would be the answer of the British premier himself? In his own words, addressing a meeting of the Coalition Liberals on August 12 last, according to the press reports, he said:

"'When the terrible question of peace or war has to be decided, our first duty as a government is to the people, who trust us not to commit their treasure to any unjustifiable adventure. Nothing but the most imperative call of national honor, national safety and national freedom can justify war. Before this country is committed to it, even in the most limited form, we must be satisfied that these are in peril.'

"I quote these telling words, my countrymen, with the utmost satisfaction, because with one amendment they express to a nicety my own position. I take for granted that the prime minister meant to include in 'treasure' the greatest treasure of all, but, for myself, I should leave nothing to be inferred. Foremost and above all else to be safeguarded by those of us who hold the trust of the people, it goes without saying, but cannot be too often repeated, is the manhood of the nation.

Will Not Misuse Power.

"Now, it may appear to you that I have been speaking chiefly in the negative. I make the admission. What is more, I might continue to do so almost indefinitely without disadvantage to our cause. So many things have been done by the present expiring administration that no power on earth could induce me to do, that I cannot even attempt to recount them. I may remark casually, however, that if I should be, as I fully expect to be, elected President of this just and honorable republic, I will not empower an assistant secretary of the navy to draft a constitution for helpless neighbors in the West Indies and jam it down their throats at the point of bayonets borne by United States marines. We have a higher service for our gallant marines than that. Nor will I misuse the power of the executive to cover with a veil of secrecy repeated acts of unwarranted interference in domestic affairs of the little republics of the western hemisphere, such as in the past few years have not only made enemies of those who should be our friends, but have rightfully discredited our country as their trusted neighbor.

Will Submit to No Wrong.

"On the other hand, I will not or shall not, as you prefer, submit to any wrong against any American citizen, with respect to either his life or his property, by any government. This statement is made in all solemnity, with enmity for none and friendship for all. If it particularly applies to Mexico, the application has been directed by the robbery and murder of hundreds of our own people in that unhappy country who were lawfully there and were entitled to protection. One must admit that these outrages upon Americans are largely the consequences of the wiggling and wobbling, the supine waiting of our own government, though the admission neither helps the hurt, nor gives the hope of security for the future while the present administration remains in power, or when one in 'complete accord' succeeds it.

"This admonition is not directed exclusively toward our next door neighbor to whom we would gladly hold forth a helping hand, and whom primarily, certainly in preference to far off peoples in Europe, Asia and Africa, it is our manifest duty to serve with a whole heart and generous tolerance. It is intended for a plain notice to every government on the face of the earth that the entire resources of this nation are pledged to maintain the sacredness of American lives and the just protection of American properties.

Line of Demarcation Plain.

"The line of demarcation between our attitude and that of our political opponents is perfectly plain. The president has made his position clear by his acts no less than by his words. Twice there came to him an opportunity to obtain ratification at the hands of the senate and twice he put the opportunity aside, because he would not accept reservations designed solely to safeguard American rights. He still holds Article 10 to be the heart of the covenant. So does the Democratic platform. So does the Democratic nominee. To assume that the nominee would accept the reservations rejected by the President and denounced by the party platform is to impugn his integrity. To insinuate, as those who in proclaiming themselves for the Democratic candidate and 'the league with reservations' do insinuate that he would pursue such a course in seeking ratification is not to pay him a compliment, but rather to challenge his sincerity.

"For myself I do not question for a moment the truth of what the Democratic nominee says on this subject. He has flatly said he is 'in favor of going in' on the basis announced by the President. I am not. That is the whole difference between us, but it is a most vital one, because it involves the disparity between a world court of justice supplemented by a world association for conference, on the one hand, and the council of the league, on the other.

The Difference.

"The difference between a court of international justice and the council created by the league covenant is simple but profound.

"The one is a judicial tribunal to be governed by fixed and definite principles of law administered without passion or prejudice. The other is an association of diplomats and politicians whose determinations are sure to be influenced by considerations of expediency and national selfishness.

"I do not mean to say, nor do I mean to permit any such construction that I would decline to co-operate with other nations in an honest endeavor to prevent wars. Nobody living would take that position. The only question is one of method or of practicability within the bounds prescribed by fundamental principles.

"There are distinctly two types of international relationship. One is an offensive and defensive alliance of great powers, like that created at Versailles, to impose their will upon the helpless peoples of the world. Frankly, I am opposed to such a scheme as that, and I speak knowingly when I say that the associated powers, with whom we fought the war, were reluctant to accept such a proposition.

"I am opposed to the very thought of our republic becoming a party to so great an outrage upon other peoples, who have as good a right to seek their political freedom as we had in 1776 and have the same right to developing eminence under the inspiration of nationality as we held for ourselves.

The Other Type.

"The other type is a society of free nations, or an association of free nations, or a league of free nations, animated by considerations of right and justice, instead of might and self interest, and not merely proclaimed an agency in pursuit of peace, but so organized and so participated in as to make the actual attainment of peace a reasonable possibility. Such an association I favor with all my heart, and I would make no fine distinction as to whom credit is due.

"This is proposing no new thing. This country is already a member of such a society—The Hague tribunal, which, unlike the league of Versailles, is still functioning, and within a few weeks will resume its committee sessions under the chairmanship of an American representative.

"In that body we have the framework of a really effective instrumentality of enduring peace. The fact that the tribunal did not prevent the great war is, of course, manifest, but the cause of the failure is no less apparent. Germany, already secretly determined upon a ruthless invasion, was able to prevent the adoption of measures which might have proved effectual. The condition now is wholly different. Not only Germany, but the entire world has profited to the extent of an awful object lession, the impression of which cannot be erased from the human mind for generations to come. The horrors of war and the eagerness for peace have become universal. What once seemed at The Hague to be a mere academic discussion has become a positive, outstanding need of facing terrifying actualities. This makes vastly easier the task of so strengthening The Hague tribunal as to render its just decrees either acceptable or enforceable. It is not uncommon for the advocates of the league of Versailles to contrast unfavorably The Hague tribunal upon the ground that the tribunal 'lacks teeth.'

Let's Install the Teeth.

"Very well, then, let's put teeth into it. If, in the failed league of Versailles, there can be found machinery which the tribunal can use properly and advantageously, by all means let it be appropriated. I would even go further. I would take and combine all that is good and excise all that is bad from both organizations. This statement is broad enough to include the suggestion that if the league, which has heretofore riveted our considerations and apprehensions, has been so entwined and interwoven into the peace of Europe, that its good must be preserved in order to stabilize the peace of that continent, then it can be amended or revised so that we may still have a remnant of world aspirations in 1918 builded into the world's highest conception of helpful co-operation in the ultimate realization.

"I believe humanity would welcome the creation of an international association for conference and a world court whose verdicts upon justiciable questions, this country in common with all nations would be both willing and able to uphold. The decision of such a court or the recommendations of such a conference could be accepted without sacrificing on our part or asking any other power to sacrifice one iota of its nationality.

"The Democratic nominee has spoken about America abandoning her associates in war and deserting the allied nations in establishing the league of Versailles. I do not think it longer necessary to challenge that statement or pass farther opinion upon the unfortunate league. It has already been abandoned by Europe, which had gone so far as to accept it by formal agreement in treaty. On this subject, we are fully informed at first hand. Only the other day the British premier said unresentfully that the essential co-operation of America might involve 'some change, at any rate, in the form of the covenant,' and he added, with characteristic outspokenness, 'it is quite possible it might be a change for the better.'

"Listen, further, to the wise and far-seeing, former British ambassador, who was not permitted to present his credentials to our executive.

On Our Own Terms.

"'As long,' said Viscount Grey, hardly a month ago, 'as long as the richest, most powerful, the greatest, both for population and territory, of the civilized countries of the world stands outside the league, the league will be unable to fulfill its destiny. To put it in quite plain terms, the Americans must be told that if they will only join the league they can practically name their own terms.' Undoubtedly that is the fact. I ask: Is there any good reason why we should not avail ourselves of this privilege? I do not mean in any arrogant or selfish way, but simply as a matter of fairness and right to our own people. Surely it is becoming, and a duty as well, to safeguard our own people, since it is we who are the main contributors, while asking nothing for ourselves except to participate in a contribution to the promotion of world peace.'

A Valued Suggestion.

"Viscount Grey continues: 'The Americans should be intrusted with the task of drafting a reconstruction scheme.' Then he suggests further that 'a committee of the senate—we must never forget the senate's rights and duties in regard to foreign affairs being re-enforced by the members of the house of representatives, and also by nominees of the President, and Supreme Court—could draw up suggestions for the reconstruction of the league which could be consonant with the feeling not of one, but of all parties in America.'

"Frankly, I value that suggestion very highly, because it is proffered obviously in a helpful and friendly spirit and reveals an important Old World opinion on the necessity of amendment, revision or reconstruction. It comprehends substantially what I would propose to do if elected president. I do not mean precisely that. It would be clearly unwise to undertake specific suggestions or to attempt to pass upon suggestions now. What is in my mind is the wisdom of calling into real conference the ablest and most experienced minds of this country, from whatever walks of life they may be derived and without regard to party affiliation, to formulate a definite, practical plan along the lines already indicated for the consideration of the controlling foreign powers.

"The objection, strongly uttered in some quarters, that this course would involve the reconvening of the entire convention may be regarded as a very slight one. The acceptance of our proposals by the few principal nations would undoubtedly be followed promptly by the acceptance on the part of the minor members of the alliance.

"There would be no material delay. One can not disregard the leadership or have any doubt about the influence of the principal allied and associated powers. Insofar as I could do so, without disregarding the proprieties, I should give very earnest and practically undivided attention to this very vital subject from the day of my election and I should ask others to do likewise as a matter of public and patriotic duty. Indeed, I should hope to have behind me, after the decision on the national referendum we are soon to have, a country wholly united in earnest endeavor to achieve a true solution of this problem upon which the future civilization so largely depends.

Already Announced.

"I have already announced that I shall urge prompt passage of the resolution, vetoed by the president, declaring at an end the preposterous condition of technical war when we are actually at peace. Simultaneously, I shall naturally advise the resumption by the Congress of its exceptional powers, which have been vested by war legislation in the executive. I have no expectation whatever of finding it necessary or advisable to negotiate a separate peace with Germany.

"In view of the simple fact that the allied powers with whom we were associated in the war have already formally concluded their peace, the passage of the peace resolution by congress would merely give formal recognition to an obvious fact.

Our Unselfishness Emphacized.

"Let us take stock for a moment of America in the world, aye, and of America at home. The end of the war found our unselfishness emphasized to all mankind, and the garlands of world leadership were bestowed from every direction. We had only to follow the path of America, rejoicing in the inheritance which led to our eminence, to rivet the gaze of all peoples upon our standards of national righteousness and our conception of international justice. Moreover, the world was ready to give us its confidence. It was the beckoning opportunity of the centuries, not for the glorification of the new world republic, but for America to hold every outpost of advancing civilization and invite all nations to join the further advance to heights dreamed of, but never approached before. But force of example was flung aside for force of armed alliance. We neglected our readjustments and restorations at home, and the cruel sacrifice of millions of lives and billions of treasure left us and the world groping in uncertainty and anxiety instead of revealing us in the sunlight of a new day, with ties formed, ready for the onward march of peace and all its triumphs.

Let's Resume Our Place.

"Mindful of our splendid example and renewing every obligation of association in war, I want America to be the rock of security at home, resolute in righteousness and unalterable to security and supremacy of the law. Let us be done with wiggling and wobbling. Steady, America! Let us assure good fortune to all. We may maintain our eminence as a great people at home and resume our high place in the estimate of the world. Our moral leadership was lost when 'Ambition' sought to superimpose a reactionary theory of discredited autocracy upon the progressive principle of living, glowing democracy. My chief aspiration, my countrymen, if clothed with power, will be to regain that lost leadership not for myself, not even for my party, though honoring and trusting it as I do, but for my country, the country that I love from the bottom of my heart and with every fiber of my being above all else in the world."

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