

The Threatening Danger of a Military Autocracy

Opposition to the Organized Military Cabal to Bankrupt the National Treasury--Are the People, the Brave, Patient People, Clamoring for a \$500,000,000 Bond Issue in a Time of Peace with all the World?

By GENERAL ISAAC R. SHERWOOD

Speech of General Isaac R. Sherwood, October 22, 1915, before the Kenilworth Club, Toledo.

All the news coming to us from Washington indicates that we are now in the midst of an era of "Military Hysteria." We have had several eras of this kind lately, all resulting in lowering our ethical standards of government, and all costly and reprehensible. We had one in the winter of 1907-1908, when under the leadership of jingoes of the Hobson type, we added several additional millions to our naval and army budgets, on the theory that Japan was about to attack us on the Pacific slope. In fact, I heard Hobson, then congressman from Alabama, say on the floor of congress that he had secret or confidential information that Japan was contemplating war against the United States. Of course, the armor plate trust and the powder trust and the steel trust and their allies, through the big newspapers they own and the leading magazines they control, worked up a powerful sentiment in congress and the country for a bigger navy and a more formidable army to resist the imaginary warlike attitude of Japan. In fact we had for that session of congress an acute case of military hysterics, and we wasted some seventy millions of our hard earned tax money for an increased army and navy. All wasted money and wasted energy, as we all know now.

Then in 1912, we had a very aggravating attack of political hysterics, largely fomented and led by Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, who made the campaign for the presidency on a more radical socialist platform than Eugene Debs. He not only advocated the recall of judges, but also the recall of judicial decisions by the roosters in town election. This spasmodic system of hysteria enabled Roosevelt to carry 88 electoral votes that year, while Taft had only eight. Today there is not a citizen of sanity and sense, of ordinary patriotic inspiration, who would not prefer in the present awful European crisis, Taft for president rather than Roosevelt.

Today in the midst of this terrible war in Europe, every patriotic man and woman in the United States realizes that had Roosevelt been elected president in 1912, we would today be involved in this most brutal and barbarous of all wars.

OUR WAR WITH SPAIN

Again in 1898, we had the most costly fit of military hysteria since this republic was born. I refer to our war against Spain. It is now known to every intelligent student of American diplomacy that Cuba would have been freed without war or without shedding one drop of American blood. The correspondence in the state department at Washington shows that Spain had agreed through Prime Minister Sagasta to withdraw the army of Spain from the island of Cuba, before congress declared war against Spain. Not only does this official correspondence prove this, but ex-Senator and ex-Cabinet Minister John Sherman, then secretary of state, so stated in a public address at Mansfield, Ohio. That spasm of military hysterics has already cost us the lives of over 16,000 stalwart young soldiers, with a pension list to date aggregating over forty millions of dollars and over one thousand millions all told worse than wasted in the far away Philippine Islands. And the end is not yet.

There is not a prominent public man today of either of the three parties, who does not know that the acquisition of the Philippine Islands was the greatest diplomatic blunder in our whole 130 years of national life, and yet that violent attack of hysteria which precipitated the war with Spain was largely caused by one too many of our many useless battleships. Had not the battleship "Maine" entered the harbor of Havana, there would have been no war. It was the wild excitement created throughout the country by

the blowing up of the "Maine" with its precious freight of human lives that raised the war spirit to such a ferocity that President McKinley was overwhelmed.

General Fitzhugh Lee of Virginia, an able diplomat, then United States consul at Havana, notified the secretary of war not to send any battleship to Havana during the excited condition of affairs on the Island of Cuba. Hence, I give it as a historical fact that the one battleship too many "Maine" was responsible for our war with Spain, aided, of course, and promoted by that cruel propaganda of the Army and Navy league and the jingoes in congress.

TRUSTS' PROFITS ON WAR MATERIALS

One of our leading citizens of Toledo has recently received instructions from Pine street, New York, emanating, of course, from that gigantic organization of trusts that seek to dominate the legislation of congress, to organize the city of Toledo for that tremendous expedition of our resources for a big army and navy, under the humbug pretense of national defense.

"There are millions in it," if it can be fully exploited, for that powerful array known as the Army and Navy league, backed by the armor plate trust, the powder trust, the steel trust, and allied trusts. Their combined profits during the past ten years, all off the taxpayers of the United States for material furnished the government, are estimated at not less than one hundred millions of dollars; (scan these figures, \$100,000,000).

As I have already stated, there are millions in this military propaganda for the big interests. Since 1887 we have purchased 217,379 tons of armor plate, at an average of \$440 per ton. The price above what they sold armor plate to Russia was \$190 per ton. A price over reasonable profit of \$41,301,319.

In the meantime we have been paying the powder trust as high as a dollar a pound, while we are now manufacturing powder in the government-owned plant at 36 cents per pound.

It is estimated that the armor plate trust and the powder trust and the steel trust have realized over \$100,000,000 on our military establishment during the past ten years.

MONEY SPENT FOR COAST DEFENSES

This dominating military cabal is claiming we have no coast defenses, in face of the fact that we have expended during the past ten years \$75,738,254 on coast defenses. I give the official figures. But this is only one illustration of the continental lies now being exploited, as we have spent some SEVENTY-FIVE AND THREE QUARTER MILLIONS on big guns for coast defense during the past ten years. Who's afraid?

And now the contention of this powerful and dominating cabal is that some nation or power, not named, after the close of this barbarous European war, is going to cross three thousand miles of ocean and attack the United States. Mind you, after this war is settled, and every nation involved is bankrupt and utterly exhausted in men and war material, they, or some of them, are going to make war on the hundred million people of the United States. Was there ever such an utterly idiotic proposition before exploited, since civilized man was evolved from the prehistoric cave man? And yet we are now in an acute stage of military hysterics, over the recently invented slogan, "Military Preparedness." And we are told now, after building the second biggest navy in the world and with some 218,000 soldiers, including the national guard, all equipped and ready for any kind of war, that we are utterly unprepared.

And Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, ex-president of the United States, an explorer, an orator, a historian, a politician, a rough rider, a slayer of mountain lions and African tigers and turtle doves, is going up and down the country, saying we are utterly unprepared for war. Let us see. This is the same Theodore Roosevelt who, as president of the United States, when our navy was only two-thirds as strong as it is today, and we had ten thousand less sailors and "middies" on our battleships, sent our whole navy around

the world, and exhibited it in all the ports on the south and west Pacific; sent it over to Japan and the Orient, in order to convince the empires of South America and Asia that we had an invincible navy, ready to fight at the drop of the hat, anybody and everybody.

Now, this same Roosevelt, who exploited our navy at an expense to the taxpayers of the United States, including repairs for that memorable trip, of almost one hundred millions of dollars, now says we are utterly unprepared for war. We are now at peace with all the world, with no threatening dangers anywhere, and still we are asked to spend five hundred millions of our hard earned tax money, to add five hundred millions to our bonded debt, or to add five hundred millions to the taxation of our people, in defense against an impossible war, that not one of the whole array is able to state or to name the enemy we are to fight. Privately they are saying it is the Kaiser. They think that the Kaiser, after annihilating the armies of England, France, Russia, Serbia, and Belgium, and killing more than one-half of the men of his own country able to bear arms, and exhausting all the resources of his empire, is going to cross the Atlantic ocean, three thousand miles, and attack the people on this side, with whom he has no quarrel and never had any. In my judgment this is the most idiotic proposition that was ever presented to the American people, by anyone outside of a lunatic or idiotic asylum. * * * * *

COSTS OF ONE BATTLESHIP

Quite recently also we consigned to the retired list another of our great battleships, the North Dakota, which cost us over twelve millions, and up to the time it was sent to the junk heap had cost the taxpayers of the country \$28,000,000. These twenty-eight millions would have been enough to build fourteen hundred churches at \$20,000 apiece. It would buy seven thousand farms at \$4,000 each. It would provide a college education for 56,000 young men at \$500 per year. It would have given 280,000 worthy workers who produce all the wealth of this country, OLD AGE PENSIONS at \$100 a year. And yet when I talked about old age pensions for deserving toilers on the floor of congress, it was remarkable what an array of political economists was developed. "O, you are wild on pensions," they said. "You will bankrupt the treasury." But when a proposition was up in congress to retire the officers of the regular army who had been educated at West Point at the government's expense of \$4,000 a year, who had lived on the fat of the land, and never had occasion to serve at the front for fifty years, and who at the age of 64 were to be retired on half pay for life, the legislation went through with a whirl, to retire them not only on half pay, but with three-fourths pay above the grade at which they were retired. That is a colonel would be retired at 64 at three-fourths the pay of a brigadier general. This gives our people an idea of the influence the Army and Navy league have had on the congress of the United States.

ATTITUDE ON WAR QUESTION

There appears to be an impression that my attitude on the question of war is a new idea. I have held the ideas that I hold today for over half a century. On Sunday, May 12, 1912, I was called upon to deliver a memorial address on General George W. Gordon of Tennessee, a Confederate soldier, who was wounded and captured at the terrible battle of Franklin, and who at the time of his death was a member of congress.

The battle of Franklin closed at midnight with the greatest destruction of human life in proportion to the number engaged of any battle ever fought on the American continent. I quote from my address on the above occasion, as printed in the Congressional Record:

"Outside the breastworks in a wider and a thicker line lay the Confederate dead. It was midnight and still the dun smoke of battle almost hid the stars. I stood upon the parapet in the center of that battle line and saw all that