



# DEMOCRACY

---

VS.

---

# SOVEREIGNTY

BY  
DARWIN P. KINGSLEY



This Address is issued for the use of the High Schools of the United States. It is distributed by the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York in the hope that the subject matter thereof may prove useful to the Debating Societies connected with such Schools



# DEMOCRACY vs. SOVEREIGNTY



AN AFTER DINNER RESPONSE

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 18, 1915, AT THE  
147th ANNUAL BANQUET

OF THE

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK

BY

MR. DARWIN P. KINGSLEY



WALDORF-ASTORIA, NEW YORK

II 525  
.K48

Library of Congress  
1918

## DEMOCRACY *vs.* SOVEREIGNTY

---

Into the terror and chaos which to-day misrule the greater part of the world certain questions are increasingly thrusting themselves:

- 1st. What was the fundamental error in the civilization of the world on August 1, 1914?
- 2d. What fundamental change must be made in order to correct that error?

Of written and spoken answers to the first question there is no end. Answers to the second question are naturally fewer, because the facts necessary to coherent thinking cannot be arrived at until the first question has been answered.

All the peoples of all the warring countries believe their cause is just, that they are fighting defensively for their existence. And the paradox of it is that all these beliefs are true. They are all fighting for existence and for fatherland.

I heard Dr. Bernhard Dernburg say in the early days of the conflict, defending Germany for her invasion of Belgium, that the act was a necessity, that a nation could not be expected to consent to its own destruction.

Commenting on our last and formal protest to Great Britain, against what we deem her violation of International law, and her disregard of the rights of neutrals, one of the great London dailies, justifying England's determination to retain control of the seas at all hazards, said "A nation cannot be expected to commit suicide."

These expressions from either side, almost identical in phraseology and absolutely identical in philosophy,

reflect the existence of a cause of war not often referred to, under the compulsion of which however the whole world rests to-day.

The flames which burst into a world conflagration fifteen months ago were not only already burning under cover fiercely everywhere in Europe, but unquestionably were lighted, unquenchably lighted when world civilization based on the doctrine of sovereignty began to take form centuries ago.

The civilization of 1914 rested on that doctrine. And what is sovereignty? Sovereignty is final authority, the thing greater than the law, that indeed protects the law. Sovereignty is the highest expression of authority in a civilized state, not inferior however to the authority of any other sovereignty, be that sovereignty physically greater or smaller, and not qualified in its completeness by any other power.

This is the language of sheer authority, and sovereignty is the doctrine of authority. Democracy can no more live in its atmosphere than Jefferson's theory of inalienable rights can live in a world ruled by 42-centimetre guns and superdreadnoughts. Its demands are such that peace is now only a period of preparation for war. If any branch of human endeavor is anywhere developed along purely commercial lines, it is almost certain ultimately to be held an error. Highways should be built for military purposes; railroads should primarily be planned to transport armies; ships of commerce should be so constructed that they can be converted quickly into cruisers or transports. In obedience to the demands of sovereignty, the shadow of war rests over us at all times.

At the very outset sovereignty assumes that it must ultimately fight, that war is its true explanation, and, therefore, it reserves the right to take the last dollar of its citizens or subjects, and, if necessary,

to demand the sacrifice of their lives as well. The favorite phrase of sovereignty runs this wise: "In defense of our liberties and our soil we will fight to the last man."

Whatever the form of government, the sentiment is the same. Behind that sentiment and in obedience to its necessities the prejudices, the provincialisms, the misconceptions, the hates, the fears, and the ambitions that so bitterly divide nations, were born. On the first of August, 1914, they had grown to uncontrollable proportions.

Add to these conditions the fact that we were living in the age of electricity, when the impalpable and imponderable ether had become not a dead wall but a shining highway through infinite space, when the spoken word was seized by a messenger whose speed and orbit far outreached the imagination of the people who kept and guarded for uncounted centuries that glorious word picture finally expressed in the first chapter of Genesis, and the conclusion is inevitable,—in such an age, and in a world so small a civilization based on eight great aggressive unyielding unconditioned sovereignties was no more possible without war than that two solid bodies should occupy the same space at the same time under the laws of physics.

Unconditioned sovereignty was the fundamental error in the civilization of 1914.

A striking feature of this war is that its divisions do not follow the usual lines of cleavage. Neither race nor color nor religion are primarily responsible for the conditions in Europe, nor for the cataclysm which has occurred. Christians are fighting Christians; Jews are killing Jews; Moslems are against Moslems; whites are murdering whites; men of color are fighting their kind. Saxons are fighting their own breed; Slavs are against Slavs. The special favor of

the God of the Christians is blasphemously claimed by both sides.

The ordinary causes of war had unquestionably decreased on August 1, 1914, but the hope which that fact held out to many of us proved finally to be a false hope. In the impact of unyielding sovereignties, in the fear which created a race in armaments, in the belief that national preservation was the supreme duty and sovereignty the supreme good, there was abundant fuel for the fires already lighted. The conflagration was certain. Every new invention by which time and space were annihilated, presumably bringing humanity increased comfort and safety and happiness and efficiency, served even more markedly to increase international friction. Sovereignties were jammed together; they met everywhere; they jostled each other on every sea; they crowded each other even in desert places. They had no law by which they could live together. They could have none. Each was itself the law. When, therefore, through the elimination of individual prejudices and provincialisms on the one hand, and the conquest of time and distance on the other, the world had reached a point where human brotherhood was conceivably attainable, humanity found itself in the clutch of this monster called sovereignty. Then came the tragedy! Not alone in squandered life and property, but in missing the great moment prepared through centuries of human fidelity and suffering, the moment when humanity was prepared to see itself through eyes suffused with sympathy and understanding rather than as now through eyes blinded by hate and blood-lust.

The people of the various great powers of the world in 1914 in fundamentals were not dissimilar. Never in the story of man's evolution had he been so nearly homogeneous. Everywhere he had ap-



proached common standards. His dress was much the same over most of the Christian world, and this uniformity had even made headway against the ancient prejudices of the Orient. He thought much the same everywhere. His standards of justice were strikingly alike. He was kindly and merciful. His vision reached far beyond the borders of his own land, and he was beginning to understand that all men are brave and should be brothers. The various instrumentalities that brought all peoples severally face to face, that promised still further to increase understanding and sympathy and therefore the prospect of peace, unhappily and finally had just the opposite effect. Men grew in international sympathy; sovereignties did not. Men dropped their prejudices; governments did not. The rigid barriers which geographically delimit nations became more rigid and more unyielding as individual knowledge grew and common sympathy spread. The light that penetrated to the individual and banished his bigotry could not penetrate national barriers as such. Its effect indeed was not to banish the darkness, but to cast deeper shadows. The condition that made men gentle made nations harsh; the impulse that drew the peoples of the world together drove sovereignties apart. The movement which foreshadowed a democratic world, the brotherhood of man, meant the end of the existing international order, and sovereignty instinctively knew and feared that.

So far as governments would permit, men made world-wide rules of action. They traded together internationally when tariffs allowed. They joined in great co-operative movements where race and creed and all the usual distinctions that separate men were ignored—ignored because men found when they came face to face that the old hates and preju-

dices were based on lies. The units of humanity became homogeneous; the units of civilization, the great sovereignties, did not. Here were two irreconcilable conditions. Sovereignties were in desperate straits. Each, menaced by every other, assumed that its integrity must be preserved at any cost. None was able to change its point of view; none was permitted to qualify its attitude toward other sovereignties, because each feared, as Shakespeare puts it, that

“To show less sovereignty than they, must need  
Appear less King-like.”

No sovereignty except that of Germany saw, fully, what this meant. Germany saw it long ago. Sovereignty from the beginning meant ultimate world-dominion by some nation. It could mean nothing less.

This explains why the splendidly efficient machines of modern civilization, moving, from the standpoint of the individual, co-operatively, happily and helpfully under the guidance of powerfully advancing human sympathy, were on the first of August, 1914, suddenly swerved by the savagery of unregulated internationality and sent crashing into each other. How complete the ruin of that collision no one can yet tell! What was destroyed, or is to be destroyed, is not yet clear. Was it democracy? Or was it sovereignty? The ultimate destruction of one or the other is probable. World peace is possible under either, but not under both.

Out of this hideous ruin will sovereignty ultimately arise rehabilitated and increasingly aggressive? Will a group of Powers finally emerge substantially victorious and will the Controlling Power of that group by perfectly logical processes gradually make its civilization dominant over the whole world? That is the only process by which sovereignty can ever bring permanent peace. So long as there are

even two great unconditioned sovereignties in the world, there can be no lasting peace.

Or is it possible that out of the ruin will come the revolt of humanity? Will a real Demos appear? A Democracy that has no frontiers, the Democracy of Humanity? Remembering not only the slaughter of 1914 and 1915, but the program of slaughter followed all through the Christian era, will the people say with young Clifford in Henry VI:

“Oh War, thou Son of Hell.”

Is it conceivable that they may say to sovereignty—

“You have in some things served us well in ages passed. You have awakened in us heroic aspirations and led us to noble achievements; but now, alas! your hands drip with innocent blood, you are guilty of deeds which the beasts of the jungle would not commit—deeds that show you to be inherently and necessarily, in the present condition of the world, the arch enemy of the human race, and therefore we must now fundamentally modify your demands.”

Milton, in the Sixth Book of Paradise Lost, tells how Satan, rebellious, and all his hosts, after a terrific struggle, threw themselves headlong

“Down from the verge of Heaven.”

He tells us, too, how the Almighty stayed his own hand because

“\*\*\*\*\*he meant  
Not to destroy, but root them out of Heaven.”

Flanders and Poland tell a tale of horror, record the use of machines and instruments of destruction, register a story of cruelty and hate, such as even the Miltonic imagination did not compass. The Satanic crew now busy in Europe, whether their blood guilt is the result of dynastic and race ambi-

tions or, as I believe, the product of forces beyond their control, must in like fashion be cast out if we are ever to have peace in this world.

That process will raise profound issues here. The Trans-Atlantic problem includes more than lies on the surface. What indeed of democracy? Will it again be strangled as it was at the Congress of Vienna a century ago, under the leadership of Austria and Prince Metternich? We are involved because if democracy has a future in Europe, it will largely be the result of its triumph here—a condition that Metternich and his fellow reactionaries did not have to face.

For a hundred and thirty-five years of organized life, and indeed through all the years since the settlement of Jamestown and the landing at Plymouth, America has been the beneficiary of the human race. Wrapped in her all but impenetrable isolation, beyond the reach of dynastic ambition, and until recently substantially beyond the impact of other sovereignties, and therefore measurably unaffected by internationality and its savagery, she has taken to her bosom the restless, the wronged, the adventurous, the bold, the brave—of all lands, indeed she has gathered into her fertile soil seed sifted from all the world.

Our country has not been unworthy of the opportunity. With all her blundering, she has done well; and whether she is now to be branded as selfish after all depends on what she clearly stands for when this war closes. One great thing she has done—perhaps the greatest democratic thing that men have ever done. She has shown how so-called sovereign states can be merged into a larger state without losing their individuality and without parting with democratic principles. She has shown how local citizenships

can coalesce into a master citizenship and yet remain vital. But, unless we misread the signs of Fate, she is now nearing the period when she must do more than that, or prove herself recreant, show herself an unworthy beneficiary.

Before considering what we should do in the interest of humanity, what we should do to discharge our obligation and our duty, let us consider what we should do at once, not as a measure of philanthropy but as a measure of safety.

*First, we should arm, and arm adequately;* not because we believe in that theory of government, we do not, we hate it: nor because we believe in that method of settling international difficulties, but because we must at all hazards protect this home of democracy from the Satanic brood which, driven from Heaven, apparently fell in Flanders and Poland.

Second, we must at the same time try at least to show that we are as great as Fate has decreed that we may be.

“But specifically”, you ask, “what should we do”?

We should signify our willingness to meet representatives of all the considerable powers of the world in an International Congress, the purpose of which shall be similar to that of the Convention which met in Philadelphia in 1787. That Convention met in the historic mansion where the Declaration of Independence was signed. Those two great assemblages, the second no less than the first, have made the words “Independence Hall”, in the imagination of the plain people of all the world, to shine like the Divine Presence over the Mercy Seat.

We should in that Congress stand for the civilizing and humanizing of international relations by whatever steps may be necessary. If to do that the present doctrine of unconditioned sovereignty must

be abandoned, if as a nation we must surrender what each Colony seemed to surrender in 1789, we should stand for that. We should find when the time came—as our fathers did—that we had actually surrendered only a little false pride, a little hate, a little prejudice and a little fear, and had entered, as the Colonies did upon the only Order that leads to peace and true greatness.

If such a program were presented to the stricken people of Europe at this war's close, it probably would not raise any larger problem than Washington and Franklin and Madison and Hamilton faced in 1787. The whole civilized world is no larger nor more obsessed by prejudice than the Colonies were then. You remember how bitterly they hated each other. Perhaps you recall what Mr. James Bryce says in his "American Commonwealth," viz: that if the people of the Colonies had voted directly on the adoption or rejection of the Federal Constitution, it would not have been adopted.

You certainly recall that New York State was against it, and the Convention called to vote on it was hostile until Alexander Hamilton compelled acceptance by the force of his logic and eloquence. We narrowly missed reverting to political chaos.

John Fiske calls the years between the Peace of Paris and the adoption of the Federal Constitution the critical period of American history. So indeed it was. During that period prejudice was put aside, jealousies were overcome, hatreds were forgotten, and the common aims of the people, their natural sympathy, their homogeneity, were gathered up into a triumphant democracy.

No exact figures are available, but the population of the European states now at war—excluding Japan, Turkey, Asiatic Russia, and the Balkans—

was at the beginning of the nineteenth century approximately the same as the population of the United States now. Our territory, geographically, is about equal to that of the countries I have included.

At the close of the Napoleonic Wars the people of Europe expected a new order and the end of war. They looked for the United States of Europe. Metternich and his associates denied that hope and so readjusted continental Europe as to strangle democracy. But the dream of the people was borne over seas and the United States of America in 1915 is the colossal fact which damns the continental sovereignties of 1815, and points the way to a regenerated Europe.

Emerging from this hopeless, senseless, and desperate struggle, the people of Europe will desire democracy as never before. They first brought democracy to us. Shall we now take it back to them?

We shall not, of course, reach the ultimate goal at one bound. A world state modelled after our Federal Constitution may be a long way off, but a real beginning would be a transcendent achievement. Ex-President Taft's League to enforce Peace, with its modest suggestion of a modified sovereignty, if achieved would be worth centuries of European diplomacy.

We did not ourselves achieve peace immediately after 1789, nor a national citizenship, but after our feet were once fairly set in the way of the Constitution, the people would not be denied. Once the people of Europe feel their feet firmly set upon a road that leads away from the savagery which now commands them, away from the slaughter which periodically claims their sons, from the shame that claims their daughters, no dynastic or demagogic ambition can indefinitely deny them the achievement of the civic brotherhood which is the glory of America.

The people of Europe are not essentially different from us. They are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. The difference lies in this: We have been the darlings of fortune. We have realized the noble vision of democracy which Europe glimpsed and lost a century ago. After a hundred years of agony, the Fates bring again to those stricken peoples conditions not dissimilar to those of 1815.

If now we arm—as we should—and do only that we shall show ourselves a nation of ingrates. If we arm and say to Europe that we are ready at any time to disarm, ready with them to create an international state, a state in which the central authority shall act directly on the people as our Federal Government does—a state democratically controlled as our Union is—a state in which international questions shall be settled as our interstate questions are—a state in which war would ultimately become as impossible, as unthinkable as it now is between Massachusetts and New York—if we do that, aye, if we try to do that—we shall show ourselves morally at least to be worthy descendants of the intrepid men who signed the Declaration of 1776, worthy successors of the great democrats who fashioned the charter of our liberties in 1787.

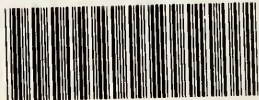








LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 021 547 845 2

