

*Col. Jones*

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THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.

S E C R E T

G.T. - 2941.

W A R      C A B I N E T.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL OFFENSIVE .

To be launched at a well-selected psychological moment.

(Covering Note by Sir Edward Carson)

A suggestion has been made that a Joint Manifesto shall be issued by the Allies to the peoples of the countries with which we are at war.

I circulate the attached Memorandum which Sir Maurice Hankey has received, together with the comments of Colonel Buchan, Director of Information, whom I have consulted in the matter, and propose to raise the question for the consideration of the Cabinet at an early date. The suggestion appears to me to be a very valuable one and to afford an opportunity of impressing on the enemy peoples the real aims for which we are fighting and the manner in which they have been misled by their rulers. The Department of Information has ample means for getting such a document circulated in enemy countries, and if the Cabinet approve of the scheme, I suggest that immediate steps should be taken to draw up a Manifesto of the kind described and to secure the adherence of our Allies to it.

(Sd) EDWARD CARSON.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W.  
11 December, 1917.

(1)

(Memorandum sent to the Secretary of the War Cabinet)

No-one will deny that Germany has made telling use of the "psychological" weapon in her efforts to dislocate and embarrass the military plans of the Allies, especially at moments when those plans seemed to give higher promise of embarrassment to the enemy. New problems have thus been created for the Allies involving a re-modelling of plans, much loss of time and prestige to ourselves, and corresponding gain of time to the enemy. She has realised that with increasing war-weariness increasing opportunities offer themselves for her psychological operations in the countries of the Allies as well as in neutral countries, and that lack of military success may be counterbalanced - if not more than counterbalanced - by psychological triumphs. The past year has furnished abundant proof of the collateral value of these methods to the military machine, and she will undoubtedly continue to employ to the full methods which have so admirably served her purpose in the past.

Is not the present moment peculiarly opportune for formulating a counter-plan of campaign, upon as big and world-wide a scale as it is possible to make it, launching that plan at a well-selected psychological moment, e.g., immediately after a German reverse. The peoples and armies of the enemy countries are, presumably, not less susceptible to psychological treatment than the peoples and armies of other countries; indeed, Prussianism is now reaping the fruit of a studied recognition of the fact !

The Allied Conference has just concluded its deliberation. At that Conference have been representatives of 17 States - verily a "League of Nations", all united for the one object of freeing the world from Prussian domination and Prussian ideals and (quoting from Mr Balfour's Despatch to Washington last January) of causing "the aggressive aims and unscrupulous methods of the Central Powers to fall into disrepute among the peoples of those Powers". How far do the peoples of Germany, Austria and Turkey realise for what it is this League of Nations is contending, and for what it is not contending? As yet they have been fed with lies to suit the psychology of their disease. Is it not worth considering the possible effect upon that psychology of the following plan?

- (A) Let all the States represented at the Paris Conference subscribe to a Joint Manifesto, addressed to the peoples of the enemy countries. Let that Manifesto be couched in reasonable, but strong and virile, terms, breathing an unshakeable determination not to sheathe the sword until the objects for which they are united have been attained. Let it set forth, clearly and concisely:-

- (1) A few telling statements to show that the responsibility for the War lies with Prussian militarism;
  - (2) The objects for which the Allied States intend to pursue it - no matter how long it may last - emphasising the fact that so many of the nations who are in the War have voluntarily entered, though they had nothing whatever to gain;
  - (3) The common desire of them all that the German people should become a free people -- free to live under a democratic Government - freed from those who have brought upon them so terrible a war; (Dwell upon the misery and suffering caused);
  - (4) The common view of them all that the destruction of Germany as a nation is not, and never has been, a war aim; that it is not desired either to impose upon the German people any form of Government not chosen by themselves, or to thwart her natural development and her legitimate growth, etc., etc.
  - (5) A statement, in general terms, of the losses - financial, commercial and colonial - which have resulted to the Central Powers from the War. In short, tear the sheep's clothing from the wolf as much as possible.
- (B) Print the Manifesto in every necessary language - tens and tens of millions of copies. Drop millions of copies from aeroplanes over the enemy's lines, on towns and villages in the enemy's countries, on every useful spot. Exhaust every possible means of getting them to the enemy's peoples - in the Near East, as well as in Central Europe. Make superhuman efforts to ensure a world-wide circulation - in Russia, neutral countries, Oriental countries - everywhere. Flood the world with it. Let the papers of the Allied Countries give a whole page to it, printing it in heavy type.
- (C) The Manifesto to be signed by the Heads of all the States concerned, with the population of their respective countries added. The solid fact that hundreds of millions of people were represented by the signatories would probably carry weight.

An imposing Manifesto of this kind, signed by this "League of Nations for Freedom", ought not to be without effect - not only upon the peoples and armies of the Central Powers, but upon neutral countries and the whole world. If defection can be accomplished by German methods among Armies and peoples, may we not assume that there is good probability of a Manifesto by this League of Nations accomplishing defection among the enemy armies and peoples? The Manifesto would bring vividly home the fact that nearly the whole world is leagued against Prussianism, is contending for the freedom of nations (and, with it, the freedom of the German nation), and has entered into a solemn pact unswervingly to pursue its aims until, in the interests of humanity and civilisation, they have been attained.

Compiled with psychological effect always in view, a telling Manifesto ought to result. Much, of course, would depend upon the moment selected for its issue. Human nature is human nature all the world over, and war-weariness with the enemy people is certainly not less than with the peoples of the Allies. Their spirit and determination are certainly less, and, if a moment of depression be selected when, through reverses, the barometer of their hopes is falling, the Manifesto might sow seeds the effect of which would bear fruit at no distant date. In short, follow up an important military victory by a wide-spread invasion of the enemy's psychological world.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W./1  
11th December, 1917

(II)

(Comment by the Director of Information.)

I return the Memorandum sent to Sir Maurice Hankey, and agree that the time has come for an Allied statement of War Aims directly addressed to enemy peoples rather than Governments. I think the matter one of first-class and immediate importance. I have talked it over with members of the General Staff at the War Office especially concerned with enemy countries, and they take the same view. The kind of statement which I suggest would also, I may point out, have very great effect at home, and would spike the guns of many of our critics. It should be a very short and simple statement of the Allied case under the following heads:-

1. It should begin by pointing out the number of nations which have declared war against Germany, many of them voluntarily, or have broken off negotiations with her. The result is that the better part of the world, controlling most of the raw materials of the world, is in an attitude of hostility towards the Central Powers. Why? Because the governing classes in Prussia have broken the written and unwritten law which alone makes civilised intercourse possible. Until this law is restored there can be no resumption of relations.

2. A short statement showing how the responsibility for the war rests with Prussianism. It could be shown by quotations from speeches and writings how Germany intended the war as an offensive campaign for world-power, and it was only when things began to go badly with her that she began to assume the role of an injured innocent.

3. The objects for which the Allies are not contending:- The dismemberment of Germany, the degradation of the German people, etc.

4. The one object of the Allies - to make the world secure in the future. This involves the freeing of Germany from Prussianism and the entrance of Germany into the comity of democratic peoples.

5. This, and not territorial adjustment, is the aim of all the Allies. Territorial adjustments are important only in so far as they subserve the main purpose, and this purpose is just as vital to the peace and prosperity of the German people as to that of the Allies.

- 2 -

6. A general statement of the losses which the Central Powers have so far sustained in the war. Why the Allies must win in the long run. Every month the war lasts means the more certain economic ruin of Germany after the war, and this not from any hostile tariff but from sheer natural causes.

7. The masters of Germany have enslaved and sold the German people. At this moment the German soldiers are not fighting for, but against, their own interests. Germany is in the position of a blackleg in a Trades Union. She must be forced to agree to the law of the common interest which happens also to be the interest of her own people.

Some statement of this sort might be signed by the Prime Minister of Britain, the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of France and the Prime Minister of Italy. It should be distributed by every possible means in enemy territory - by our smuggling arrangements, by aeroplanes and balloons, and should be printed also in all the chief neutral papers of the countries adjoining Germany. With a little trouble an immense distribution could be given it, and the importance of the signatories would compel it to be regarded seriously.

I would point out that such a statement of War Aims would do an immense amount of good in clarifying the ideas of our own people at home. It would answer most of the ordinary criticisms made against the Government on the ground of policy and would help to the understanding of America. It should be really simple - an amplification in popular form of President Wilson's last speech.

If you agree, I might try and draft some kind of document which you could submit to the War Cabinet.

(Intld) J. B.

Department of Information,  
11 December, 1917.

John Buchan (Dec. 17, 1917). SECRET - A PSYCHOLOGICAL OFFENSIVE, To be launced at a well-selected psychological moment. G.T. 2941, Cat. Ref. CAB 24-35-41. The National Archives.

## TRANSCRIPT

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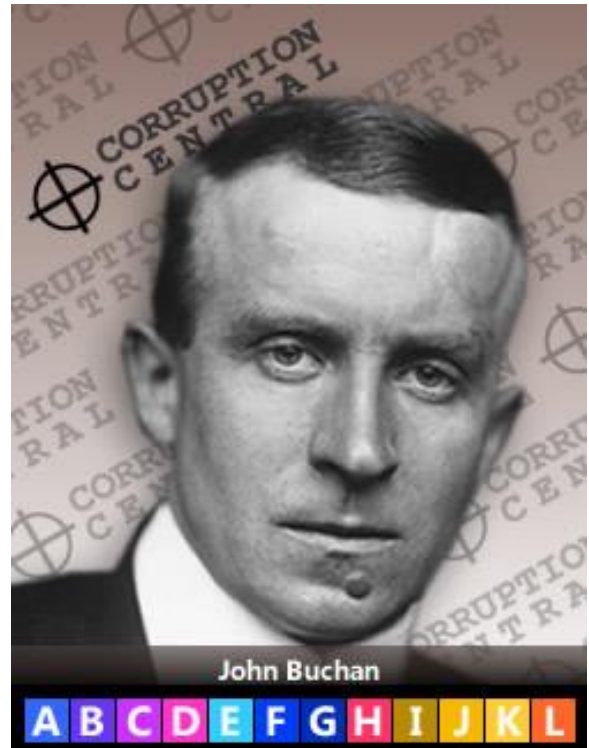


Figure 1: John Buchan, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, GCMG, GCVO, CH, PC; 26 August 1875 – 11 February 1940)

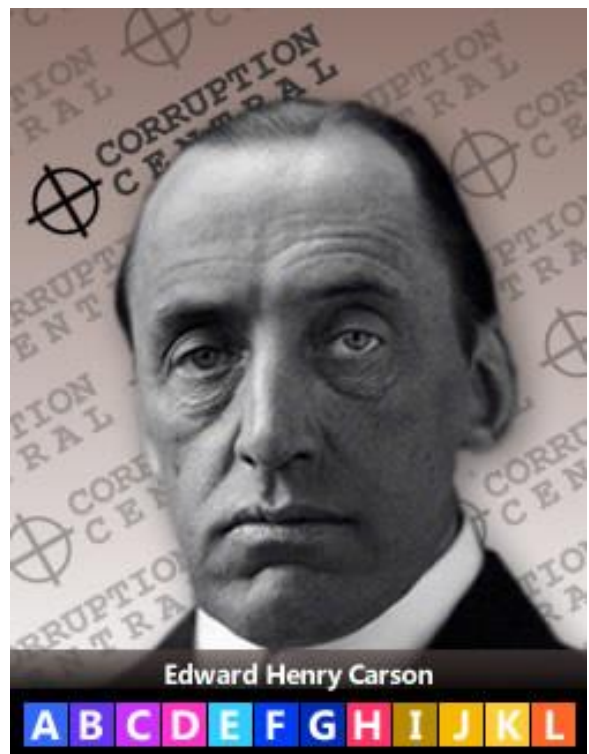


Figure 2: Edward Henry Carson, Baron Carson, PC, PC (Ire) (9 February 1854 – 22 October 1935).

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(Memorandum sent to the Secretary of the War Cabinet)[Edward Stanley, 17th Earl of Derby]

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