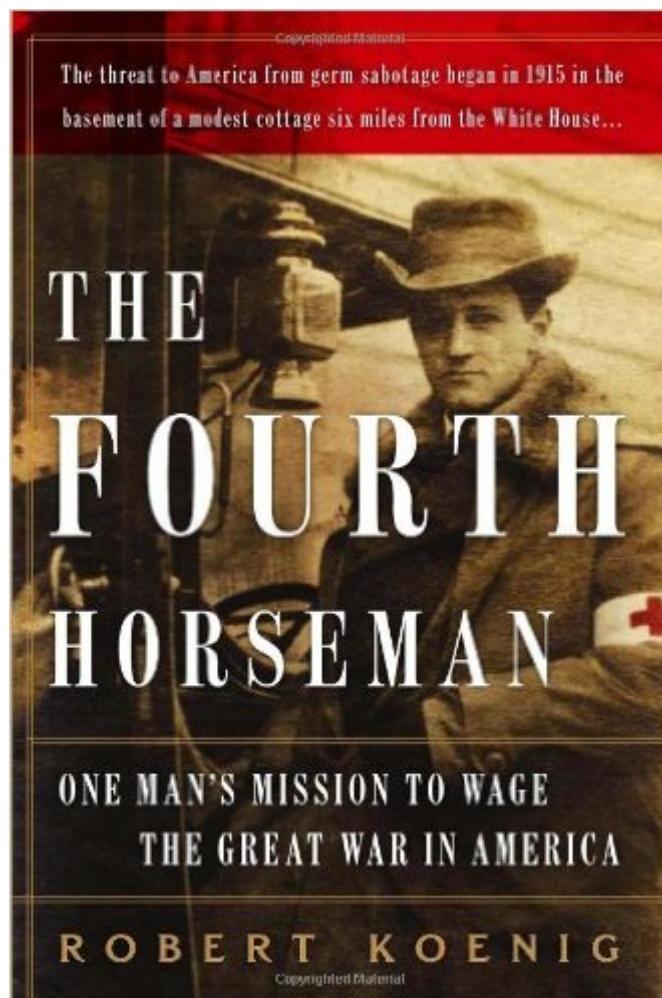


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The Fourth Horseman: One Man's Secret Campaign To Fight The Great War In America



Synopsis

The story of Anton Dilger brings to life a missing chapter in U.S. history and shows, dramatically, that the Great European War was in fact being fought on the home front years before we formally joined it. The doctor who grew anthrax and other bacteria in that rented house was an American—the son of a Medal of Honor winner who fought at Gettysburg—on a secret mission, for the German Army in 1915. The Fourth Horseman tells the startling story of that mission led by a brilliant but conflicted surgeon who became one of Germany's most daring spies and saboteurs during World War I and who not only pioneered biowarfare in his native land but also lead a last-ditch German effort to goad Mexico into invading the United States. It is a story of mysterious missions, divided loyalties, and a new and terrible kind of warfare that emerged as America—in spite of fierce dissention at home—was making the decision to send its Doughboys to the Great War in Europe. This story has never been told before in full. And Dilger is a fascinating analog for our own troubled times. Having thrown off the tethers of obligation to family and country, he became a very dangerous man indeed: A spy, a saboteur, and a zealot to a degree that may have so embarrassed the German High Command that, after the war, they ordered his death rather than admit that he worked for them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When anthrax spores were sent through the mails in 2001, we had a reminder of just how scary germs can be as weapons, but the use of such methods has a long history. Until bacteria were scientifically understood, however, those who tried to use infections as armaments were doing so by

guesswork. Germs were first systematically deployed as weapons in World War I, and they were used within America by German saboteurs. In The Fourth Horseman: One Man's Mission to Wage the Great War in America (PublicAffairs), Robert Koenig has pieced together the career of Anton Dilger, an American of German roots, and his campaign to strike at one of the foundations of the US Army of the time, its horses and mules. Dilger failed in almost all his efforts; others in later wars would make germ warfare truly frightening. Speculations on his personality and motivations, however, provide fascinating reading, and Koenig has filled his book with valuable historical notes on social and military forces of the time. Anton Dilger was born on the Shenandoah farm of his father, who was born in Germany but had become a hero in the Union Army. Dilger was sent to Germany for an education, eventually studying medicine at the University of Heidelberg. When WWI started, as American citizen, he could have returned to the United States and remained neutral. He could not enter the German military, but he did volunteer to be a noncombatant surgeon. He got to see how America's slanted neutrality was hobbling Germany, and he sought a more active role in helping out his homeland. In 1915, the General Staff in Berlin were investigating the use of germs as weapons. The target for the operation would be horses and mules; this bypassed any early international conventions that forbid germ warfare against soldiers.

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