

An Approach Towards Peace

The military shrine at Potsdam must be broken, its altars thrown down, and its priests scattered

By W. W. SWANSON, Ph.D.

Premier David Lloyd George's solemn words that civilization itself is endangered, and that the present generation may yet see the world relapse into barbarism, must not fall upon deaf ears in this country. Much as our politicians have been criticized in the past for paying more regard to selfish ends and party purposes than to the welfare of the nation, it must now be admitted that they are more alert to the terrible dangers inherent in the present world situation than the masses themselves. It would be unfair to single out one section more than another, in Canada, for criticism in this respect; but the unvarnished truth is that many of our people everywhere are intoxicated with the prosperity of the day—a factitious prosperity, wholly evanescent, but which, nevertheless, appears to some as being of an enduring nature. Mr. Lloyd George is not accustomed to speak lightly, or to indulge in the mere making of phrases. When a man of his world-wide reputation and calibre sounds a solemn note of warning, it is high time that the people of this continent give due heed to his message.

The war is far from won—at least so it appears at present writing. All advice from Germany, direct and indirect, go to show that the military caste remains unbroken, and its power virtually undiminished. True, the mutiny in the German Navy lent a glint of hope for belief that the masses of the Fatherland were getting a view of world conditions in their just proportion; but notwithstanding slight gains made by the Socialists and Radicals, the Kaiser and his henchmen remain firmly entrenched in the citadel of power. It requires grim resolution and unflinching determination on the part of every man in Canada and the American Republic to see this war through. To strengthen our purpose to that end, it will be worth while to consider, briefly, the issues for which the democracies of the world have pledged their all.

ISSUES.

In the first place, let us admit that the inextricably difficult local problems—Alsace-Lorraine, Poland, Trieste and the Trentino, Transylvania, and so forth—do not appear to be the chief factors that preclude the signing of terms of peace. That is precisely what differentiates this colossal struggle from the wars that have preceded it. In almost every contest between the nations in modern history, it has been comparatively easy to negotiate peace because the issues involved have been clear-cut, and well understood. The Civil War was concerned with the abolition of slavery; the Franco-Prussian with the unification of Germany; the Russo-Japanese with the control of Manchuria and the mapping out of spheres of influence in the Far East. Notwithstanding all that has been said, however, concerning exchanges of territory and political regroupings in the present contest, it has become abundantly clear that the altering of boundaries and even the control of the great vacant spaces in Asia and Africa do not constitute the main question at issue. It goes far deeper than that. In a word, it concerns itself with the recreation of a Concert of Nations and the rehabilitation of international law.

As everyone knows, the balance of power idea was the determining fact in international politics during the nineteenth century. Much as the balance of power idea has been criticized, it yielded really splendid results, and did much to maintain the peace of the world. True, there were great wars in Europe during the nineteenth century; but on the whole they concerned themselves with local issues, or with the unification of nations. From that point of view the war between Italy and Austria resulting in the rehabilitation of Italy was justified, as was also the struggle of 1870 between France and Prussia. Unfortunately, diplomats and statesmen held the idea that war could be made economically profitable; and though the people feared war, the masses were fascinated with military aggression as a great adventure. Thus, it came about that leading statesmen always considered war as a definite part of their political programme, if other methods of attaining their ends failed.

EVENLY BALANCED.

This state of affairs, however, did not jeopardize the position of the States of the world until the beginning of the present century. Up to that time the two political groups on the European continent were evenly balanced; and the balance of power remained in the hands of the United Kingdom. British naval

power, in fact, was the stabilizer of the European political machine. The United Kingdom provided the balance wheel for the diplomatic and military mechanism of Europe. About 1900, however, Germany embarked on a grand scheme of military and naval aggrandisement. In the middle of the Boer War the Kaiser declared that "the trident must be in our fist." This was not an empty vaunt; Germany immediately put into effect a naval programme that seriously menaced the sea-power of England. Military and naval measures succeeded one another with almost mechanical precision in the Fatherland, until it became an imperative necessity that England abandon its policy of isolation and ally itself with one or other of the great contending groups upon the continent. One choice only was open—an alliance with France and Russia.

In the meantime Germany has ceased to fear a war waged at one and the same time on both fronts, a contingency that had always haunted Bismarck. Because of her central position in Europe, and her malign influence over Austria-Hungary and Turkey, Germany found herself in an immensely strong, strategic situation; a situation that permitted her to regard a war with Russia and France, even if allied with England, with equanimity. There was no longer a balance of power; unstable and terribly powerful forces were let loose which constantly threatened to upset the equilibrium of the Great Powers. In self-defence, also, the United Kingdom was now obliged to further French designs in Morocco and Russian ambitions in the Balkans. Pursuing her own commercial interests and political ends, Great Britain check-mated Germany in Asia Minor and prevented the Bagdad Railway from being carried to open water on the Persian Gulf.

INEVITABLE.

Under these conditions war was inevitable; and even if the Hague tribunal were in session in August, 1914—as has been planned and arranged—hostilities could not have been avoided. Both the fascination of war, and the profit of war, appealed to the German imagination and to the greed of the industrial and Junker classes. International law had, in truth, become a "scrap of paper." Hitherto the moral, if not the military might of the world had been behind it; and the naval power of England had given such law its sanction. But when Great Britain, for self-preservation, was drawn into continental affairs, the weight of her power could no longer be thrown into the scales in preservation of international good faith and law. The Powers were now too evenly balanced—the stabilizer had disappeared. It is therefore foolish and futile to speak of restoring the status quo ante bellum. It would be as reasonable to pass statutory enactments, and to set up courts and expect the law to be put into effect without making provision to enforce it by the might of the State. It is impossible, then, to think of restoring the conditions existing in August, 1914. We could not if we would, and should not if we could. The only way out is to constitute, after President Wilson's plan, a League of Nations having an international police force to carry out its decrees; or, what appears to the writer as more advisable, to reconstitute again, and to build on firmer foundations, a Concert of the Powers in which the United States would play a prominent role. This would involve, of course, the breaking up of present alliances and the substitution therefor of diplomacy and friendly agreements.

This brings us directly to the meat of the matter. What are the objects for which the Allies are fighting? Reparation, restitution and guarantees succinctly sum up, in the words of Mr. Lloyd George, those aims. It goes without saying that Germany must evacuate all territory overrun by her marauding armies; that she must indemnify the countries that have suffered loss at her hands; and that above all, to paraphrase Premier Lloyd George's pregnant utterance, the military shrine at Potsdam must be broken, its altars thrown down, and its priests scattered. That, it strikes us, lies at the heart of the issues involved in this world-shaking struggle. It does not mean that Germany is to be humiliated to the dust; that her territories are to be wrested from her. In our judgment, as in that of all Canadians, Alsace-Lorraine should be restored to France, and Poland reconstituted as a free and autonomous nation. But Germany must not be despoiled; else we shall merely find the terms of peace the preliminary articles of

a programme presaging future war. For it goes without saying that Germany would, in that event, never rest until she had formed an alliance with the predatory powers of the world for mutual aggrandisement at the expense of western civilization.

ABSURD.

This leads us to consider another basic factor in the situation. Much is said, and much has been said during the course of the struggle, of the right of every race to choose its own sovereign and its own form of government. It is a palpable absurdity, however, as Lord Acton pointed out long ago, to assert that that each race has a right to a separate national existence. The United Kingdom itself has within its confines four races—the English, the Welsh, the Irish and the Scotch. It needs no argument to establish the fact that it has been for the supreme good of the Empire, as well as the world, that these races have joined their fortunes and lived their life under one sovereign power. The question of local self-government is another matter. Without going extensively into this phase of the question, at the present time, it will suffice to say that the race problem might have been a comparatively minor affair in Eastern Europe if Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey had shown any wit or wisdom in dealing with the problems arising under nationality.

The root of the difficulty lies in the general confusion of our thinking upon nationality and citizenship—quite distinct and separate concepts. In the American Republic there is some excuse in confusing American nationality with citizenship; but there is no need of such confusion of thought in the case of British subjects. In truth, there is no "British nation"; there is a British Empire, made up of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, the Crown Colonies, Dependencies, and so forth. Citizenship means one thing in Canada and another thing in South Africa, Austria or India. Even the races are diverse—Boer and Briton, Mohammedan and Frenchman, all live at peace within the Empire. We may feel, and do feel, as races; we think as citizens.

And this, it appears to us, affords the clue out of what appears almost inextricable difficulties obtaining to-day throughout the world. Canadians should think, not only imperially as members of a great Empire, but as citizens of the world. Democratic forms of government and political advances are the heritage of humanity. It is hopeless, to be sure, to speak yet of world citizenship; but that is the ideal toward which we should strive. This does not involve the denationalizing of nations, or emptying national life of all its rich content of art, literature, music and culture—the supreme achievements of each race—but the separating of racial, or national feeling, from our thinking citizens and men. Only through this process will it be possible to achieve that far-off, divine event—the creation of "the parliament of man, the federation of the world."

WORLD FOOD SITUATION.

Trenchant Review is Made in Statement by Mr. Hoover.

In a statement dealing with the world food situation, Mr. Herbert Hoover, United States Food Administrator said in part:

"If we can produce such economies in consumption and such stimulation of production in the United States and Canada as will enable us to feed the Allies absolutely from this continent, and thus enable them in the final analysis to live without sending a ship farther afield than our Atlantic seaboard, we can resist the submarine indefinitely."

"The Canadian and United States supplies of wheat, upon a normal export basis, fall approximately 350,000,000 bushels short of the Allies' needs. If by conservation measures in Canada and the United States we can increase the export by 150,000,000 bushels we will have reduced the deficiency to 200,000,000 bushels. This we could do if our people would eat 1 pound less of wheat flour per week and 1 pound of corn meal instead."

"The farmer who works overtime and the consumer who economizes in his consumption are fighting the submarine with a positive and sure weapon."

"The production of more fats is to-day a critical necessity for the preservation of these people and the maintenance of their constancy in the war. Every pound of fat is as sure of service as every bullet, and every hog is of greater value to the winning of this war than a shell."

"Every spade full of earth turned by the farmer and every animal reared is lessening human suffering and guaranteeing the liberty of the world."

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