

## The Trend of National Policy

Peace without annexations or indemnities — How Russia's aims may conflict with those of Great Britain, France and Italy

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The statesmen of all the belligerent Great Powers have recently enunciated what they have termed their national policies during the rest of the present war and for the days of peace to come. The most notable contribution to the sum total of the stock of ideas on international affairs was made by Mr. Balfour, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the United Kingdom. In an address which showed his profound knowledge and grasp of the situation, he outlined a policy under which the nations of the world might live for the future in peace—a policy which eschewed aggrandizement and emphasized the common interests of humanity. Nowhere else, not even at Washington, has such a pronouncement been made, with the possible exception of the speeches of Kerensky and the other leaders of Russian opinion. Mr. Lansing, as might be expected, delivered an address couched in the terms used by Lloyd George, Curzon, Carson and other leaders of the British democracy up until about a year ago—a speech which harmonized largely with Mr. Lloyd George's famous "fight to a knock-out" oration. This is not to be wondered at, since it is essential that the American government, as a whole, should act as a sort of advance agent in the country for the War Department until popular enthusiasm and determination to win the war shall have been assured. The tone of official Washington will be modified, undoubtedly, as the whole nation swings unitedly into the struggle. From Berlin and Vienna has come little or no indication that the Central Powers have abandoned their predatory projects. It is true that the Reichstag has passed a peace resolution, couched in vague and indefinite terms; and that King Karl has given assurances that a certain measure of autonomy will be granted to the constituent parts of the dual monarchy, in a federalized state. The Central Powers, nevertheless, maintain that they are fighting a defensive war, and that they will continue the struggle until the limit of their resources is reached. It must be remembered, in this connection, that both Germany and Austria have made much of the Russian shibboleth, "peace without annexations or indemnities." But, however much the press has emphasized this phrase, no official pronouncement as to its tenability has been made by either of the governments of the Central Powers. The truth is, that while German and Austrian statesmen have lost to a degree their belligerent tone, they by no means have given up the hope of fortifying the position of the Austro-German Empires as a result of the war. It, therefore, remains to inquire briefly just what Russia means by "no indemnities and no annexations," and to discover, if it be possible, what is likely to be the outcome of a peace drawn up in terms of this formula.

In the first place, let it be distinctly understood that no Russian statesman of standing, least of all Kerensky, has any thought of bringing Europe back to the conditions that prevailed in August, 1914. There has been an enormous amount of confusion of thought on this subject. Within the last month or so, copies of Kerensky's personal organ have reached London and New York, and the chief leading articles bearing upon the political and economic outcome of the war have been translated and made available for English readers. By a careful study of these expositions of the Russian formula, one finds that the leaders of the revolution do not preclude the possibility, and even the justice, of levying indemnities for purposes of reparation, and of building up the devastated areas, no matter where they may be, over which the contending armies have swept. Indeed, a specific proposition is put forward that all the belligerents contribute to a fund of 5,000 million pounds sterling to be used for that specific purpose. According to the terms of this proposal, Poland, Galicia, Serbia, and Belgium, as well as Northern France would be indemnified for the havoc wrought by the armies operating within these theatres of war. Kerensky and his associates advanced the idea that East Prussia should be recouped for its losses as well as Belgium and France; and that, since in their opinion all the Great Powers were responsible in more or less degree for the outbreak of hostilities, each should contribute to repairing the damage wrought. A rough and ready estimate thereof might be found in contributions made according to the war expenditures of the several Powers. This would measure, roughly, ability to pay, and apportion contributions according to the damage done by each com-

batant. It will thus be seen that the leaders of Russian life are by no means averse to the imposing of indemnities for certain definite and well-defined objects; they merely object to the predatory and punitive type of indemnity, such as that exacted from France by Prussia in 1870.

It is on the political side, however, that the Russian formula needs explication and orientation. The Russians, as has been remarked, are inflexibly averse to the re-imposition of such conditions as obtained before the outbreak of war in 1914—in other words to the status quo ante bellum. Kerensky and his followers demand that the frontiers of Europe be altered to coincide with the wish and will of the various nationalities concerned. On the one hand they repudiate annexations of territory that has come within the temporary control of a belligerent power; and on the other they insist that any significant or important population group shall have, as of right, the opportunity to express by plebiscite the specific government under which it wishes to live and pay allegiance to. This necessarily means that Russia abandons all claims to Constantinople, and to those parts of the Turkish Empire which her armies have overrun. It means specifically, also, that Poland is to be set up as an independent kingdom—a united Poland, under the type of government willed by its own people. Russia is irrevocably opposed to the establishment of the kind of Poland created, on paper, by King Karl and the German Kaiser. The Russian formula covers the reconstituting of any nationality that has been destroyed, as far as its political polity is concerned, in this or any past European war—that is to say, so long as the national consciousness, and a feeling of national solidarity, has persisted. According to this conception of the Russian position, Poland, for the future, will comprise Posen, Galicia and Russian Poland. It is just a little difficult to say how Kerensky and his followers propose to settle the Finnish problem, and that of the Ukraine; but it is safe to say that Finland and Little Russia will form federal, autonomist states in the future Russian Empire, and that all attempts at their Russification will be abandoned. On the other hand, it is scarcely fair to ask Russia to permit Finland to set up an independent government at Helsingfors.

Nevertheless, the Russian formula bristles with difficulties in its application to the ambitions of Italy, France and the United Kingdom—leaving aside for the moment those of Germany and Austria. Very few on this side of the water, or indeed in the United Kingdom itself, realize the full extent of Italy's aims. Italy demands nothing less than the whole coast of the Adriatic, including the Slavic section from Trieste south through the whole extent of Albania. In addition Italian Imperialists look with longing eyes upon the acquisition of Syria, which is more Greek than Italian, and in which, up to the present, French interests have predominated. The Italian problem, therefore, comprises more than the relatively simple disposition of Trieste and the Trentino; including as it does vast imperialistic designs. If Turkey is to be ousted from Europe, and its Asiatic possessions distributed among the Great Powers, Syria might perhaps as well fall to Italy's share as to that of any other European Power; but Russia, having abandoned its claims to Constantinople, cannot very well be called upon to fight for the aggrandizement of Italy. Russian peasants wish to plough Russian land, carved out of the vast estates of the nobility and now come into their possession; and see no real object in fighting for, or in demanding, foreign ground when they have sufficient of their own. This attitude raises almost insuperable difficulties for France, and the United Kingdom also.

As already remarked, Russia would determine frontiers, and the fate of frontier population, by making use of the plebiscite. But how could this instrument be applied to the settlement of the Alsace-Lorraine problem? Be it remembered that Russia cares nothing about the historical past; its interests lie in the living present. It cares not whether Alsace-Lorraine belonged to the Holy Roman Empire up to the days of Richelieu; or whether it was French territory from the time of Louis XIV up to 1870; and then torn from the living body of France. Russia does not propose to let the dead hand of a bygone generation strangle the life of present peoples. Kerensky and the leaders of Russian thought insist that any population shall have the right to decide,

by vote, its own destinies; and they would, therefore, apply the plebiscite to the solution of this bitter quarrel between France and Germany. But how can it be done? Metz and the territory adjacent thereto, is intensely French, and would vote for France; while the eastern part of Lorraine, at least, is pro-German. Be it remembered also—and this complicates the difficulties of the situation—that the rich iron mines essential to the industrial welfare of Germany, lie in the vicinity of Metz in a country intensely Francophile. It may be tentatively suggested, as has been done by various English students of international politics, that France guarantee to Germany that no barriers shall be placed upon the shipment of iron ores from Alsace-Lorraine to meet the needs of German industry. In that event, there would be some slight hope of reconciling France and Germany, by dividing Alsace-Lorraine between them.

There remains, in that event, perhaps the most formidable obstacle of all to the determination of peace according to the terms of the Russian formula. British statesmen, including those having the full confidence of the people, have publicly proclaimed that Great Britain will never relinquish its hold upon former German colonies. The United Kingdom, in this policy, has the strong support of both Australia and South Africa; the former having announced that it will never give up New Guinea or the Samoan Islands, and the latter that German rule must never be re-established in South Africa. Great Britain, as the whole world knows, certainly did not enter the war for territorial aggrandizement; yet the sweep of events, as in past wars, has put her in possession of colonies never coveted, but which she cannot let go. Students of international politics have not sufficiently recognized the value of tropical African possessions to a European industry — it may be said, indeed, their indispensability. And the Cape-to-Cairo railroad, Cecil Rhodes' great dream, has become at length a question of practical politics. Germany must be driven out of Africa for the safety not only of the Union of South Africa, but of Egypt as well; and she must be driven out of Asia Minor for the protection of India. Thus, even with the wide interpretation of the Russian formula as outlined above, it offers but faint hopes for the immediate establishment of peace. And certainly it cannot do so until Germany and Austria are willing to come within its scope—a proposal wholly visionary at the present time.

### THE TRUE MORALITY.

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If, after mature consideration, the 17 nations allied in arms against the Teuton confederacy, find unacceptable the Vatican suggestions of a peace basis, there is little doubt but that loud Teuton emphasis will be put on the burden and the blame of such rejection. It will be declared highly immoral.

Often before now the allies, and with them America while still a neutral and exercising the combined duties and prerogatives of neutral, have been accused in such Teuton quarters of "prolonging" the carnage. The woes and waste of war were dwelt upon with a harrowing detail quite out of line with the former Teuton glorification of war in general, and with the spirit in which the present war was started.

The palpable motive behind such new Teuton infatuation with the beauties of peace was the desire to leave aggression, foiled of its full ambitions, secure in such conquest as it did achieve. To-day, with sharper need of peace and heavier weariness of war, there succeeds a willingness to quit with little apparent gain, if only defeat and its deserved expiations may be dodged, and the system and the strength of aggression be left intact to recuperate at leisure.

### HOW LLOYD-GEORGE KEEPS UP.

"Have you ever noticed that Lloyd-George makes excruciating excursions into Wales? Of course you have, but what of it? Oh, nothing, nothing at all, only you may perhaps have also noticed that the majority of the inhabitants of Wales are Welshmen who speak Welsh—a language which conveys no meaning whatever to any other nation on God's earth and which I often doubt whether they really understand themselves. Very well, then, Lloyd George goes down to Wales, and makes speeches in Welsh. Nobody knows what he says—I don't, you don't, and I daresay he doesn't—but I'll lay a pound to a brick that during those speeches he gets off his chest all the unparliamentary expression that have been simmering inside him for months.—The Passing Show.