

## TALK OF EUROPE

HERR VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG's book about the war (all German diplomats are now publishing or writing books) will soon appear. One of its chapters, named 'The French Difficulties,' has been received in advance by the Berlin correspondent of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* for publication. Bethmann-Hollweg gives in this chapter his impression as to the situation in France and the attitude of the French Government a short time before the outbreak of the war. The ex-Chancellor says:

'From the first day I could very plainly observe the reason for the changed tone adopted by the French press from my conversations with M. Cambon after M. Poincaré had assumed power. Up to that moment the Ambassador had repeatedly developed in various ways the thesis that personal relations between the leading statesmen, whereby he would have liked to be mediator, might have contributed to bring both countries to a basis of mutual understanding as desired by themselves. Without any doubt he had taken part in the protracted negotiations about Morocco with infinite patience and with the goodwill to reach a peaceful solution. However, from that very moment the Minister was visibly altered. He no more touched on the thesis of the personal relations, and if he visited me after one of his journeys to Paris, though he was quite as courteous as before, he was very reticent as soon as we spoke about the public spirit in France, in spite of the exquisite French polish which characterized his words.

'He avoided every indication that the Cabinet of M. Poincaré was inspired by a tendency toward conciliation such as he had always praised in former Cabinets. One could not be in doubt as to the development of the French spirit in the last years before the war. This is no exaggeration, as one talked at that time of a visible renaissance of the French nation after the bankruptcy of 1870. Our Military Attaché in Paris, Herr von Winterfeldt, repeatedly

mentions in his reports the visibly increasing excellence of the army, reflecting the growing firmness of the whole people. Perhaps we did not take into account sufficiently the real mind of our Western neighbors in overlooking serious manifestations on the boulevards, and failed to judge the alteration which took place in its proper perspective. The strengthening of the general national spirit in a race with a martial tradition such as that possessed by the French, together with the increase of the chauvinist passion, was a phenomenon which characterizes all historical developments of this nature. The débâcle of 1870 could not be forgotten, perhaps subconsciously, yet the *revanche* for the military defeat was a popular feeling, and the more so as the Government had the youth of France systematically educated in chauvinism in the schools.

'That the loss of Alsace-Lorraine had left no peace in the minds of the French people is undoubtedly incorrect. Certainly the idea of the recapture of the lost Provinces had persisted in the departments situated in the immediate neighborhood, but in the rest of France in the long run the people would surely not have declined a real *rapprochement* on this question if the men in power in Paris had seriously striven after it. As the latter, however, particularly under the leadership of M. Poincaré, either by patriotic conviction or by personal ambition, or because they were of opinion that they would only be able to maintain in this way their power in the struggle of the parties, progressively pursued a policy more against Germany, the people had to follow suit, because in no country in the world is the strength of ambitious minorities greater than in France. Before the war the French themselves had described this situation in a masterly way.'

After having remarked that French Socialism had not been able to combat efficaciously this agitation, Bethmann-Hollweg proceeds: 'Did the year 1914 announce

an amelioration? The elections for the Chamber on April 26 resulted in a firm majority in favor of the three years' military service, but the réelections in May were a great success, for Socialists like Jaurès wrote in *L'Humanité* against the unbridled evil of nationalism and reaction. On June 16, the French Socialist Congress adopted a resolution to be introduced at the international Socialist Congress of Vienna, in which, with an appeal to the declaration of the Social-Democrats of Alsace and to the Congress of the German Socialists at Jena, it was demanded that Alsace-Lorraine should be granted autonomy, as by this the *rapprochement* between France and Germany, so necessary for the world's peace, would be considerably facilitated. The course of the world's events has taken another direction over the body of Jaurès. But M. Poincaré's purpose was neither *rapprochement* nor autonomy. He wanted to recapture Alsace-Lorraine with the help of Sukomlinoff and his friends.'

JUNE 9 is a red-letter day in British legal history. On this day just sixty years ago the House of Lords pronounced a decision in the great Thellusson will case, which had kept the lawyers busy and comfortable for more than two generations. Peter Thellusson was the son of the Ambassador of Geneva at the Court of Louis XIV. He settled in London, and at his death left an enormous fortune to accumulate during the lives of his three sons and of all their sons. The accumulated fund, which was estimated to be about £19,000,000, was then to be used to buy estates for the eldest lineal descendant of his three sons. One result of this remarkable document was the Thellusson Act restraining men from leaving their property to accumulate for more than twenty-one years. When Thellusson's last grandson died in 1856 there was another lawsuit to decide whether his property should go to the eldest male descendant of Thellusson or to the eldest male descendant of Thellusson's eldest son. The latter won the verdict, and then it was found — what might have been expected — that legal charges had eaten away so much of the money that instead of

millions there was little more left than the original sum which Peter Thellusson bequeathed by will.

JOHN BULL's other island is surely no place for tourists if the *Irish Times* (Unionist) of June 6 is to be believed. Under the heading 'Lawlessness in Ireland' it prints:

'Yesterday evening four policemen and a woman were shot in one of the chief streets of Dublin. The shots were fired in broad daylight, in the presence of a considerable police force and of a large number of civilians. A concert at the Mansion House, organized by the followers of the late James Connolly, had been prohibited, but the usual crowd assembled. When the police were dispersing it at the top of Dawson Street four or five young men drew revolvers and shot a sergeant and three constables. The only victim of the second volley, which was fired immediately afterwards, was a young woman. None of the wounds was fatal, and we hope to learn that none of them is serious; but the outrage is, nevertheless, grave and startling. Its audacity is hardly less remarkable than the impunity with which it was committed. The police seem to have struggled manfully with their assailants, but these contrived to get away in the crowd. We are all familiar with similar incidents — too many of them tragic incidents — in lonely parts of Ireland. Now lawlessness has progressed so far that wearers of the King's uniform are targets for sedition in a main thoroughfare of the Irish capital. Yesterday also, within a few miles from Dublin, a District Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary was assaulted. On Wednesday, as we report to-day, two men were shot at Tulla, in County Clare. It is suggested that they offended the "powers that be" by refusing to boycott a schoolmaster who had served in the army. Nobody has been brought to justice for crimes which were committed weeks, and even months, ago. The murderers of the two constables in Tipperary, of Mr. Milling, of the policeman at Limerick Workhouse, of the sergeant and constable at Knocklong are still unpunished. The fault does not lie with the Royal Irish Constabulary, whose zeal and steadfast courage in their perilous work are beyond