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A GERMAN VIEW OF AMERICAN POLICY

BY DR. PAUL ROHRBACH

Two schools of thought have come into conflict in the American Senate and in public discussion in the United States. The nominal issue is whether that country shall ratify or reject the Treaty of Versailles. Party politics, presidential ambitions, and material interests inevitably play a part in this discussion. Both schools of thought are hostile to Germany. The American people were induced to go to war by being convinced of the necessity of a crusade against German imperialism. That sentiment still persists. Furthermore, English and French propagandists have not relaxed for a moment the efforts they made during the war to propagate distrust and hatred of Germany by biased reports. We have but one recourse against this — persistent labor to make the world understand how much of the responsibility for the war, how much of the inhumanity during the war, and how much of the selfishness that inspired that conflict, also stand to the account of the rulers of the Entente. Thanks to the skill of the political leaders of our opponents, the Americans comprehend these things less than any other nation. German propaganda may well be devoted now to re-establishing a fair balance of judgment among the American people. This is neglected because our government fails to comprehend the part psychology plays in foreign policy. We might say that it understands less than the old government did — if that would not be incredible. The better

informed among us will have to resign ourselves to this fatal misunderstanding. It is impossible as yet to foresee a time when the opinion of the world will refuse to be biased longer in our disfavor.

One of the principal opponents of ratification, Senator Knox, has criticized the irrational and unjust provisions of the treaty. At the same time he felt it necessary, in view of public sentiment and probably of his own feelings, to assure his hearers that he had no sympathy for the Germans, and that he assumed as a matter of course that their misdeeds must be punished. He did not refer to the inhumanity of killing 800,000 non-combatants in Germany by a famine blockade, and of crushing the spirit and ambition of the survivors by forcing upon them years of undernourishment, and of the moral degeneration which that produces. We are, therefore, called upon to emphasize this distinctly. He and his associates, however, have something else to say, something very important for America and indirectly for the rest of the world and for ourselves. These gentlemen are not willing to have their country become more deeply involved in the affairs of Europe and Asia. The only exception they consider are those parts of Eastern Asia which face the Pacific.

If America ratifies the Treaty, thereby engaging to assist in its enforcement, every one of the innumerable difficulties that will inevitably arise in so doing will force America

to interest itself in the affairs of Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, the Balkans, and the Orient. Their country will have to form an opinion and to take sides and to make decisions in connection with each one of these countries. The result will be inevitable domestic dissension and internal conflict. The government of a people as powerful as that of the United States, with the self-confidence, the national sensitiveness, and the love of sensation, which the Americans possess, will be unable to confine themselves, if they are members of a league of nations, to merely academic and theoretical declarations concerning the innumerable complications which will flow from the Versailles Treaty. If America speaks, it will be with authority and self-assertion, and it will have to take its stand in accordance with its sympathies and interests.

The party opposed to ratification maintains that the interests of the United States are in the Western Hemisphere, and that if they extend beyond that limit, it is only in the region of the Pacific. America had a moral mission in Europe which it could not escape. It was America's duty to assist the western democracies to overthrow Germany, because they alone were too weak to throttle the monster. Now that the object is attained, America should withdraw. Beneath this sentiment lies also the thought that every European nation and government retains certain traces of backwardness, the outcome of irrational and misguided historical tendencies, and that the ideals of America can be realized only in the New World.

The question arises whether the Americans will be able to avoid actively participating in the political supervision of the reorganized world, no matter how sincerely they desire to do so. There are two conditions which

make their withdrawal difficult: the first is that the war has made them too powerful to pursue such a policy; the second is that American interests in Eastern Asia, which are of supreme importance, inevitably are inter-related with broader international questions. In addition we have the influence of America's commercial interests, which the war has greatly widened. Of these three considerations the most important is the first. Even if we assume that the anti-European party wins, for the time being, that will not prevent the constant references of European controversies to America's judgment, and the repeated efforts of the contestants to win America's support. The Americans have sacrificed money and blood for Europe. The President has voiced an ideal of extraordinary importance for the orderly development of a world in which Europe still remains the most highly civilized, and relatively the most densely populated portion. He promulgated that ideal in the name of America's people, and the nation has gained from his pronouncements definite opinions of the condition of the old governments east of the Atlantic. Besides the conviction that they have the power to make their ideals prevail, the Americans realize at heart that it is impossible to withdraw again into their old political seclusion by a mere effort of will, and that they will not be able to maintain that seclusion in the future for both psychological and practical reasons. This would be impossible. A nation that actually has supreme power, and is conscious that it is a preponderant force in the world, cannot artificially isolate itself in its own hemisphere.

A majority of the Americans now begin to feel keenly that they have been placed in an awkward position because their President has not measured up, either morally or intellectually,

to the demands made upon him. Wilson promulgated a lofty ideal. He did it with a great expenditure of pathos and in the pose of a world-judge, as though it depended upon him personally to direct the nations into the path they should pursue. We are justified in saying that hardly ever in modern times has the head of a government stood so high in the world's esteem and temporarily possessed such vast influence as Wilson.

The whole world looked up to him and felt that its fate hung from his decisions. But this man, elevated to such a height, revealed himself as a surprisingly small soul in the hour of decision. The conception of a league of nations must have resided in his head as a cloudy dream, never theoretically or practically workable. If Wilson had been capable of conceiving the league as a political actuality, he would have seen beforehand that such an institution, in the form he proposed it, would encounter insuperable opposition from his own allies. Only a dreamer — a political simpleton — could imagine for a moment that the rulers of the Entente would consent to anything but a predatory peace. No league of nations was compatible with this. If Wilson was really determined to have a league, he should have insisted in the very beginning upon sufficient guaranties from England, Italy, and France. As soon as Clemenceau and Lloyd George had succeeded in completely disarming Germany by the conditions of the armistice, Wilson's League of Nations was dead and buried. The world saw its author dandling a mere inflated rubber image of the League, in place of the real thing. He no longer imposed his ideals on anyone, least of all upon his allies. Thereupon, he preferred to accept the mere mockery of his plan, instead of frankly acknowledging his defeat and with-

drawing with dignity from the unsuccessful contest.

A feeling is spreading among the Americans, in spite of the fact that they are more easily misled concerning European and international affairs than most other nations, that the true story of what occurred at Versailles has not been told them. They have a suspicion that the President did not win much glory for their country there. But Wilson is a shrewd enough political tactician to perceive that the Americans will find it difficult not to enter the League under one condition or another. If ratification is actually to be rejected, Wilson's opponents must find a skillful political formula in order to escape the charge that the defeat of the President has dishonored the American nation as a whole.

Whether such a formula is discovered or not, America's participation in world policies cannot be recalled. Naturally the English would find it unpleasant for the United States to accept a mandate for Constantinople, or Asia Minor, or even Armenia; for the English want to be unhindered there. They skillfully arranged that the Indian and Mohammedan princes should rally to the support of the Sultan as soon as his capital of Constantinople was seriously threatened with American control. England wants to remain sole master in that quarter of the world, where it is now so skillfully establishing itself. It is seeking to elbow the French out of Syria by supporting a native president under the pretext of 'Syrian self-determination.'

China and Japan are much more important for America than these regions in Western Asia. It is a vital necessity for the United States to keep the Japanese from carrying out the economic and military organization of China. On the other hand, it is a vital necessity for Japan to do just

this thing. The Japanese are determined to be absolute masters of the Japan Sea. They intend to rule its continental as well as its island shores. They propose to occupy a position upon the mainland that will make it impossible for China to escape from their grasp. Their domination over Manchuria and Eastern Mongolia, the important highways to China from the north, is the first step in this programme. Japan has already accomplished this. But a wide stretch of coast lies between these regions and the iron deposits at the head of the lower reaches of the Yangtze-kiang, opposite Hankow. These deposits are essential to the Japanese, because their country does not now possess large enough iron resources to become a great power. Unless it has assured control of Chinese ore, Japan's policy is a failure, because in case of war it would be unable to maintain its army and navy.

England and America are united in a wish to keep Japan within limits and to prevent its annexing China's iron. If Japan succeeds, its remoteness from England and America will make it a dangerous military opponent, because it will be difficult to attack. Without iron it will be a negligible factor.

Japan must hold Shantung, if it is to control the Yangtze mines; therefore, the promise made to China, that its territorial integrity would be respected as compensation for its declaration of war against Germany, was very agreeable both to the English and the Americans. But Wilson let himself be intimidated by the Japanese at Paris, just as he was intimidated by the English and French military party, and so he yielded Shantung to Japan. Shantung goes to Japan in violation of the solemn promise to China. But since the Chinese are more fortunate than Germany and the fourteen points, in having the hostility of powerful circles in both America and England toward Japan on their side, their prospects are better than our own.

This incident is merely one illustration of how difficult it will be for Americans to avoid intervening in things outside of America. There is the further consideration, that if a controversy should ever arise between America and England, Japan would be most assiduously courted by both parties. The effect of such an estrangement upon India, and even upon Europe, is obvious. This possibility in turn would arouse bitter domestic conflicts in America itself.

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THE SHANTUNG CONTROVERSY

BY G. BUETZ

AMERICAN public men understand thoroughly the practical considerations that make them desire to do justice in the Shantung matter, and to prevent Kiaochau from falling into the hands of Japan. The business men of the United States are better informed concerning the importance of this province in the economic life of China than we are at home. What was Kiaochau?

When the war with France awakened in China a resolve to create a modern navy and army, Li Hung Chang, the father of this movement, at once appreciated the importance of the Gulf of Kiaochau. He established his naval base at Tsingtau. That was in 1891. Tsingtau was at that time a little fishing village, as miserable and impoverished as such settlements are in overcrowded Shantung. On the 14th of November, 1897, General Chang lowered his flag, and three German war vessels landed detachments at that point. The Germans thereupon expended much industry, organizing talent, and vast sums of money upon Kiaochau. In 1906 the imperial government allotted 14,660,000 marks for the use of the province in addition to the local revenues. A remarkable economic development ensued. In 1910 the recent fishing village stood sixth among the 76 ports of China in the value of its foreign trade. The significance of this is not fully comprehended until we realize that the only cities with larger foreign commerce were Shanghai, Tientsin, Canton, Hankow, and Swatow. In 1910 the exports were valued at 84,300,000 marks and the imports at 52,600,000 marks. These are very high figures in the Chinese commerce. We should note in

addition that the Japanese profited more than any other nation by the growing commercial importance of Tsingtau. This was a fact well known in America. Japan supplied one third of all its imports. The population of Shantung is very poor, and cheap Japanese goods found an outlet where European manufactures of better grade could not find purchasers. Moreover, the Japanese had managed quietly to acquire a preponderant influence throughout the province of Shantung.

Germany was able to make its protectorate not only a commercial centre, coveted by other countries, but also a centre of foreign influence in China. German thought and custom met a sympathetic reception from the educated Chinese. They discovered that everything foreign was not to be despised. Such recognition is a tremendous influence in any colonial movement. The most significant manifestation of the conscious preference of the Orient for western ways was the heavy immigration to Tsingtau during the Boxer revolt. The educated Chinese had a proverb that Tsingtau was 'the umbrella' of China.

The United States would like to profit by this respect for foreigners which is unusual in China. Nothing favors commerce more than mutual respect between nations. Germany was the first foreign Power which succeeded in acquiring such respect. Although the Americans have flattered their Oriental neighbors, they have never acquired the same standing that Germany held. The public improvements which we carried out in the region under our protection also attract other countries. The ship yards at Tsingtau contain a drydock accommodating vessels of 16,000 tons, and have a corps of highly-skilled mechanics trained in the model technical school.