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The Peace Treaties Explained

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GERMANY *and* AUSTRIA
TERRITORIAL *and* POLITICAL CHANGES

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THE PEACE TREATY WITH GERMANY

TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES

FOURTEEN SECTIONS of the Peace Treaty deal with political and territorial changes in Germany. None of these sections are completely just: eight of them are flagrantly unjust, and deny the principle of self-determination.

The lesser injustices affect:

(1) The peoples of the three partially-German districts of Moresnet, Eupen and Malmedy, on the frontier of Belgium, which are to be transferred to Belgium without a plebiscite. The inhabitants of the two latter districts are, however, to be allowed, during the six months after the transfer has taken place, to record in writing at registers opened by the Belgian Authorities their desire to remain under German Sovereignty. But the League of Nations, on which Germany is not represented, is to decide whether this desire shall be listened to. That its decision is likely to be favourable to Belgium is shown by the articles dealing with the nationality of German residents. Those who had been there before the war are upon the transfer to lose their German nationality though, within two years, if over fifteen years of age, they may regain it if they choose to leave the district and remove to Germany. There are no clauses dealing with the nationality of Belgian residents in the event of a decision favourable to Germany.

(2) The people of Middle Schleswig who are to decide by plebiscite whether they wish to remain German or become Danish. There has never been any demand for a plebiscite in this district, which is more German than Dane, and to impose a plebiscite without demand is not implied in the principle of self-determination. The wish to deprive Germany for strategical and commercial reasons, of the growing Port of Flensburg, which is within this district, is evi-

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dently a motive behind this imposition. The *Times* special Correspondent said on September 10, 1919: "If Germany retains Flensburg and the second zone, a glance at the map will show that she is still strategical mistress of Denmark. If Germany retains Flensburg, she will develop it as a port in rivalry to Copenhagen. Copenhagen is destined to play an ever-increasing part in the Baltic trade which—with the rising up of so many new Baltic nationalities—offers great opportunities to Great Britain. Flensburg in Danish hands means that the course is set fair for British fortunes in the Baltic. Flensburg in German hands—well, that may be another story." Calculations are also based on the hope that the voting will probably be influenced in favour of Denmark by the present deplorable conditions in Germany, and the wish to escape from the burden of German taxation.

(3) The graver injustices are not masked by the granting of plebiscite, but are open annexations:

1. The Saar Valley. The purely German region of the Saar, containing about 600,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom are miners, is to be severed from Germany because of the French claim to the coal as compensation for the destruction of mines in North France, and as part of the indemnity. The mines, whose pre-war output was 12 million tons a year, are given absolutely to France, but after fifteen years the inhabitants may be consulted as to their wishes regarding the nationality of the district. The decision, however, is to rest with the League of Nations, and if it should be favourable to Germany, Germany must repurchase the mines from France at a price payable in gold, or else cede all rights over the territory, even if the population pronounce unanimously in favour of reunion with Germany. The French are to be allowed to import alien workmen into the district, and have, for some time, been discussing a proposal for bringing in Poles. The district is to be part of the French Customs Union, and the inhabitants are to be deprived of votes except for local assemblies. The government of the territory is to be entrusted to a Commission representing the League of Nations. The Commission which is to be appointed by the Council of the League is to consist of five members, and will include "one citizen of France, one native inhabitant of the Saar Basin, not a citizen of France, and three members belonging to three countries other than France or Germany."

2. Alsace-Lorraine is "restored" to French Sovereignty. The wrong done by Germany in 1871 is not redressed by this settlement. The people of Alsace-Lorraine were not consulted in 1648, when the French annexed them. They were not consulted in 1871, when the Germans annexed them. They are not to be consulted as to their "restoration" to-day. For the third time in their history they are handed to a master they have not chosen.

Those Alsace-Lorrainers who claim the right of self-government are now being treated shamefully by the French. A Manifesto, issued by the Nationalists and Autonomists, whose organization was established in 1910, declares that in all the forty-eight years of Prussian dictatorial rule, the prerogatives of the people have never been so trampled underfoot as during the nine months of French dominion. Aspirations for autonomy have been suppressed, and rejoicings over French rule have been manufactured by corrupt means.

Only 5 per cent. of the entire population of Alsace-Lorraine speak the French language; the business of thousands depending upon trade with Germany will be wrecked by severance from their habitual markets behind the French customs, while the forcible annexation of the provinces will further stimulate the Irredentist movement, and keep alive a problem which can only be solved in accordance with the wishes of the population.

3. The inclusion of West Prussia, Posen, Upper Silesia, two districts of East Prussia (these two by plebiscite) in the new Polish State, creates far more difficulties than it settles existing ones. There are some territorial problems, and this is unmistakably one, which are quite incapable of being settled on purely national lines. The admixture of the two races in the German-Polish border territories is so irregularly distributed, so complicated by economic considerations, that a settlement on national lines cannot be reached without making a clean sweep of all existing interests other than national aims. The national issue may seem to be the all-important one to us who look at the problem from the outside; it has, no doubt, been the all-important one to those who ruled the Paris settlement; but it is not, unless fomented, the all-important one to those who live and work in the disputed regions, who are normally more concerned to keep their every-day life intact and secure than to alter

their national status. The transfer to Poland of large districts where the German element has, economically, made the place, where the transference will introduce an inferior material civilization, will industrially paralyse large thriving regions, and vastly hinder the capabilities, such as they are, of Polish administration. Setting aside, however, the economic arguments against the settlement laid down in the treaty, the numerical weight of the German population in the ceded districts is more than sufficient to discredit it. Large territories have been allotted to Poland, in which the German population neither represents isolated islands in indisputably Polish territory, nor is settled on expropriated property, but where the German element lives in compact masses and in immediate contiguity to the rest of the German-speaking territory.

As for the Southern portion of East Prussia, Allenstein, which is to have a plebiscite, the Polish-speaking population is not more than $13\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the whole. The plebiscite, moreover, in this district and in the western corner of East Prussia, is to be conducted wholly by an Allied Commission which, for six months at least (and the period may extend to two years, before the vote is taken) is to govern the province, and to have the right to order the expulsion of any person whom it may suspect of wanting to influence the plebiscite. The remainder of East Prussia is to be cut off entirely from Germany, just as, if Devonshire were given to France, Cornwall would be cut off from the rest of England.

4. The North-east corner of East Prussia, Memel, is taken from Germany, not by Poland, but by the associated Powers who, moreover, are given the power of deciding the nationality of the inhabitants. The town of Memel is an old Hansa town, as German as any town in Germany. Historically, it is dear to Prussia as the refuge of Queen Louise after Jena. Commercially, it is of great importance because of its transit trade in timber and grain down to the river Memel, which flows past Tilsit into Russia, and on which great quantities of timber are floated. The annual value of its timber exports is over £1,000,000, and the sawmill and export trade is by far the most important interest of the town. No reason, whatever, is given in the treaty for this deliberate annexation. The nationality of Memel has never been in dispute, and throughout the war

questions as to its destiny have never been raised in public utterances or discussion.

5. Danzig. The Polish "corridor," which is cut through West Prussia to the Baltic, is commanded by the purely German city of Danzig, which, though Poland is to control its railways and its foreign relations, is to be made a "Free City," governed by a High Commissioner of the League of Nations. Beyond that announcement, as the *Times* Warsaw correspondent recently wrote, no one knows how the "Free City" is going to exist. It contains a number of important institutions of the German Government, shipbuilding yards, munition works, locomotive factories. Its technical academy has served not only the neighbourhood, but a great part of Prussia. All the officials and work-people of the dockyards and other works are now ceasing to be paid by the German Government, and have no one to employ them but the "Free City" of Danzig, which is quite unable to accept that financial burden. The Danzigers do not know what will happen to them under Polish administration, which is not, to say the least, business-like. Danzig, at the present moment, is rapidly becoming another Vienna, cut off from its resources, and yet burdened with institutions and a population far beyond its own needs as a "Free City."

Neither the historical nor economical claims of Poland can come into consideration in face of the German history and German character of Danzig. The German counter-proposal offered Poland international service rights on the Vistula, and the creation of a free harbour, which would give access to the sea satisfactory to her economic needs.

THE AUSTRIAN TREATY

TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL DISRUPTION

The Austrian Treaty dissolves the old Austrian Empire. What was Austria no longer exists. Part of it has become Jugo-Slavia, part Czecho-Slovakia, part Italy. Austria today is Austria in name only, a small State of some six million inhabitants, one among several States carved out of the old Empire which included and kept together so many nationalities that it was said of it that if it had not existed it would have had to be invented. The meaning of that remark is brought home to us now as we look at the problems arising out of the new settlement. Racially distinct as were the many Austro-Hungarian peoples, they were nevertheless to a great extent economically dependent upon one another. The system of trade and transport had grown out of their joint needs; they share common resources and a common capital. Now that the several parts of what was economically a great whole have obtained political independence, they are faced with the difficulty of making themselves industrially and economically independent as well, and unless trade and cultural freedom can be restored so that no nationality should be oppressed, and no State starved by the refusal of its neighbours to trade with it, there is little chance of peace or progress among these people.

German-Austria, or what is left of it, for parts have gone elsewhere, is hardest hit of them all. She is cut off from the sea, and from all her former resources; agriculturally she is a poor country, mainly of mountain and upland, dependent on Hungarian cereals and meat, Bohemian sugar, Moravian potatoes. She has now to support, or as things are at present, to see die, a capital enormously too large for her, whose population is two millions out of the six millions with which German-Austria is left. Even if German-Austria had been left intact by the treaty it could not provide an economic basis for so large a city. The hinterland of Vienna can scarcely supply the city with food for three months of

the year. German-Austria, moreover, cannot provide as much as one-tenth of the coal she requires herself. The change in the function of Vienna as the centre of a vast economic system stretching over an Empire which was next to Russia the largest in area on the Continent, and next to Russia and Germany the largest in population, is reducing her to a city of the dead. She is unable to provide her two millions of inhabitants with food or clothing, heat or light.

Union with Germany is the only solution of the German-Austrian problem. As part of Germany, Austria would have access to the sea, freedom of exchange, and as Germany's second capital, Vienna would be restored. But that demand which it despairingly presses is denied to it by a provision of the Treaty with Germany, which prohibits the union unless with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. As the consent of the Council has to be unanimous, this means that the French veto can prohibit the union. The treaty, therefore, as it stands, is a sentence of death for German-Austria. It is deprived of all means of independent existence, and yet by a covenant which is supposed to hold sacred the principle of self-determination it is denied the right of taking the only step which can save it from slow death. In the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, there were Germans, Magyars, Rumanians, Italians, Czechs, Poles, Ruthenes, Slovenes, Slovaks, Croats and Jews. The solution of their territorial disputes by the application of one strict principle is impossible. A map crazier than any crazy quilt would be the result of giving the right of self-determination to all who claim it. However the boundaries of the new States are drawn, hundreds of thousands of people will be disposed of in a way they object to, either on religious, ethnographical or political grounds. In the Czecho-Slovak State, the Germans of Bohemia are demanding separation from the Czechs; the Czechs are, however, resisting any scheme of Home Rule. There are $3\frac{1}{2}$ million Germans in Czecho-Slovakia, and about half a million in South Tyrol, which is given to Italy. There are big German "islands" in Transylvania (which goes to Rumania) and smaller islands in Hungary and Jugo-Slavia. The Poles and the Czechs are fighting over Teachen. There are at least half a dozen races in the Banat, which is claimed by the Hungarians, the Rumanians and the Serbs. The Rumanians outnumber the Serbs and Hungarians, but there is also a large minority of Germans there. The Jugo-Slavs and the Italians are at daggers drawn over Fiume and Dalmatia. The property-owning classes in Fiume are Italian, but the proletariat are pure Slav. These are only a few of the innu-

merable conflicts that surge out of the ruin of the Austrian Empire. The Balkan situation before the war was child's play compared with the situation to-day. The war has Balkanized the whole of Middle and Eastern Europe, from the frontiers of Germany to Constantinople. The Austro-Serbian dispute dragged the world into this war. There are a dozen and more disputes to-day as threatening to the peace of Europe as was the Serajevo assassination. It was difficult to make the people of this country realize what the original dispute in this war was about. It is almost impossible for anyone who can only study the existing problems in Central and Eastern Europe from a distance to get any idea of the chaos in which over fifty million people are now involved.

We can, however, understand the injustice of the treatment meted out to German-Austria, both as regards preventing its union with Germany, and as regards the cession to Italy of German-speaking South Tyrol. "The German-speaking Tyrolese, who dwell north and south of the Brenner," as Lord Bryce writes, in protesting against this annexation (*Times*, November 2, 1919), "have for many ages been one people, one in race, in speech, in religion, in history and national traditions. They dwell in what was the ancient country of Tyrol, and are distinct from the Italian-speaking people of the Trentino, though in recent years the habit has grown up of applying the name Tyrol to both."

The Diet of the Tyrol have issued a manifesto declaring their wish to keep to their ancient associations, and not to be annexed by Italy. The claim that German-speaking and Italian-speaking Tyrol should be united on account of economic connections is not valid, for wine is the only product that is exported from Italian Tyrol, and German-speaking Tyrol exports its wine to the north, and has never traded with the Trentino. The strategical argument is equally weak, for Austria is no longer a danger to Italy. Twice during the Italian occupation the German-Tyrolese have unanimously protested against their annexation to Italy. They asked for a plebiscite. They have petitioned President Wilson, and also the Paris Conference. Nevertheless, their appeals have been disregarded, and German Tyrol has been handed over by the Austrian Peace Treaty to Italy who, according to the Diet's manifesto, is doing her utmost to efface the German-speaking element.



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