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THE GREAT CONDITION

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THE GREAT CONDITION

"There can be but one issue. The settlement must be final. There can be no compromise."—PRESIDENT WILSON

Peace that is not conclusive is not worth having. The conclusiveness of peace depends on the attainment of the righteous purpose of the war. Peace terms proposed in the hope that mere cessation of war and bloodshed will satisfy the combatants or restore harmony and goodwill, are futile and foolish. The loss of a life, or of a million lives, is not the worst thing that could happen to the world. There are things more precious than life.

If these statements are true, and I take it that we all agree that they are, the flabby peace-monger is worse than foolish. He is dangerous. He asks for peace not to establish principle but to avoid danger and trouble and unsightliness. His moral sense is perverted. His scale of moral values is unsound. He would stroke the back of the hissing rattlesnake because of the mottled beauty of its skin. He would pacify the untamed tiger by scratching his ears and offering him a bit of the raw beef he is struggling for. The snake may respond to the patting. The tiger will seek to fill his stomach with more meat, even though it be that of the peace offerer himself.

The people among us who say they wish peace may be grouped roughly into three classes; the "peace at any price" people; the "peace by discussion" people; and the "peace by principle" people.

The first group, again, includes several sub-groups. There are, in the first place, some sincere souls who look on war and bloodshed as wrong in themselves and believe that no end which these can attain can be justifiable, because of the sinfulness of the means. They are children horrified by a nightmare and do no harm excepting when, like children, they get in our way. Because they can make the tiger purr with their music when his belly is full, they think they can do it when he is roused by hunger.

Then there are the cowards—not many among us, thank God!

—who would rather risk a master's lash than the loss of a hand or the sight of bloodshed.

Beside them is the traitor who lauds the beauties of peace because his purse is filled and he is false to the nation that has befriended him. The undeveloped, the coward, and the traitor are all in this group together.

The peace by discussion people are also peace by compromise people and are found chiefly among those who think that they enhance their reputations for being judicial, by proclaiming that in a contest like this there surely must be wrong and right on both sides. They are long on pose but short on facts. They emphasize the iniquity of Great Britain towards the American colonies, but forget to mention the establishment of the South African Federation. They have nothing to say about the moral magnanimity of America in freeing Cuba but much about her treatment of the Indians and the iniquities of the Mexican War. Some of them tell us that they lived long in Germany and never saw any exhibition of the evil spirit that the world is now condemning in Germany.

This group has its organs of expression largely in certain eastern journals. One of these journals recently discussed the problem of peace terms and suggested that if Germany and her allies would withdraw from Belgium and France, give Belgium proper indemnity to restore her ravaged territory, and withdraw her armies from the other territories which she now occupies, it would be fair to restore her colonies and cry quits. The writer argued that we would thus have restored conditions to what they were before the war, and that, therefore, nobody would have lost. These people are deeply impressed with the highly moral talk of the German government as seen, for example, in the German reply to the Pope's peace proposals of some months ago. The German government is said to have agreed with Pope Benedict "that in the future, the material power of arms must be superseded by the moral power of right." But shall we be content to let a highway robber go free because when he is caught by superior force in his robbery he offers to restore what he has taken and go about his business? Is it not our duty to see to it that he changes his business or is put under limitations which will make its future pursuit impossible? It is true, as the *New York Tribune* has remarked, that "the outlaw and outcast is willing to be reinstated in a new society of nations,

but only on his own terms, which include no sackcloth and ashes on his part for the infamies of the past."

We cannot plumb the depths of the futility of the "peace by discussion" proposals without an understanding of the German peace proposals. In Germany, as elsewhere, there are various groups of "would-be peace makers." There are some in Germany who talk of peace without annexation and would give back to all belligerents the territory which they had at the outbreak of the war, provided Germany be left with a consolidated influence or power over Central Europe and the Near East. There are those who would restore the Pre-War status in territory and let each belligerent and victim bear its own burden of rehabilitation. A large party demands the increase of German sea-power with seaports on the coast of Belgium and France, and the coal mining districts of the latter. Another demands the realization of the dream of "mittel Europa." Another adds to this the dream of "Berlin to Bagdad." Others insist on the restoration of a colonial empire, not in the scattered fragments which made up the colonies which she has lost, but in a solid block of territory and people from the East to the West coast of Africa, so that in the years to come Germany could arm millions of black men and, from that vantage point, once more reach out for the domination of the world. There are others who would be content with annexations of Russian territory. Be it noted that some, if not all, of these programs include freedom of the seas—FOR GERMANY—meaning that Germany must have coaling stations and a fleet such that no other power would dare attack her. Then Germany must have a controlling influence in South America, and that continent must be open to her colonists to live in and keep up their duty to their home country. To the Pan-Germans who look westward, the enemy has been Great Britain. To those who look eastward, the great enemy was Russia. To both, the great enemy has now become America.

The real import of the "peace by understanding and discussion" proposition is shown by the statement of Paul Lensch, a German Socialist, made only last October. He declares that such a peace "would be for Great Britain the greatest defeat in its history and the beginning of its ruin." Again, he tells us that Germany has a great and immense advantage "in the fact that Germany will have won the war, if she does not lose it, whereas England will have lost the war if she does not win it." That was written, note you, at the

time when our efforts were regarded as negligible, and the same remark will now apply to us. This same writer tells his countrymen that they are too impatient. He warns them that it will be a score or more of years before the economic and political disintegration which the war has started will show themselves. "Then", he tells us, "the true time of harvest will have come." Being pious, as well as patriotic, he also tells his fellowcountrymen that the Biblical phrase applies in their case,—*"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you"*. "First bring about the peace by understanding, which guarantees German political independence, territorial integrity and freedom of economic development, then Germany will have shown herself so strong that all these things shall be added unto her."

These are the views of various parties in the German Empire. The government, while neither expressly accepting nor rejecting any of the programs has held itself in a position to adopt any or all of them according to the military conditions at the close of the war. In other words, the peace proposals of the German government have varied inversely with their military successes. We have become accustomed to see a German peace offensive follow a failure of German military offensive, but in the intervals of German military success the spirit and intention of the government appears to have been on the side of the extremest demands that any one of the parties of the people has made. The military party in Germany, the German autocracy, the German government, will undoubtedly adopt as its program of peace conditions *the program of the most extreme party which it feels sure it can get*. Hence it is that the German reply to the Pope's note, for example, like all their other peace propositions, was general and vague. On certain matters, however, the government has made its views evident. For example, Germany must have economic privileges in Belgium and must dominate Belgian policy, if Belgium is restored at all. As the Chancellor said to Mr. Gerard, "We must possibly have the forts of Liege and Namur. We must have other forts and garrisons throughout Belgium. We must have possession of the railroad lines. We must have possession of the ports and other means of communication. The Belgians will not be allowed to maintain an army, but we must be allowed to retain a large army in Belgium. We must have commercial control of Belgium."

But on one point the government and the separate groups of

people in Germany are all agreed. It is that the settlement of the war shall secure enlarged power and increased resources for Germany at the expense of somebody. Along with this declaration goes the refusal, sometimes tacit and sometimes expressed, to admit that her aggression on her neighbors for her own aggrandizement is wrong and must not be repeated. The consideration of this point brings us to a discussion of the aims of the third group of peace advocates mentioned at the beginning, the "peace by principle" people.

This group of our own people, comprising without doubt a vast majority of those who desire to see peace re-established, are those who take the ground that the primary condition of the restoration of peace is the establishment of a certain fundamental principle of political morality which Germany has violated. Various phrases, this principle is that might does not make right in international dealings any more than in individual affairs; that no nation may now commit with impunity, acts of aggression upon its neighbors; that civilization may not again be trampled on in war by outrages that break down centuries of progress of law and order; that war, even if it must be waged, shall not be carried on under a policy of frightfulness, an attempt to terrorize the world by murder, outrage, and destruction. To establish the principle thus variously expressed, is the GREAT CONDITION of peace. To end the war without establishing this principle, either by Germany's voluntary acceptance of it or her compulsory submission to it, will be to lose the war. To fail to establish this principle, at any price in blood and wealth, will be simply to give a breathing space to the forces of evil to become stronger for a second effort to bring the world under the domination of the opposite principle.

On this matter we cannot be too clear, too specific, too emphatic, too determined. The only terms of peace which America and her Allies can accept or even listen to, for the sake, I will not say of justice only, but of their own national existence, are terms which acknowledge and give expression to this great principle. In other words, the terms of peace must be such as to secure as far as possible in the future that no nation shall attempt, or prepare herself to attempt, to impose her will upon other nations, to destroy their liberty and independence, their economic and social order, their intellectual and moral consciousness, and their sentiment of nationality.

As remarked before, the position which some people take that if Germany will retire from the countries she has conquered and will provide for the economic restoration of devastated territory, we might well make peace, is fundamentally wrong, unless that restoration is made in the spirit of repentance for her evil deeds and as evidence of her full acceptance of the principle here described as the GREAT CONDITION. For, be it repeated, whatever indemnities may be paid; whatever restoration of territory may be made;—nay even if she were able to recall the dead to life and restore the population she has murdered; if she were able to collect the ashes and gases into which by her destruction she has dissipated the accumulated wealth of ages; even if she were able to restore all the conditions that prevailed before the war both within her own boundaries and elsewhere;—we shall have failed to win the war unless in addition Germany freely accepts or is compelled to submit to this Great Condition. Well would it be if by some miracle the people of Germany could have a change of heart that would lead them to accept this principle and give evidence of their repentance, by such restoration as I have just described. But there is no evidence of such a spirit of repentance or even of regret. On the contrary, they tell us that France shall be bled white, that the power of Great Britain shall be broken and the Empire dismembered, so that neither may ever again be able to strike a blow against similar oppression.

At this point one plea, to which some people urge attention, needs consideration. They say that we must not be bitter in our condemnation, nor seek to impose on Germany terms which will humiliate her, because, after all, this war, like many others, is impersonal. They tell us that it is the clash of two rival economic and cultural systems. They remind us of the American civil war as an example of a conflict between two systems of economic order and civilization. But the parallel is not true. The Civil War was, as some other wars have been, a conflict between two rival, irreconcilable systems of life which grew up as a result of the environment in which their people lived, without conscious purpose on the part of either to injure the other.

The main difference between the present war and other wars, from this point of view, is that no other war in history has been produced by a conflict of systems one of which was consciously, deliberately, adopted as a national policy for the very purpose of

producing a war that would enhance the aggrandizement of the aggressor. But it is established beyond cavil that for two generations, or more, German policy has been shaped to this end. Upon Germany, therefore, rests the moral responsibility for the iniquity. She cannot claim even an equal division of the guilt on the ground that the war is a clash of economic and cultural systems, for she molded her system to produce the war.

The illustration, however, happily serves to teach a lesson of a different kind. The Civil War *was* such a conflict of differing social organizations. The principles on which these two organizations respectively rested were so different that only one could survive. They could not exist side by side. The conflict could not be settled by compromise or discussion. There could be no negotiated peace. President Lincoln was not deluded on this point. He knew that "Rebellion not crushed would be rebellion triumphant." The same is true in the present crisis. The system of government for which militaristic, autocratic Germany stands cannot exist side by side with democracy. One must be crushed if the other is to survive. Let us not deceive ourselves on this matter. If the Allies permit the survival of an autocracy powerful enough to begin another world war, it will destroy civilization. Never can the world be safe for democracy. Therefore, there can be no peace in this conflict by compromise or negotiation or discussion. One system of political and economic organization or the other must go down to complete defeat. We must so punish this autocracy and crush its spirit that at least for generations to come it will not rear its head again.

But, say some kindly people, this is unchristian and wrong; we shall drive the German people to hate us, whereas we should try to win them over. While we may readily acknowledge the force and kindliness of this view, we shall make a mistake if we permit it to have any influence with us. Have the past four years not shown abundantly that the only condition under which Germany will not hate the world after this war is that she shall be successful? But her success is the very thing which must be prevented if the principle of autocracy is to be destroyed. We must face the fact that after this war Germany will hate the world and that her people will be an obstacle to every attempt at world progress, just as for years the bitterness between North and South stood in the way of that consolidation and harmony necessary to the perfect welding of our national unity. The generations "to come must contend with the

sullenness of a conquered foe", and this war will not be ended, however or whenever it closes, until, fifty or seventy-five years from now, bitterness is forgotten and the spirit of "live and let live" is accepted by all the nations concerned, those who are beaten as well as those who win.

But how shall we know? How can we tell whether and when Germany either accepts or submits to the great condition that autocracy must be destroyed and the principle of self-determination and self-government, the principle that right makes might, established and obeyed? The answer is that, "By their fruits ye shall know them." If Germany were to accept the principle, she would of her own free will do the things which the Allies have outlined as necessary to a settlement. She would renounce annexations and restore devastation. Of her own free will she would atone for murder, outrage and destruction. She would restore to those whom she has despoiled. She would do penance for the murders she has committed. But there is no likelihood that she will do these things of her own free will and so show that she accepts in humility the condition that is imperative. There is nothing to do but compel her to submit. Certainly our own President made every attempt to induce the German government to accept the principle willingly. But even he at last was, as he said, disillusioned and came to the conclusion that the only remedy was force, force without stint, force to the limit,—and so it must be.

The concrete expression of submission to the Great Condition, the destruction of the principle of autocracy and acceptance of the principle of the right of a people to determine its own life and its own government, can be assured, of course, only through the imposition of specific terms of peace. What are some of the things that will make sure the establishment of the Great Condition?

1. The first is a victory which will drive the Germans and their allies back within the boundaries of their own countries. Whether or not there was a time when a proposal for a peace without victory could have been reasonably entertained, it has passed.

2. Germany must restore and indemnify Belgium.

3. Germany and her allies must evacuate all the other territory which they have conquered and occupied—Russia, Roumania, Servia, Montenegro, France and Luxemburg.

4. Alsace-Lorraine must be restored to France and the Trentino and Trieste to Italy.

5. Turkish rule must be limited to Turks only.

6. The individual violators of humanity and law, those who have been responsible for and those who have actually committed, the acts of murder and personal outrage in Belgium, France, Russia, Poland, Servia and Armenia, must be punished.

7. The Balkan question must be settled as far as possible "by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality", and international guarantees of their stability and independence must be given by a council of the nations.

8. Poland must be restored.

9. There must be readjustments of frontiers in proper cases so as reasonably to consolidate national groups and afford due national resources.

10. Germany's colonies may be restored to her only if adequate guarantees are secured (1) that they will not be made hatching grounds for plots against her neighbors; (2) that the consent of the people and those of neighboring communities shall be secured; (3) that she shall not organize in them armies of natives; (4) that the colonies will be governed in the interests of the people of the colonies and not for exploitation. She should not be left in a position in Africa in which, for example, she can again check the "Cape to Cairo" Railway.

11. Germany must restore that part of the world's shipping which she has *illegally* destroyed.

12. All nations must agree to reduce armaments, both military and naval.

13. An international court of justice must be established to which all the participants in this war, and as many others as possible, shall agree to submit their disputes for a reasonable time before making preparation to settle them by arms.

14. By a similar agreement at the close of the war, there should be established a League of Nations to enforce agreements and to prevent treaties in the future from becoming scraps of paper.

"For such arrangements and covenants, we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved." They are characterized by principles of justice and recognize the right of all nations, great and small, to "live on equal terms of liberty and safety."

It is of the highest importance that the people of the country should understand clearly the necessity of insisting that the war

shall go on until this principle which I have called the Great Condition is securely established; that the power of autocracy shall be finally broken; that no government, or people, or nation, may, with impunity, aggrandize itself through the destruction of the liberties and rights and property of another government, or people, or nation. It is of the highest importance that we shall develop throughout the country a public spirit that will not yield on this point, but will insist on attaining our purpose; so that, if by any possibility dark days come and weak-kneed people join in clamor to be relieved from the frightful strain of the war by a settlement which will not establish this principle, the people of America will sternly refuse and will push out of their way all who impede them in the attainment of this mighty purpose, and insist that our Government shall stand for this Great Condition as the essential of lasting peace.

“There must be no hugger-mugger peace. It must be a real peace. . . . Germany has waged three wars, and each time she has added through those wars to her strength, to her power, and each successive war she has waged has inevitably encouraged her on to the next. If she had had one check you would not have had this war. If this war succeeds in adding one square yard to her territory, of adding one cubit to her stature, of adding a single iota to her strength, it will simply raise their idea of militarism for which the world is being sacrificed at the present moment.”

HON. LLOYDE GEORGE