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SIMONDS' REVIEW OF THE WAR

(By Frank H. Simonds.)  
 Author of "The World War," "They Shall Not Pass."  
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In several previous articles I have discussed various aspects and problems of the forthcoming peace congress at Versailles. The great variety of questions to be decided, territorial, financial and political, since a very large portion of Europe is to be remade, has already served to confuse the mass of observers, and this confusion has not been lessened by the addition of the supreme puzzle, which is the league of nations.

In the present article, however, I intend to deal, not with the problems which are to be submitted to the decision of the congress, but to the equally important question of the view of the various European peoples, still our associates against Germany, as it affects and will hereafter affect our influence at Versailles. Such observations as I here make are based upon the comment of my French and English friends and the reading of the various foreign journals which come to this country.

**Singular Unanimity.**  
 In the beginning it must be said that there is singular unanimity abroad in recognizing the plain fact that without America Germany could not have been beaten. The war has ended in 1918 because we supplied

Foch with the necessary reserve, available and prospective, to push this great offensive. In the spring the Germans won great initial successes, but the cost was so great that their main power gave out at the precise moment when there was needed a great reserve to enforce victory. On July 18 the first American divisions entering the battle gave Foch the advantage of numbers at the decisive point. Thereafter he was always able to count upon a perfectly regular new contribution month by month.

Only less decisive was our aid in material directions, in money and in supplies; while, small as our naval contribution was, measured by comparison with that of Britain, it was a precious aid at the moment when the submarine peril was at its height. Europe, then, and particularly our British and French allies, feels toward this country a gratitude which is spread over the whole population, and is nowhere more genuine and intense than among the poorer classes, whose immediate sufferings were greatest and whose gain through peace is swiftest in arriving. This is the foundation of the influence which we have today in Europe and the basis of the appeal our voice will have in conference.

But along with gratitude, which would express itself in a prompt compliance with any request of ours made in our own interest, made for the

safeguarding of any policy of ours, there is an unmistakable apprehension born of the suspicion that our great influence may be exerted to procure things of little real value to us and carrying a future menace to our associates. For example, it is customary in America to say that we make war, not upon the German people, but upon their rulers. We have always in certain official quarters made a clear distinction between the masses of the German people and their rulers. But no such distinction exists in the minds of the French people, and it has practically disappeared from British minds.

**Is German Thing.**  
 The Frenchman does not see in his ruined villages, his ravaged fields, his murdered and dishonored women, an evidence of the exclusive spirit of the Prussian or of the official caste. What has been done is, to his mind, a peculiarly and characteristic German thing. He reasons, without exception, that the excesses and crimes which have been committed on his territory and against his brethren have been the lasting expression in deed of what the German is, not the high born German, not the prince or the baron, but the German of all classes.

For the Frenchman, therefore, there is the realization of what the German is, what he has always been, emphasized by the events of recent

years, but illustrated by all German history. And in the Frenchman's mind the German will not change easily, probably never. In any event, a new form of government will not transform millions of men who yesterday, and for years past, conducted themselves in the spirit of barbarism on French soil.

When peace does come France will still find herself with an open frontier toward the Germans. It will be a better frontier, easier to defend, including 1,500,000 people of Alsace-Lorraine who desire to be French, but it will be a frontier marching with the German lands.

And the emotion which I find among Frenchmen is not one of passion toward the German. I have walked through many villages which had been wantonly destroyed by German troops with every attendant atrocity and my French guides have shown no passion. They have said, simply and invariably, "This is what they did." At the French why the answer is the same: "We do not know, but they always do."

**Do Not Trust Him.**  
 Now, as nearly as I can measure the feeling of the French people whom I know, there is no thought of partitioning Germany or of destroying it. All recognize that, under some form of government, the Germans will continue where they have been for centuries. There is no desire to take German territory, but there is a vast, an immeasurable amazement at the American assumption that the German will be transformed by a change in government, or that it will be possible to trust and deal with the German who under the empire was a methodical murderer and incendiary when he lived under a republic, socialist or bolshevik.

The French have had many treaties with the Germans. But all have been violated when there was gain for the German. Belgium was only one case. For forty-seven years the French have been bullied, badgered, insulted, victimized. And this has been done not by a class, but by a race. Therefore, the Frenchman finds it difficult to understand why the American will be transformed by a change in government, or that it will be possible to trust and deal with the German who under the empire was a methodical murderer and incendiary when he lived under a republic, socialist or bolshevik.

The Frenchman's feeling about the league of nations, so far as it deals with his relations with the Germans, is the feeling that certain order committees have manifested when remote metropolitan districts undertook to tell them how to get on with the red Indian. In France for four years the German has been engaged, in the league between battle in murder, loot and arson. If the Frenchman now shows himself skeptical about the league of nations it is because he can not understand how one can safely associate in any international organization with a nation all of whose people sanction, most of whom defend and many of whose practice methods which are to be described only as German.

I do not think Mr. Wilson's league of nations will arouse any great enthusiasm in France, because it is founded upon the idea of the moral as well as the intellectual and physical equality between nations. I find amazement in the minds of French friends at the idea that we should expect them, want them, to join with the Germans in a league of nations. I find apprehension lest we should seek to compel them to enter such a league against their own better judgment. I find it among the very Frenchmen who are most sincerely grateful for American aid and frank in expressing their conviction that without that aid the war would have been lost.

**Nothing More Than Incident.**  
 Every sensible Frenchman recognizes that this war is probably nothing more than an incident in European history. He does not see any sign of a change in the German appetite, in the German ambition; he sees that Germany changed her tone, but only after her defeat was too unmistakable to be further concealed from the mass of the German people. He has been fighting the German and he has a pretty shrewd notion of the enemy. He has measured him mentally as well as phys-

ically, and he does not find any promise in a league of nations which includes Germany, and he recognizes that unless the league of nations includes Germany it is nothing more nor less than another alliance of the old sort.

Looking now to my English acquaintances, I am frank to say that I find in this quarter very little more enthusiasm for a league of nations of the sort which Mr. Wilson seems to advocate. There is the same gratitude for American aid that the French show. There is the same unqualified praise of what we have done, praise generous beyond measure. There is, beyond this, a certain inarticulate satisfaction that after a century and more of mutual misunderstanding and intellectual and sympathetic separation a world war has supplied the opportunity for the two branches of the English-speaking race to draw near to each other.

And again, for any request America should make for herself in the peace congress, I am satisfied there would be quite as prompt a British support as a French indorsement. I feel sure that both the British and the French will be glad to sacrifice some portion of their own interests if by that sacrifice they could please America or prove their gratitude. But, just as the French are apprehensive, the British are disturbed, and their disquiet grows out of the reported purpose of America, at the peace conference, to seek to transfer from Britain to some international body the mastery of the seas, the power which, in British hands, has just saved the world and prevented the downfall of the British empire.

**No Hesitancy.**  
 If we should ask the British to associate with us in a league made up of America and Britain, with France and Italy as lesser partners, to regulate the oceans, to police them, I do not think there would be the smallest hesitancy on the British part. For the British would trust us to play the game fairly, to mean what our words seemed to mean when we spoke them, to hold to our pledges when we had given them. But, again, the danger preceding the war will be held up to scorn for centuries to come because of the extent to which it trusted the assurances of German public men.

England was caught unawares because she trusted Germany. France, the better knowledge, but France sees a reason why the written guarantees which Germany gave before 1914 and violated then would have a different character if Germany should make them all over again. The difficulty with the league of nations idea is that its basis must be international trust. And it is not possible and will not be possible in our lifetime to restore confidence in Germany among the nations who have had in the present terrible years a full realization of the German methods and the German spirit.

Accordingly, when the United States goes to Europe to impose a league of nations upon the world, if it does undertake this task, it will find itself instantly confronted by the friendly but not less determined opposition of the masses of the nations which have suffered at German hands in the present war, in direct contravention of German pledges before the war broke out. A league of nations which was made up of races seeking the same enlightened goals by similar

courses, having the same regard for honor, good faith, humility that is not a difficult thing to arrange. But for four years—for four and forty years—the German has used the same words to mean a totally different thing, and who on the top of this earth can believe him today, when he uses words which in other mouths might mean honorable things, but in his mouth may mean anything?

**Concerted Effort.**  
 In the early part of this war a concerted and purposeful effort was made in this country to establish the idea that all the European nations were equally responsible for this war and were all seeking selfish ends. It took a long time to uproot this idea; there are traces left of it even now and signs which point to a new effort to exploit this view. But in the main we know better now and we shall know still more exactly when our two million soldiers come home, bringing with them their own judgment upon the German as he is and as he is likely to remain for a long time to come.

But either all the European nations are equally criminal nations, in which case it may be our holy, if somewhat risky mission, to compel them to lay aside their evil ways and under our supreme and enlightened directing enroll in a new international organization, leaving their guns and their sticks at the door, or else there is a difference between nations and the British may have it all to do again, and we perhaps we shall wait three years before coming to their aid in our current next time, as we did this time.

The weakest league of nations that is, in the form which carries "best protection against attack," will be sufficiently strong for us. We can run risks which no other great nation can think of running, but have we the right to ask other nations with far greater immediate dangers to surrender their means of defense because we, immune from those dangers ourselves, have decided that

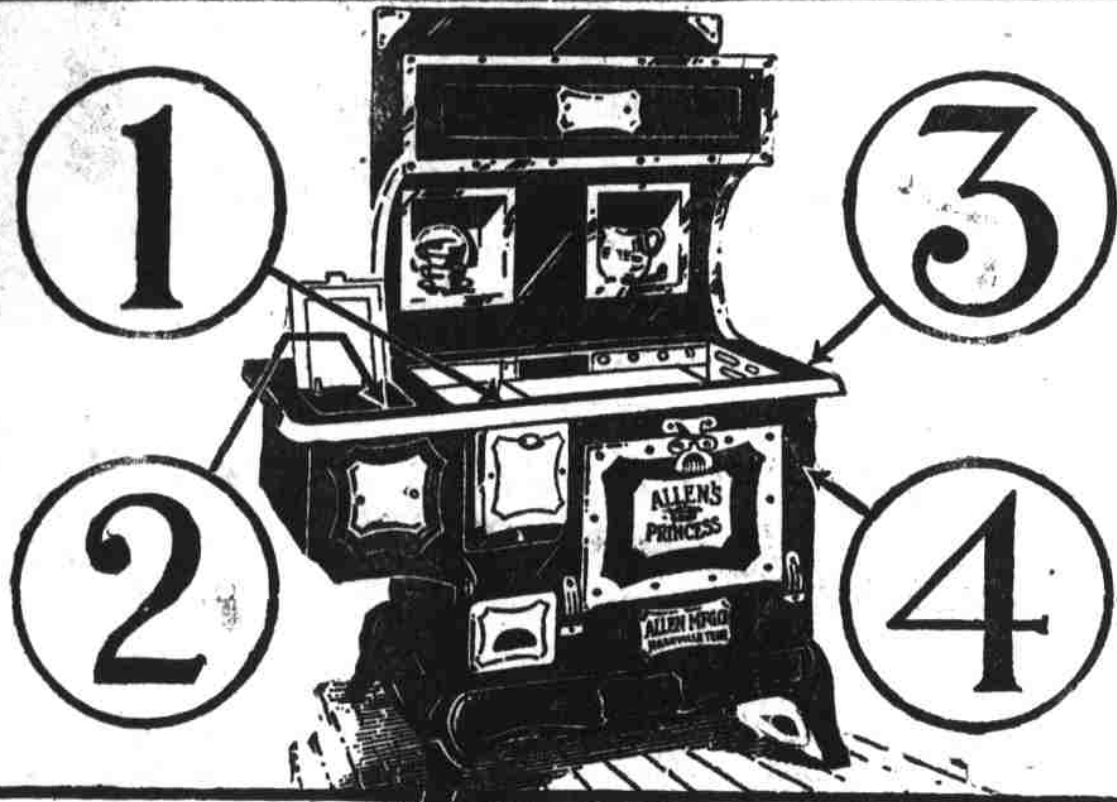
German in the same way and not in any other, we had better give up trying to impose our view. For in doing this we shall make enemies of our friends without in the least succeeding in making friends of our enemies.

**Will Agree to Anything.**  
 The peace congress has to deal with Germany as the court of law deals with a criminal. It has to punish the criminal nation for its crimes. The punishment consists in compelling that nation to make reparation in money and in kind for wanton destruction and to restore stolen provinces. To make Germany pay one quarter of the costs of the war, the war which she precipitated for selfish profit, will be to put her in a state of poverty for decades to come. If, in addition, the nations she has wronged, either collectively or separately, boycott German industries, and there are millions of people who will do this personally in any case, then German industry will be practically ruined.

To escape the just sentence, the equitable consequences of her crimes, Germany, whether socialist or Hohenzollern, will agree to anything; she will use every effort to maneuver around the league of nations discussions in such shape as to escape payment—we are seeing evidences of this purpose every day. But if she makes promises, will she keep them? And if she doesn't, then the French and the British may have it all to do again, and we perhaps we shall wait three years before coming to their aid in our current next time, as we did this time.

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