

THE COMMON CAUSE

FORTNIGHTLY OF THE POLISH SECTION OF THE "SWORD OF THE SPIRIT"

EDITORIAL OFFICE: 27 GROSVENOR STREET, LONDON, W.1.

Telephone: MAY 2928

Vol. II No. 17

SUNDAY, AUGUST 29th, 1943

Price 3d.

JÓZEF WINIEWICZ

GERMANY, VERSAILLES AND THE PRESENT WAR

THE OFFICIAL AMERICAN PUBLICATION "National Socialism" (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1943) states:

"The glorification of the Volk, the adulation of the strong leader, and the tendency to concentrate power in an autocratic totalitarian State led Germany naturally to the imperialistic foreign policy which was vigorously pursued after the establishment of the Empire."

The imperialistic policy of Germany became particularly dangerous to European peace when the growth of German nationalism coincided with a period of general endeavour to secure a political stabilization and the introduction of democratic principles in international relations. Furthermore, this growth just coincided with the epoch when the progress of civilization, reducing the obstacles of time and space, tended to bring men and nations closer together.

There is only one tendency in the internal relations of Germany which is of no concern to Europe at large—the antagonism of some of the German provinces towards Prussia. All the other trends and tendencies existing within Germany are of direct interest to Europe. Even the problem of German unity cannot leave Europe indifferent. Every nation has the right to decide matters concerning the mutual relations of its members within its own State. This right cannot be denied to Germany. The Germans, however, decided to conquer territories which have never been German and which are inhabited only by small German minorities, accounting for this policy by the principle of "national unity." These claims seek justification in the so-called Volkstumlehre. It is a "science" which aims at justifying German claims to various territories which have at some, more or less remote, period either belonged to Germany or been "subject to German cultural influence." Such claims were the immediate cause of the present war.

The four other wars (1864, 1868, 1870 and 1914) started by Germany in the course of the last eighty years were all caused by similar political tendencies. It might be said, of course, that three of these wars were started by Prussia, not by Germany. Prussia, however, was the first stage of the concentration of German national power. It became the nucleus around which national unity was built and that is why it never ceased to be a part of Germany. The differentiation between Prussia and the other German countries may be important from the point of view of internal German politics, but it would be a grave error to make any difference between the two as far as the relations of Germany with the rest of the world are concerned.

It seemed that the war of 1914-1918 might change the situation in Central Europe, that Republican Germany might follow a different path and depart from the tradition of the Empire. There were in Germany some people who tried to achieve such a change. The outside world supported their endeavours with moral and financial assistance. Nevertheless they all failed. The treaties which concluded the Peace Conference of 1919 were to mark the beginning of a new era for Europe and the world. Actually they were no more than an armistice agreement. Since 1933 German imperialism began to menace peace again.

There were in Germany two views on the subject of the first world war and the Peace Conference. The first was that Germany had not lost the war in the field. The undefeated German army was stabbed in the back by revolution in the rear. The second view spread in Germany was that the treaty of Versailles was responsible for the subsequent development of nationalism and militarism among the Germans. The German nation—it was stated—would have changed its habits and ways of thinking if the severe conditions of peace had not encouraged the chauvinism of certain sections of the German nation. This

1 Max Hildebert Boehm "Volkstheorie und Volkstumspolitik der Gegenwart," Berlin, 1935.

theory, however, failed to explain why the influence of the nationalist extremists found such a ready reception among the masses. Both these myths nevertheless built up a desire for revenge and therefore they menaced European peace.

It is not my intention to enter a close study of the treaty of Versailles and its clauses. It is a fact that no peace treaty ever gave complete satisfaction to the defeated party. There have been, on the other hand, some nations which carried out the provisions of peace treaties

signed by them. The peace of Frankfurt, imposed by the victorious Germans on France in 1871, was certainly not less severe than the peace of Versailles. France lost two provinces and paid huge reparations, while twenty-six French departments were occupied by the German armies until the complete execution of all the clauses of the treaty. The industrial system of France was moreover severely damaged:

"The world at large questioned whether France would ever recover the pre-eminent

position which had so long been hers. Even some Frenchmen shared this doubt. Yet the great majority of her population refused to acknowledge the Peace of Frankfurt as a national requiem."²

But France did not break the treaty. France faithfully carried out the obligations which she had undertaken, without sacrificing anything of her national greatness.

The Germans blamed the peace treaty
² V. L. Albjerg and M. Hall Albjerg, "From Sedan to Stresa," Macmillan, 1937.

for everything—for the political immaturity of the German masses and its consequences, for the violation of disarmament clauses, for the economic crisis which struck all the European countries after the war and for many other things as well. The speed with which Germany rebuilt her armament industry after the war, the disparity between the enormous loans secured by Germany and the small sums paid by the Germans on account of reparations, and the speedy recovery of German industry in general prove conclusively that the economic clauses of the Treaty of Versailles were anything but severe.³

The Treaty of Versailles did not involve any international discrimination against Germany. In 1925 Germany signed the Locarno pacts, in 1926 she took a permanent seat on the Council of the League, in 1928 she was a signatory of the Kellogg pact and she had been a member of the International Labour Office since 1919.

The Germans could have considered as grievous only the territorial clauses of the treaty. They lost their colonies, with an area of about 1,129 square miles and 15 million inhabitants. This was a severe loss to their prestige. They also lost Alsace and Lorraine, robbed from France half a century earlier. As to the remaining territories lost by the German Empire, they had—even according to the biased German statistics—less than 35 per cent of German inhabitants. Some of these territories passed to other countries after plebiscites had been carried out in conditions particularly favourable to Germany. The Germans had no historic rights to these lands. They were detached from the Reich in accordance with the principle of self-determination and the nations which organized their independent lives on these territories displayed both national vitality and ability to make full use of their freedom.

The Germans, however, continued to claim the return of these territories. Eventually they even launched in their programme of revenge the recapture of territories lost by Austria. If all the German territorial claims of revision of the Versailles Treaty had been accommodated, the first world war would have left no trace in Europe, except for a rather superficial change of regime in Germany. France would have had to return Alsace and Lorraine, Poland and Czechoslovakia would have had to disappear, while the first and basic principle of the Peace Treaty, enunciated by Lloyd George, would have lost all meaning. It was:

"This settlement . . . first of all must do justice to the Allies by taking into account Germany's responsibility for the origin of the war and for the way in which it was fought."

The German propaganda attacks against the Versailles treaty are not yet finished. The treaty cannot be revised any more. It was torn to pieces by Germany. Nevertheless it would be a major error to admit a revision of our view of the epoch-making decisions of the last Peace Conference, which have remained for many years the charter of justice and freedom of many European nations. Such a revision of view would amount to admitting that Europe had to bleed for four years merely to achieve a change of regime in Germany—from monarchy to sham republic. It would amount to a confession of the futility of the Allies' war aims in the First World War. It would suggest that we are fighting the present war only to achieve another change of regime in Germany.

The real aim of the Second World War is not merely the destruction of the National-Socialist regime in Germany, but the prevention of a recurrence of German aggression. The peaceful collaboration of nations must be safeguarded against the outbursts of the aggressive instinct of the German nation, which has so far always found leaders for its warlike enterprise with surprising ease and followed them with singular docility.

³ T. E. Jessop, "The Treaty of Versailles—Was it Just?" Nelson, 1942.

POLISH EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

(An Interview with Mgr. Zygmunt Kaczynski,

Polish Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education)

THE TIES OF MONSIGNOR KACZYNSKI with "The Common Cause" are so close that an interview with him in his capacity of newly-appointed Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education becomes naturally enough a



The old astronomical observatory at the University of Wilno.

On the back page: The famous old Ossoliński Library in Lwów, Room of the Manuscripts.

friendly and informal chat. With no preliminary remarks, Monsignor described his present activities and plans.

"Since September 1939," he began, "we have had no Minister of Education. Like many other Government Departments, this one was not reinstated and the affairs which normally belong to it were divided between the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Social Welfare, and for the most part they were dealt with by the Office of Education, under the direction of General Joseph Haller. But lately the amount of work in this field has grown to such an extent and acquired so much importance that it was absolutely necessary to centralize it in the reinstated Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Education. My opinion was fully shared by the President of the Republic, and by my colleagues in the Cabinet, and thus the Ministry of which I am the head, has formally and legally the same status as it had in Poland in 1939 . . ."

"It is a fact that work in this field has grown to such an extent?"

"Few people realize," replied Monsignor Kaczynski vivaciously, "that we have at present under our direction several hundred Polish schools of various kinds. We have schools in Britain, in the Middle East, in Persia, in India, in South Africa, in East Africa and in Mexico. . . . We have schools of every grade: grammar schools, secondary schools and university schools. We

have courses for adult education. We have an ever greater amount of educational work outside the schools."

"What is the present state of our higher education?"

"We have a Polish medical faculty at the University of Edinburgh. We have a faculty of architecture at Liverpool. We also have a legal school in Glasgow and a technical school in London. Thus, our young men can, partly at least, continue their higher studies which were interrupted by the outbreak of war, provided that these studies do not collide with their duties as members of the Forces."

"But," added Monsignor Kaczynski after a while, "it is not the education of this handful of young men who have been discharged from the Forces either as invalids or for other reasons, undoubtedly important though this may be, which is our main task. We have other ends in view. As everybody knows, all institutions of learning in Poland have been destroyed by the invader. This destruction is not limited to the closing down of all university schools, to the seizure of all valuable libraries and collections and of the expensive equipment of scientific laboratories. It will be comparatively easy to make good these losses, whether through their revindication from the invaders (and we are preparing an elaborate list of the losses we have thus sustained), or with the assistance of Britain and America, who show the greatest understanding for our needs. Our most grievous losses are those which we have sustained in scholars: hundreds of our scientists have been either murdered or tortured to death in concentration camps and prisons, or have died of poverty and exposure in consequence of the enemy occupation. Do you know, for instance, that of our eight most prominent geographers, who before the war taught in our universities, only two are still alive? Only a handful of our university professors have succeeded in escaping abroad. It is of the utmost importance to give them the possibilities of continuing their scholarly work in exile. Furthermore, their work is not necessarily far removed from actual needs. I cannot enter into details, but I can assure you that those of our scholars who work in laboratories here have made more than one valuable contribution to the allied war effort."

"I suppose that your Ministry is busy not only with current affairs, but also with planning for the future?"

"This indeed is one of my main tasks, and I am doing my best to engage all our most prominent pedagogues who are now abroad in this work. This work is not exclusively theoretical and mere planning. For instance, we are of the opinion that the teaching of English should be made compulsory in our secondary schools after the war, and for this reason we are organizing a special course for English teachers who would like to go to Poland in this capacity after this war."

"I would not like to enter into details about the future school system in Poland,

as I realize that decisions in this respect would be premature, but could you tell me something about the fundamental principles on which the Polish educational system is to be based?"

"You are right in saying the educational system," said Mgr. Kaczynski, "teaching is not enough, education is necessary. Today, after the tragic experience of the war, the whole world is becoming conscious of the importance of education. We are examining educational problems at conferences of the Allied Ministers of Education with Mr. Butler, President of the Board of Education, in the chair. I am eagerly following the discussion which is taking place at present in Great Britain around the White Paper on educational reform in this island. In particular I read very attentively the opinions of the British Catholic press on the matter."

"As far as Poland is concerned, it is obvious and indisputable that the education of a nation so overwhelmingly Catholic must be based on Catholic principles. The parents of every Polish Catholic child have the right to demand from the State that it should educate the child in accordance with its Polish tradition and the principles of its religion."

"How about the people of other denominations?"

"All religious minorities, both Christian and non-Christian, have exactly the same right. This principle is proclaimed by our Constitution, it was always carried out in practice, and it will continue to be scrupulously observed. Every religious minority in Poland will be entitled not only to its own denominational schools, but also to have these schools supported by the State, on a basis of equality with Catholic schools and in numbers proportionate to the numbers of worshippers of that religion."

"How about the language rights? I mean here those Polish citizens who use the Ukrainian and White Ruthenian tongues in Eastern Poland."

"Of course, in this case the principle of complete equality must also apply. The right to develop one's own language and one's individual culture is a natural right of man which I shall always respect both as a priest and as a Pole."

"I think," I remarked, "that this is the first time that the post of Minister of Education has been held by a Catholic priest?"

"Not quite the first time," replied Mgr. Kaczynski, with a smile, "in 1773, when the Diet constituted the Committee of Education, which was the first Ministry of Education in the whole world. Father Gregory Piramowicz was its life and soul. This man of great merit was a great educator and organizer and one of the greatest pedagogues of the eighteenth century. When I think of that, I am both deeply moved and anxious. Nothing teaches the sense of responsibility more than the consciousness of the great tradition of the post one holds."

