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Autor: Gschwind, Frank Henry
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THE BASES OF A FUTURE PEACE

The Editor of *Wissen und Leben* has kindly allowed me on more than one occasion to express my views on certain burning questions of the day in the pages of his journal, and even to employ my own language (English) for this purpose. If I again take up the pen, it is not with the intention of abusing the hospitality afforded me by a neutral paper, but truly and honestly to contribute something, however modest, to the solution of questions that every right-thinking European must have at heart. For, whatever our nationality may be, we are all of us Europeans; the accident of having been born and brought up in this or that country need not blind us to the fact of our common parentage and interests.

Since the publication of the German offer of peace, a great deal has been said on the question on all sides; the ideas which I offer here to the readers of this periodical are those which I have gathered by the perusal of English papers and letters as well as by the conversation of my compatriots. They are such as all reasonable men must agree to.

All of us, even the loudest jingoes, are agreed upon one fact—there must be no more war. The present catastrophe must be the last, as it is the most terrible, that visits Europe or, indeed, the whole world. In order to attain this object certain political theories must be thrown, bag and baggage, overboard. The first is the theory that war is inevitable, owing to the inherent weakness of human nature, that can find no better way of settling disputes than by fisticuffs. This theory may have been all very well for the dark ages, but it is absurd in the twentieth century. It has been proved over and over again that disputes which were formerly settled by force, can be arranged in a court of law. Nobody nowadays, except a few fanatics, approves of duelling, yet the time is not long gone by when every man who could hold a sword defended his "honour" by this doubtful means. The other theory, namely that war is necessary because it gives the really "strong" nation a chance of expansion by exterminating the weak, is almost too horrible to be considered seriously. It is based on a wholly wrong conception of the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest.

But who shall say which people is the "fittest"? Ancient Greece, Weimar, and the former republic of Geneva were small communities: if they had been suppressed by the stronger powers, how much poorer the world would have been!

Further, there must be no more question of the "balance of power". In pre-railway and pre-aviation days there may have been some reason for England, for instance, to maintain the balance of power on the Continent in her own interests. But those days have passed by. It is true that it would not be a good thing for Europe if any one state on the Continent were to gain the upper hand and thus be in a position to impose its will on other and weaker states, but there is no reason why the European states that are numerically equal or nearly so, should not live in harmony with one another. The old conception of the state as being something apart from the individual and having consequently different aims and ideals, is, luckily, dying out, but it is still vigorous enough to do a great deal of harm. The state, according to this theory, has to look after the social and material interests of its citizens, but beyond this it has no duties towards its neighbour: under the banner of expansion, imperialism, looking after one's own interests, etc., its duty is to get as much land as possible from other states, to grab its "place under the sun", i. e. to get as many colonies as it can manage to acquire. It will at once be objected, that this is precisely what England has always done and is still doing. By conquest and prudent policy England has succeeded in getting all the best colonies for herself, that is, she has done what the other nations would have liked to do if they had been able to. Yet there is a difference between the English colonies and (say) Alsace-Lorraine. The only time that Britain tried to force her will on a colony led to the foundation of the United States. Since then she has learnt the lesson that no nation can with impunity force its will on another. The inhabitants of the great British republics are English-speaking people; their institutions are a replica or an amplification of those of the mother country. They are free to govern themselves in the way that seems best to them. Hence they are a source of strength to England herself, and, however they may have been acquired, it is too late in the day to alter anything now. Besides, none

of the British colonies would wish to be anything but what they are.

No nation has, in any case, a right to dictate its will to another. The future peace of the world must be based on an acknowledgment of the right of every state to pursue its own way in the manner best suited to itself and to the interests of humanity. Mr. Wells has suggested a kind of international tribunal which should settle all disputes; if such a tribunal could exist, then we should have no more war. He further suggests that the manufacture of munitions should be in the hands only of a few states, who should refuse to furnish them to any other state. The strength of the army and navy, he suggests, should also be fixed by international law. For my part, it has always seemed to me that our former English system of a regular standing army, was the best. No one was forced to join, and the army was thus limited in number. If we must have armies at all, how much better it is to have one consisting of few men only, who have not been compelled to give their services, but have done so of their own free will. The international tribunal, according to Mr. Wells should also administer maritime law and regulate the question of freights. The freedom of the seas is one of those vexed questions that crop up only in time of war: if the strength of the navy of each European power is determined by the international tribunal, this question will cease to exist. The map of Europe, which forms one of the chief objects of the various peace proposals, is a problem requiring a great deal of thought. The present map, it has been said, must be re-drawn. But on what basis? The basis of nationality does not seem to offer a satisfactory solution: Switzerland, for instance, would fare very badly by a redistribution on a basis of language — and that is what is really meant when we talk of nationality. "The maximum of homogeneity and the minimum of racial and economical liberty", says Mr. Wells.

It seems hardly probable that the solution of the whole problem can be found in Europe. It is unsafe to prophesy, but the result of the next great offensive may prove as productive of surprise as the previous ones. The general opinion seems to be that there will be no result, that the comparative strength of the belligerents makes defeat or victory impossible. In that case, who is

to stop the war? America?[1]) Here, indeed, is the United States' opportunity. If the greatest of neutral states, supported as she will undoubtedly be, by all the other neutral states, intervenes to put an end to the calamity which has overtaken Europe, the belligerent nations will be obliged to give way, and a struggle that has cost millions of lives, not to mention property and money, will be terminated by arbitration. One asks oneself why the struggle should ever have begun. It will have done its work, however, once for all, if it prevents the re-occurrence of similar catastrophes in the future. Let us hope that the bloodstained battlefields of Europe will prove to be the fertilising grounds of the world's peace.

FRANK HENRY GSCHWIND

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ALTES STÄDTCHEN

Von ERNST FREY

Da sind die Häuser,
Mit den Gottgefälligkeiten,
Die krummen Dächer,
Und das biedere Schreiten
Der stillen Bürger —
Durch die alten Gassen!
— Und ist ein Lied
In niedrigen Gelassen.

Schielt auch zum Kirchenturm
Ein Wirtshausschild empor,
Das seinen goldnen
Wappenstern verlor.

— Fern, einer Lokomotive
Pfiff und schriller Ton;
Die versonnenen Giebel
Erzittern davon!

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[1]) The above was written before the entry of the U. S. A. into the war.