

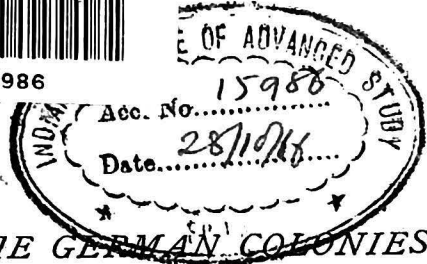
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THE FUTURE OF THE GERMAN COLONIES

Two suggestions with regard to the future of the so-called German colonies have been made during the past few weeks. The first suggestion came authoritatively from the Pope: the second comes only with quasi-authority from a sub-committee of the Labour Party Executive. Both these suggestions have received not a little general approval and support, because they profess to make a moral appeal if not to justice at least to mutual concessions, and both aim at bringing this War to a speedy close and ensuring a lasting peace. Because they are moral suggestions they demand a moral examination, although it would be futile to disregard in so doing the practical facts of the case. That the two suggestions have been turned down for the moment does not in the slightest detract from their importance. Consideration is already preparing the way for action among the organisations of Labour in this country, whatever may be the case abroad. Successive meetings during the past month have demonstrated the tendency of Labour leaders to regard the catch-phrase of 'no annexations' when applied to German colonies as above dispute from its moral side. This is a real source of danger. Hasty action upon imperfectly understood facts is a perennial fault of democracy. And unless the rank and file of electors in this country understand the main facts of German colonising methods, they are in danger of wrecking the future peace of the world, as inexperienced seamen have wrecked their ships by refusing to allow for the swell of the sea.

The keynote of the Papal appeal to the chiefs of belligerent peoples is for 'reciprocal condonation.' *Inter alia* the Pope suggests that the so-called German colonies should be handed back to Germany as a condition of peace. There was little doubt that such an arrangement would be welcomed in Berlin. The Central Powers are quite well aware that they must evacuate Belgium and Northern France, and they realise that without outlets for German trade, and reservoirs of supply of raw products, they must fall in with schemes of international trade which will mean the reversal of all their former colonising methods. The fine answer from the President of the United States how-

ever, although it does not touch upon the German colonies, has ruled all bargaining about them as outside consideration. There can be no basis of agreement with a Power which has thrown treaties to the winds as useless scraps of paper.

The memorandum prepared by the sub-committee of the Labour Party Executive as a proposed basis of British Labour's peace proposals does not contemplate handing back the colonies to Germany, but at guaranteeing their freedom of development by the immediate establishment of a League of Nations which shall act not only as 'an internal high court for the settlement of all disputes between States which are of a justiciable nature,' but which shall also provide 'appropriate machinery for prompt and effective mediation between States in issues that are not justiciable.' It would demand space far longer than is available for this present article to attempt a detailed examination of all these supernational proposals, but it is necessary to see what the memorandum actually contemplates with regard to the German colonies. Section XII—'The Colonies of Tropical Africa'—runs as follows :

With regard to the colonies of the several belligerents in tropical Africa from sea to sea (north of the Zambesi River and South of the Sahara Desert), the conference disclaims all sympathy with the Imperialist idea that these should form the booty of any nation, should be exploited for the profit of the capitalist or used for the promotion of the militarist aims of Governments. In view of the fact that it is impracticable here to leave the various peoples concerned to settle their own destinies, the conference suggests that the interests of humanity would be best served by the full and frank abandonment by all the belligerents of any dreams of an African empire; the transfer of all the present colonies of the European Powers in tropical Africa, together with the nominally independent Republic of Liberia, to the proposed supernational authority or League of Nations herein suggested; and their administration by an impartial commission under that authority, with its own trained staff, as a single independent African State, on the principles of (1) the open door and equal freedom of enterprise to the traders of all nations; (2) protection of the natives against exploitation and oppression and the preservation of their tribal interests; (3) all revenue raised to be expended for the welfare and development of the African State itself; and (4) the permanent neutralisation of this African State and its abstention from participation in international rivalries or any future wars.

It will be noticed that the memorandum avoids the thorny question of the late South Sea possessions of Germany, but it is impossible to imagine that such avoidance can be long continued. Both sets of colonies are in the Tropics. Both involve native rights, native labour, and foreign trade. It would be difficult for any supernational authority to make fish of Africa and flesh of the South Seas. Even if the English Labour Party were willing to leave the future of Papua, Samoa, the Caroline

Islands, the Marshall Islands and the 'German' Solomons, to the administrative justice of Australia and New Zealand, it is scarcely likely that the European Allies would approve of an arrangement which left authority with England in the Pacific and refused it, say, to France in West Africa. Moreover, such an arrangement connotes the complete conquest of Germany, while the representatives of international Labour appear inclined to regard the colonies as pawns in the game for an early peace. The democracies of Australia and New Zealand, on the other hand, regard the German colonies from a point of view different both from international labour and the English Labour Party Executive. The Colonial Labour Leaders have a lively fear that their interests will be overlooked, not only by diplomats, but by Labour, when the time comes for settling the terms of peace.

A striking statement made to Reuter by Colonel Cresswell, the Leader of the South African Labour Party, is worth more careful consideration than it has received. While expressing his general approval of the memorandum under discussion Colonel Cresswell declared that he could not sign it without great reserve. He said :

As the only extra-European delegate to the Conference I feel that by doing so I would be appearing to endorse without qualification a principle, the application of which to African problems and to our own future safety in South Africa depends so entirely upon the circumstances obtaining when the War actually ends.

The circumstances to which Colonel Cresswell refers he leaves undefined, and there is no reason to do otherwise than respect his reserve. Personally—and I think Australians and New Zealanders would almost unanimously support my views—I believe that the circumstances which must govern the future entail the destruction of the present method of government in Germany. If the governing spirit behind German colonising methods is not broken, then the alluring vision of a tropical world, where the natives are freed from capitalistic exploitation and delivered from the danger of war, is worse than a dream. It is a will o' the wisp which will dance those who follow it into a deep and bloody morass—unless there is no meaning in past and practical experience.

The Pope, in his brief reference to the late tropical possessions of Germany, does not make mention of native rights. It is impossible to conceive that he is careless of these rights. In German East Africa alone there are 48,000 native Roman Catholics, who look to him to protect them. Nor can it be said truthfully that the German officials have shown themselves as antagonistic to missionary work as the French Government have done. Accord-

ing to a New Zealand Blue Book dealing with Samoan affairs in 1874, the Hamburg House of Godeffroy and Son gave to all its scattered agents one clear direction :

Never assist missionaries either by word or deed, but wherever you may find them use your best influence *with the natives* to obstruct and exclude them.

But on the other hand it was in Samoa that missionaries received the most direct commendation by Germany. On one occasion a German warship saluted a Wesleyan missionary by manning the yards, because of his pacific influence with the natives. In more recent times and in German East Africa the British missionaries were tolerated, to use no stronger word, before the War, but directly war was declared these same missionaries, with their native coadjutors, were harried with abominable cruelty. The rank and file of converts also were not only detached from any leaning towards British rule : they learned that Christianity did not pay. This backing and filling is capable of a very simple explanation. The German spirit of colonisation utilises everything to its own materialistic ends. This is the tragedy of Germany. The natives are German goods and chattels. They are massacred when they are rebellious : they are surrounded with care when they are content to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for their overlords. It is difficult to place too great emphasis upon the cold, calculating policy underlying all these things. The car of colonising Germany rolls on to its appointed end, not entirely regardless of suffering humanity but regardless of their rights or wrongs.

A striking example of German methods with native races may be found in 'German' South-West Africa. The Hereros are a pastoral people whose name in their own tongue signifies 'the merry folk.' They accepted the German protectorate under Bismarckian auspices with a light heart and a ready mind. Little more than ten years' experience of German officials and German traders, however, was quite sufficient to throw them into passionate revolt. As in Belgium, any desire for racial cohesion and rights provokes the German mind to fierce and brutal resentment. The practical characteristics of such resentment in the case of the Hereros may be judged from a proclamation issued by General von Trotha in October 1904. This Teutonic paladin commanded that every Herero, with or without arms and cattle, was to be shot. The women and children were to be driven back upon their own people or fired upon. Unhappily, as every man who has lived upon the frontier of European occupations knows, the natives soon complicate even a good case by their own actions. German farmers and their families in Damaraland were murdered

and their farms were burnt at the beginning of the conflict. Similarly, later on, revolted Hottentots in the South were guilty of crimes which were more or less of the nature of reprisals, but which none the less acerbated the German temper. Much may be said in extenuation. It is very difficult, even for non-Germans, to look at disputes with the natives in a spirit of abstract justice, when the bodies of murdered white women and children lie in the compound unburied, or when spears fall on the roof like hail. It is significant, however, that both British and Boer farmers were left alone by both the Hereros and the Hottentots.

Similar evidence may be produced from 'German' East Africa. Racially the peoples of both countries are alike, and the Bantus are a virile, intelligent and warlike stock. The trouble in the East was due to native resentment of German methods of government, with the additional grievance entailed by compulsory work on the plantations. It was quelled in much the same fashion, the Germans bringing to their aid a mixed army in which there were natives of Papua and the Bismarck Archipelago! The name of Carl Peters, who was Administrator of 'German' East Africa at the time, renders it unnecessary to give any detailed account of the harsh methods he employed, or to doubt the evidence with regard to the barbarous treatment of women and children. The German official returns, made before the conclusion of the war in 1905, show that the natives lost 120,000 men, women and children. Carl Peters was withdrawn and von Trotha's proclamation was cancelled by the Imperial authorities, but neither of these things was done before the natives had been beaten down by the mailed fist.

It is very frequently said that whatever the Germans may have done in the first instance with the natives, their subsequent care on their behalf is very great. This statement has been made not only by globe-trotters or commercial agents who are concerned chiefly with the present, but by administrators of great experience and ability. Mr. E. D. Morel, in his book *Africa and the Peace of Europe*, makes a great deal of this fact, and his arguments are worth reading and weighing carefully, not for their intrinsic value, but for the undoubted influence the book is exercising in some quarters. Section XII of the memorandum prepared by the Executive of the Labour Party reproduces almost verbally Mr. Morel's suggestions for the future administration of tropical Africa. Those who refuse to recognise the practical formative importance of Mr. Morel's book are foolish, those who accept the book as a reliable guide are still more unwise. Even when his facts are accurate his deductions involve almost every fallacy known to the logician. But the Labour Party Executive apparently have cast their mantle, if not over the whole book,

at least over the main purposes of the book, and therein lies its dangerous character.

Mr. Morel states that the fairest summing-up of German rule in tropical Africa has been contributed by Sir Harry Johnston in his work published in 1913, *The Colonisation of Africa*. The paragraph is worth quoting.

It will be seen, I fancy, when history takes a review of the foundation of these African States, that the unmixed Teuton—Dutchman or German—is on first contact with subject races apt to be harsh and even brutal; but he is no fool, and wins the respect of the negro and Asiatic, who admire rude strength, while his own good nature in time induces a softening of manners when the native has ceased to rebel and begun to submit. There is this that is hopeful and wholesome about the Germans: they are quick to realise their own defects, and equally quick to amend them. As in commerce, so in government, they observe, learn, and master the best principles. The politician would be very shortsighted who underrated the greatness of the German character, or reckoned on the evanescence of German dominion in strange lands.

It will be noticed that Sir Harry Johnston was taking the view of the politician who must accept the *fait accompli* and throw a veil over the past, no matter how deplorable the past may be. He premised more things about the greatness of German character and the permanence of German dominion than would be assumed to-day, and he might now even differentiate between the German people and the German Government. But the most serious modification Sir Harry Johnston made, and it is passed over by Mr. Morel, is contained in the sentence which implies that the German drops his harsh and brutal methods 'when the native has ceased to rebel and begun to submit.' There is the spirit of German colonising methods! The German is no fool. He realises quite well that it is not profitable to himself to have the natives dying out like rotten sheep, or scurrying away like frightened deer at the approach of a German trader. Therefore in Papua, in the Pacific Islands, and in tropical Africa, the Germans improve native towns, houses, water supply, drainage and health conditions, so far as tropical diseases are concerned. Therefore they lay down strict regulations with regard to recruiting, to barracks, to hours of labour and such-like. They would do the same for slaves or for domesticated animals. The price the natives pay for these advantages is their freedom—their right to occupy an equal position with Germans under the sun by virtue of their humanity. And what a price to pay!

The method by which the Germans desire to ensure the perpetual submission of the native races is also worth careful consideration. All over the world social difficulties have a remarkable similarity, and therefore it should surprise no one to learn that the flashpoint of almost all native troubles has been the

ownership of their land. Here experience in the South Seas casts a valuable light upon darkest Africa. All over the Pacific the natives have been from the first inclined to sell their birth-rights without in the least comprehending what the transaction actually meant. Similar ignorance must be credited to white men who did not realise at first the complicated character of land tenure among all the South Sea Islanders, for under the native laws of custom it is impossible for any individual to alienate rights which belong not to him alone, but by reversion to hundreds of others also. A mutual misunderstanding led to extraordinary results. Men sold and bought land in Samoa alone to such an extent that it would have necessitated reclaiming the foreshore for twenty-five miles out to sea all round the island in order to satisfy the claims lodged by the white purchasers! No nationality of traders is altogether free from complicity in the pernicious policy of land-grabbing, but care should be taken to differentiate between the action of traders and the action of Governments. The American and British Governments upheld native rights throughout the Pacific. The German Government, on the other hand, not only condoned but facilitated the transfer of land from native ownership. By this policy the Germans affected the whole future of the islands in a fashion destructive of native freedom. Wherever they could, they bore down native opposition with brutal force, and though their purposes were generally effected by such methods and peace restored thereby, it was upon terms which meant perpetual servitude to the subdued. This point should be understood very clearly by all who wish to estimate the German colonial question from a moral standpoint. It will also focus a danger-spot in regard to the future of Africa. There is a grave danger, in any policy of commercial concessions, of interfering unfairly with native rights connected with the tenure of land. Here again no nation is entirely free from blame, but it must be stated that the British people, if they have acted wrongly, have sinned in ignorance, not in deliberate purpose. They would support no Government that they knew robbed the native races and condemned them to slavery or permanent degradation. Evil, however, is wrought by lack of thought, and the Labour Party will do great service to the native races of Africa if they fight tooth and nail against any concessions which do not guard the inalienable rights of the natives to their own lands. If the Labour Party can unite the working people of Europe in a similar policy in their respective countries with regard to this matter, so much the better all round.

The question of ownership of land automatically affects that of labour. It must be stated at once that the British policy with regard to native land has entailed labour difficulties which did

not arise in the German colonies prior to the War. Here is a case in point. Fiji profited by the experience the British gained in dealing with the Maori land question—a question which was the cause of the last Maori war. Fijian rights by reef and palm, on sea and land, have been upheld, and wherever there has been any doubt as to ownership, decision has been given in Fijian favour. Under British Rule Fiji is for the Fijians. A consequence has been that the natives are in so comfortable a position that they need do no work at all except raise a few garden products. So far from working for the white man, the white man works for them. The rent paid to the natives, for instance, by the Colonial Sugar Company must reach a large sum every year. But this is not all. Since the Fijians have preferred the *dolce far niente* of landlordism to work in the plantations, they have welcomed recruited labour not only from the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands, but from India. There are estimated to be 90,000 native-born Fijians in Fiji to-day and 60,000 Indians. This fact alone is profoundly modifying to the future of Fiji. As the number of Indians increases so does the demand for native land. The Indian immigrants prefer to remain in Fiji as tenants of the Fijians to returning to their own country. This complicates the labour problem, and it is difficult to foresee what will be the ultimate fate of plantations and industries owned by white men, and subsequently what will become of the Fijian race itself. Will the latter survive their own prosperity, or will they be amalgamated into some composite race? The more men know of the facts, the less are they ready to answer these questions dogmatically or offhand. At any rate, freedom of development is assured to native races in the South Sea Islands under British rule through the land question, while the German policy, which favours freedom of purchase, spells practical enslavement of the native races. Similar conditions are pretty certain to prevail not only in tropical Africa but in the Southern part of the continent also, where the purchasing or hiring of land by Europeans within certain scheduled native areas was forbidden by the Native Land Act of 1913. If Colonel Crosswell would expound to his British confrères the South African Labour Party's policy towards native land and native labour, nothing but good would be likely to arise when the future of the German colonies comes urgently into current politics.

The subject of maintaining the open door to traders is another in which the German colonising spirit must be taken into consideration. It has been said that the German method with their foreign traders has been much more enlightened than those of the French. This may be true, but two wrongs do not make one right. And even though the Germans may have welcomed British

trade in Africa, it was only because it suited their purposes for the moment. The policy would have been reversed to a certainty when the proper day for doing so came. Here South Sea experience becomes valuable. The Australian and New Zealand attitude towards Germany seems to many people in this country unreasonably implacable. Not only are they opposed to the return to Germany of her colonies in the Pacific, but men speak openly of excluding all Germans from trading in Australia or elsewhere. The latter talk need not be taken too seriously, but it should be known that it is caused by bitter experience of the ways of German traders. It has been stated that official Germany had no complicity in the tricks of trading Germany, but this no Australian believes. He cannot believe, because he knows that Germany made good her footing in the South Seas by the unscrupulous acts of her traders. He remembers not only how Germany sent her warships to Samoa to assist the notorious Godeffroy and Son in their dealings with natives, but also how Australian trade, in the years immediately preceding the War, was crowded out of the Marshall Islands by the unscrupulous conduct of the Jaluit Company, registered at Hamburg as a commercial concern, but in close connexion with the German Colonial Office. This example of commercial warfare has burned into Australians and New Zealanders a dread of German trading enterprise. Of fair commercial competition they had no dread, but the German methods were not fair. Messrs. Burns, Philp and Co., the Australian shipowning and trading firm who fought the matter, even when they paid levies upon their trade amounting at last to no less than 900*l.* per month, nominally paid no more than German firms. There was this difference. The Germans paid out of one pocket into another. Public opinion ran so high in Australia that it might have precipitated a war with Germany before Germany wanted war. The Commonwealth Government threatened commercial reprisals upon German trade. This threat forced the Germans for a time to be reasonable, but ultimately only made them more determined to dominate in spite of all treaties. The Norddeutscher Lloyd, stiffened by subsidies, succeeded on the eve of war in driving from the Marshall Islands trade their Australian rivals, and they would have carried their commercial conquests farther afield but for their own disasters. Consequent upon these disasters the way has been reopened to Australian trade, which is coming into its own again. These facts may be unknown in Europe, but they have stirred Australia and New Zealand deeply: how deeply may be judged from a recent debate in the New Zealand House of Representatives. On the 3rd of July Mr. Massey stated that there was no division of opinion throughout Australasia as to the grave danger of returning any

of the Pacific Island colonies to Germany. To this Sir Joseph Ward added a striking metaphor with regard to the menace. Germany was a hound ready to put its fangs into all honest passers-by.

In their memorandum the sub-committee of the Labour Party Executive lay down a principle that 'all revenue raised' is 'to be expended for the welfare and development of the African state itself.' This sentence is misleading so far as it makes an assumption that in some unexplained fashion 'revenue,' that is money raised directly by the State by taxation and duties, is being deflected from tropical colonies to Europe under present conditions of government. This is certainly untrue of British tropical dependencies. It is probably untrue also in the case of other nations. For instance, in the year before the War German New Guinea, including the Bismarck Archipelago, cost Germany 300,000*l.* But German methods with regard to land tenure, and their consequent effect upon labour, make it possible for the German Government to recoup itself for expenditure upon administration by methods which are not open under British conditions. None the less, those who are familiar with the progress of political thought in Australia with regard to British Papua know that the additional cost of the occupation of Kaiser Wilhelm Land by the Commonwealth has been clearly understood by the Australians themselves, even though the Australian Governments have set their faces so far like rocks against any large application of the principle of granting 'concessions.' Herein they are consistent, and ethically right, if it is premised that the natives have inalienable rights in their own land. And it is exactly at this point where the British Labour Party may bring useful pressure upon the British Government to assist in a principle for which the Australian Labour Party has contended persistently. The practical effect of a careful reserve in granting concessions in 'German' East or South-West Africa would do more than almost anything else in detail to promote 'equal freedom of enterprise,' the 'protection of the natives against exploitation and oppression,' and the preservation of natives from 'future wars' or punitive expeditions.

The Labour Party, in their proposals for the future of Africa, have outlined the formation of a huge tropical republic which shall be administered primarily for the good of the African peoples themselves. This would entail 'the transfer of all the present colonies of the European Powers in tropical Africa, together with the nominally independent Republic of Liberia, to the supernational authority or League of Nations' who shall guarantee 'permanent neutralisation of this African State and its abstention from participation in international rivalries or any

future war.' There can be no doubt of the ethical flavour of these proposals, but as things are they are only a dream, and a dream likely to disappear when the cold facts of to-day are carefully considered. Those who attempt to erect such a State in the fond belief that the various European nations will be content with such an arrangement will begin to build not only upon sand but with sand. And even granted that they allowed it as a *pis aller*, the attempt to raise a huge tropical republic in Africa, and to administer it by a supernational authority swayed by socialistic theorists, would deluge Africa afresh with blood, and not only Africa but the world. The supernational authority implied by a League of Nations, such as has been outlined in the memorandum under discussion, entails a revolution in the government of Europe, which is far more likely to reproduce the pitiful weakness of Russia than to produce a Power capable of maintaining freedom of commerce, right treatment of natives, and abstention from war in tropical Africa.

Experience modifies all administrative theories. It is solid experience that has made Australians, who regard themselves as the wardens of the peace of the Pacific, dread above all things the military and naval dangers incidental to a return to Germany of her late colonies in the Pacific. As long ago as the 'eighties Queensland realised that German occupation of Papua was a real menace to the waterways inside and outside the Great Barrier Reef. Recent events have confirmed this conviction. When the Germans wantonly bombard peaceful watering-places like Scarborough, within measurable distance of the British Fleet, what abiding safety can there be for Townsville, for Brisbane, for Sydney and for Melbourne? The only hope of protection is an enormously increased Australian navy, a burden which no Australian desires lightly to place upon his country's shoulders. The danger does not come only from the sea. This war has demonstrated the unholy ability the Germans possess in organising native races for military purposes. Their native army in East Africa is one of the military wonders of the War. They are not likely to scrap this military machine unless there is a radical change in their belief in military force. A realisation of this and other facts makes Australians ask themselves what assurance there will be that the same Power which took Papuans to conquer Bantus will not bring troops from East Africa into the Pacific should the occasion arise. And even though the Germans should be deprived of the possession of their colonies, the danger does not cease so long as German traders refuse to play the game. Not once and again in the Pacific German traders have shown their readiness to foster tribal quarrels and to encourage revolt against the authority of those Governments under whose flags

they themselves were trading safely and without unfair hindrance. It is a quarter of a century since Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his *Footnote to History*, in which he gave an account of the eight years of trouble in Samoa conterminous with the Bismarckian development of the German colonial empire, but his book is worth studying now, not only as history, but because of its accurate diagnosis of the German colonising spirit which is the same to-day as it was yesterday.

The main purpose of this article has been to adduce grave practical considerations of a moral character why it would be wrong to return the German colonies to Germany, either as a condition of peace, or through any sentimental consideration for so-called German rights. German rights spell native wrongs. The Labour Party have shown a clear perception of the importance of preventing native wrongs, but they have not shown an equally clear perception of all the forces which make these wrongs possible. None the less, however impracticable or dangerous the administrative plans of the Labour Party may seem to those with practical experience of tropical colonising difficulties, they have a fine ethical ring of which any race may be proud. The Pope, on the other hand, although it must not be assumed that he is careless of native rights, evidently considers them of small importance in comparison with his appeal for peace by 'reciprocal condonation.' Here again there is an ethical element, but it will not stand the test of experiment. To forgive and forget the horrors that have accompanied German colonising methods would be as fatuous as forgiving the depredations of a tiger, or forgetting what are his predatory propensities. Not only in Africa but in the South Seas the Germans have trampled alike upon the rights of the native races, and upon the elemental duties of honesty, truth and fair dealings between traders and traders. They have shown themselves, when brutal ferocity was impossible, ready to stir up native tribal warfare as a means of embarrassing the Governments of friendly Powers. They have proved their ability in organising the fighting races of the world. They have deprived the natives of their land tenure and therefore of their freedom in labour. They have taken care for the peoples they have subdued, but only such care as might be shown for slaves. If any colonising race of mankind, since the cruel days of Assyrian deportations, has shown itself unworthy of being trusted with the control of native races, it is Germany. In Germany is 'the head of the boil of which this world languishes.' Until the poison is removed there is no hope for a lasting or a righteous peace in the Tropics or elsewhere.

GEORGE H. FRODSHAM, *Bishop.*

