The AMERICAN JOURNAL *of* ECONOMICS *and* SOCIOLOGY

Published QUARTERLY under grant from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation in the interest of constructive synthesis in the social sciences.

VOLUME 14 OCTOBER, 1954 NUMBER 1

The Turmoil of the World

By FRANCIS NEILSON

THE RESTLESS, PERTURBED SOULS of modern politicians seem to find relief in participating in conferences held in different parts of the world. When anxiety concerning domestic politics frets them, they are glad to get away for a time to meet other people, see their names in other papers, and enjoy the hospitality of other boards. A conference has become part of the routine of diplomatic life. There is, however, a danger of its becoming something of a political and diplomatic habit.

When the system began, it is hard to tell. Of course, conferences were held in classical times, as Thucydides records in *The Peloponnesian War*. In the history of England there are many references to conferences held by popes, kings, and their chief ministers. There was the Field of the Cloth of Gold. But one more memorable was held at Canossa, when Henry IV made submission to Pope Gregory VII.

One that should be remembered by the diplomatists of this generation is that which took place at Vienna in 1815, for the agenda at that conference was not unlike the one perplexing the minds of the men of this time. It concerned the settlement of Europe after the abdication of Napoleon I, and four of the most brilliant political minds of Europe gathered together to map the future of her States. These men were Talleyrand, Metternich, Castlereagh and Stein. With all their knowledge about the conditions of their continent brought to bear upon the governors of States and their rulers, they failed of their object; and not one dreamed that Europe would be torn by revolution before the middle of the century.

The men who participated in the Congress of Vienna were schooled

diplomatists, save perhaps in the case of Castlereagh. Both Talleyrand and Metternich had had years of experience in European courts; and as for Stein, who was perhaps the shrewdest of the lot, he knew Central Europe as if it were his own estate. For students of the present imbroglio, I would recommend two books which contain indispensable information concerning their labors: Algernon Cecil's *Metternich,* and Professor J. R. Seeley's *Life and Times of Stein.* College and university students should read these works if they are to have a proper understanding of the problems that now perplex us.

Another conference held to consider the peace of Europe and the security of her States was held at Berlin in 1870, when all the leading ministers and diplomatists of the governments gathered to make a settlement of the disputes then rife. Bismarck was host on that occasion. The English representatives were Disraeli and Salisbury. The British Ambassador to the Court of Berlin was Lord Odo Russell. Count Andrassy represented Austria; Prince Gorchakov, Russia; and William H. Waddington, France.

As it had been at Vienna, so it was at Berlin, for men of undoubted European experience assembled at a critical period to find a way out of their difficulties with Russia and avert war. There was then no Sir Edward Grey, no Raymond Poincaré, no Bethmann-Hollweg, no Count Berchtold, and certainly no Sazonov. Nationalism, as it is understood today, was no impediment to an understanding of European problems. Under the skillful direction of Bismarck, everything had been planned before the conference met. The details that had to be considered took little time to arrange satisfactorily, and the documents for the setttlement were signed within a month.

It is somewhat disturbing to think of what might have been, if the work and advice of Lord Odo Russell, as Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Court of Berlin had been acceptable to his government. Repeatedly he urged upon Gladstone and Disraeli the necessity of working with Bismarck for the peace of Europe.

In 1881 Russell wrote to Lord Granville:

For ten years have I preached confidence in Bismarck as a means of success in foreign policy, but in vain! I never could overcome the deep-rooted distrust his wish for a cordial understanding with England inspired at home.[1]

Five years later the following resolution was moved in the Commons:

In the opinion of this House it is not just or expedient to embark in war, contract engagements involving grave responsibilities for the nation,

[1] Quoted by F. Neilson in *How Diplomats Make War* (New York 1915), p. 70.

and add territories to the Empire, without the knowledge and consent of Parliament.[2]

It was lost by only four votes.

Thirty years before Russell made his complaint to Granville, Thomas Carlyle wrote:

. . . There are men now current in political society, men of weight though also of wit, who have been heard to say, "That there was but one reform for the Foreign Office,—to set a live coal under it," and with, of course, a fire-brigade which could prevent the undue spread of the devouring element into neighbouring houses, let that reform it! In such odour is the Foreign Office too, if it were not that the Public, opressed and nearly stifled with a mere infinitude of bad odours, neglects this one,—in fact, being able nearly always to avoid the street where it is, *escapes* this one, and (except a passing curse, one in the quarter or so) as good as forgets the existence of it.[3]

The European Mind

ABOUT THE TIME when Russell was at Berlin, John Motley was on his deathbed at Dorchester. He had been the United States Ambassador to Vienna, and somehow when I think of Russell and the work he was engaged upon, Motley comes to mind, and the influence he exerted on the State Department at Washington. Both these men were Europeans in outlook and sympathy. They realized what Germany might become, for Motley had been schooled by Bismarck and knew his mind. Men of this type regarded a consolidated Germany as essential for the peace of Europe. In some respects they were prophets. One has only to read the British documents—the letters that passed between Salisbury and Bismarck—to appreciate how different things would have been for the world, if the British Government could have accepted Bismarck's idea of an alliance. Lord Salisbury wrote to Bismarck in 1887:

I believe that the understanding into which England and the other two Powers are now prepared to enter, will be in complete accordance with her declared policy and will be loyally observed by her. The grouping of States, which has been the work of the last year will be an effective barrier against any possible aggression of Russia (BISMARCK: *'Especially if Turkey joins!'*) and the construction of it will not be among the least services which Your Serene Highness has rendered to the Cause of European peace.[4]

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[3] *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 91; written April 1, 1850.

[4] *Bismarck's Relations with England 1871–1890*, trans. by E. T. S. Dugdale (New York and London, Harper, 1928), p. 355.

It makes one rather sad to think of the situation in which we are now placed and what might have been if the British Government had seen its way to accept Bismarck's policy.

Our trouble today is that there is not a man at the head of affairs who knows the history of Europe and her problems. As for us here, we have no John Motley who was undoubtedly a cultured European, just like many other American gentlemen of that period.

The mind of the nationalist is far too insular to realize—let alone sympathize with—the desires of European people. No one can be more self centered than a nationalist who will deny to his neighbor the very desires and ambitions that he reserves for himself. This policy of grim self-interest has wrecked Europe and is responsible for the turmoil of the world. And, yet, our men of affairs do not understand that it is futile to organize conferences for diplomatists or, indeed, for the panjandrums of the government, so long as each one is fighting for his own interest.

We learned nothing from the extraordinary lessons taught us by France since the close of the First World War. And as our correspondents in Paris have pointed out over and over again, the French people know perfectly well that our interest in Europe is *not* European, and never was. The same opinion is held by her people about our concerns as was held by the heads of European States about England's before the First World War. The diversity of interests of the various States, the geographical position, the customs of the people, and the ambitions of their politicians cannot be learned and understood by men who live and have their being three thousand miles away from her shores.

The same may be said of the British Government. There was only one man in the cabinet during the premiership of Asquith who could be called a European; and he was Richard Haldane. Grey and Churchill would not have passed a fourth-form examination on the history of the States of the Continent.

The business which engaged the attention of the skilled diplomatists at the Congresses of Vienna and Berlin was comparatively simple. Europe and her problems were to be considered, and yet they have failed to secure the States against war. Men of today have the whole world to consider.

The Algeciras Conference

ANOTHER CONFERENCE that should be studied by students of foreign policy was the one that met to consider the status of Morocco. The meeting took place at a small town on the Spanish side of the Strait of Gibraltar.

For the first time, the United States had representatives in attendance, and Henry White and Samuel R. Gummeré put their signatures to the document. The treaty contains 123 articles, covering practically everything of any moment going out of or coming into a State. Indeed, Article LXVII is as follows:

The Conference expresses the hope, subject to the observations submitted to it on this subject, that the export duties on the articles mentioned below may be reduced to the following extent:—

Chick peas	.....20 per cent.
Maize	.....20 " "
Barley	.....50 " "
Wheat	.....34 " "

The real, underlying purpose of the treaty was to exclude Germany from Morocco and to give France and Spain a free field for economic expansion and territorial aggrandizement, but the public was informed that the object was to preserve the integrity of the State of Morocco.

Here is a case of making a treaty for one purpose and, at the same time, in secret articles, violating it. When the secret articles were published, there was consternation among the men of the chancelleries, but the ordinary taxpayer, who was carrying the enormous burden of army and navy expenditure, had not time to read the revelations of perfidy. Yet, everything at Algeciras concerning the public document was done "In the name of God Almighty." This sentence stands on the crown of the very treaty itself.

If, today, there were a man in the Senate or in the House who was a student of diplomatic conferences, he might raise the question of the utility of any one that has taken place since the close of the First World War; and what advantage the American taxpayer has gained from its labors. He might also raise the question of the political morality of those who organized these meetings.

Let me take an example which is pertinent. He might ask: "Did Sir Arthur Nicholson, Permanent Secretary of the British Foreign Office, know, when he took part in the Algeciras Conference, that Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Minister had already given consent to France and Spain to partition the State of Morocco?"

I doubt if he did know. Indeed, it would be a fearful shock if he signed a document in the name of Great Britain to preserve the integrity of the State and the sovereign rights of the Sultan, when he knew that there was a secret treaty made with Britain's consent to permit France and Spain to

take its territory. However that may be, the case of drawing up the Act of Algeciras is in itself an example of creating the conditions that foment wars. I do not know a treaty made by European diplomatists since the close of the First World War, which does not contain the seeds of another one. In this connection, it is only necessary to mention Versailles and Potsdam.

The Breaking of Treaties

IN RECENT YEARS we have heard a great deal about political and diplomatic miscreants who do not respect the provisions of treaties; such treaties, for instance, as those that were formulated at Versailles in 1919. Sir Winston Churchill himself was deeply grieved, nay shocked, at the treaty-breaking practiced by Hitler, and in debates in the House of Commons, many times he expressed his sorrow that anyone should be so depraved as to violate a treaty which was signed by the victim of it at the point of the gun. However, there is no limit in these affairs to the righteous indignation of those who have not hesitated to break treaties when it was policy to do so. Disraeli's remarks, made in the House of Commons, concerning this practice of governments and chancelleries, are still good and might be read with profit today by those who are drawing up charters for the preservation of national interests.

It was not the German Foreign Office that discovered the secret treaties concerning the partition of Morocco. A French newspaper published them, and when it was charged that they had been stolen from the Quai d'Orsay, it was not denied. This took place in November 1911, a few months after the Agadir affair. In February of the next year a debate took place in the French Senate. Several of the members criticized severely the diplomatic methods of the Foreign Office. Baron d'Estournelles de Constant said:

> . . . It was a treaty of friendship with England recognising the freedom of our political action in Morocco and also proclaiming our will to respect the integrity of that country; that was what the public knew and approved. But the public was ignorant that at the same time, by other Treaties and by contradictory clauses hidden from it, the partition of Morocco between Spain and France was prepared, of that Morocco of which we guaranteed the integrity. There existed two irreconcilable French policies in Morocco, that of public arrangements, that is to say, a policy of integrity which was not the true one; and that of secret arrangements postulating a protectorate and the partition of Morocco.[5]

[5] Quoted by E. D. Morel, *Morocco in Diplomacy* (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1912), p. 91.

The "Father of the House," M. Ribot, was even more emphatic in his strictures upon what was revealed in the secret treaties. But no lesson was learned, and so far as Great Britain was concerned, the secret treaties might never have been made known. And yet it was her consent to the partition of the State by Spain and France that was at the bottom of all this trouble, which during the prior turbulent seven years had seen the powers on the verge of war. How wise we are after the disaster! But the wisdom-mood doesn't last long. There are too many events arising in different parts of the world every day of the week to give politicians and diplomatists the opportunity of leisure to understand the mistakes they have made. It is the soldiers, sailors, and airmen who have to pay the terrible penalty for the blunders of their masters. After the end of the First World War, I heard one great general say he did not believe there was a man in the army who knew the real reason why he was fighting. I have met many generals and admirals in my time—American and British—but I cannot remember more than two who, when they were on furlough, took the trouble to find out what the last war was about.

If politicians were put on the pay basis of soldiers and sailors, there would be a different tale to tell. But the legislative business now offers a comfortable career for would-be statesmen. And its attractions are often highly lucrative. Yet, it does seem unreasonable that members of Parliament and Congress run no risk to life or limb when they support a declaration of war. Others do the fighting for them. It is just as well to think of these things, because we have reached the stage when the turmoil of the world is getting out of hand, and diverse interests are causing frictions among the Western Allies, which may precipitate another and greater conflict. Conferences have failed signally, and the caliber of our masters, executive and diplomatic, has reached the nadir of ineptitude.

Conferences and Camouflage

CONFERENCES BECAME the order of the day after the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. It would take too long to mention all the "joy-rides," as they were called, that were necessary to put the treaties into operation. Think of the efforts of Stresemann and Briand! Stresa, Locarno, Washington and London should be remembered, because we heard during the recent Geneva conference that Mr. Eden considered a treaty along the lines of the Locarno pact might be effective in solving the troubles of the Colonial French and the Communists in Viet-Nam. It should be remembered that there was a great organization called the League of Nations brought into being to

consider the disputes between States and to find a way of bringing about an era of peace in Europe.

All these efforts to arrive at decisions, which would tend to solve the difficulties created by the War of 1914, proved to be not only ineffective but utterly useless for the purpose their promoters had in mind. Indeed, the League of Nations became a laughing stock, and no one jeered at it so sardonically as Sir Winston Churchill himself.

Now we have the United Nations, a chattering body that has brought nothing but ridicule upon itself. Surely there have been enough conferences in the quantitative sense, to turn all swords into plowshares.

It is strange that the taxpayer does not wake up to the fact that all these conferences are in the nature of camouflage. They are held, it might be said, to hide the utter incompetency of diplomatists to settle their grievances. The method is another way of diverting the attention of the taxpayers from domestic anxieties; not unlike the advice given by Henry IV to Prince Hal:

> To lead out many to the Holy Land,
> Lest rest and lying still might make them look
> Too near unto my state. Therefore, my Harry,
> Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels. . . .

What our governors would do without such demonstrations must be plain to the thinking man. Imagine a state of affairs when there would be no need for a chancellery! What would we do in this country without a State Department, that is, a State Department as we have known it since 1917? Intervention in other peoples' quarrels has not only loaded us with debt, but has entangled us in world affairs to such an extent that peace has become the dream of a Utopian babbler.

The most extraordinary thing about it is that no one with any influence asks why and how we got into this mess. Such a question put during a war in which we were engaged would be immediately condemned as the utterance of a defeatist. But now, when scarcely anybody has the sense to inquire how it all came about, it is amazing to find the diplomatists at their wits' end in trying to solve their problems by prosecuting the methods that have failed ever since we began to meddle in other peoples' quarrels. Suppose somebody of influence were to say in Congress that we were drawn into the European maelstrom by Great Britain and France, because they feared that, if we remained aloof, we would become the dominant creditor nation of the world and the greatest menace to the industries of European countries.

In the spring of 1917, before Wilson was persuaded to send troops to France, our position as a creditor nation had become impregnable. But we did not know it. When the French sent Joffre and Viviani to this country, and Great Britain sent Balfour and Edward Holden, sensible people expected an early peace, and it was believed by leading British and French clear-headed observers that the Germans were ready to negotiate. Hence, the missions to Wilson. The cajolery of Balfour, and the threat of Holden that America would suffer mightily if Great Britain and France became bankrupt, were sufficient to intimidate the man who had mapped out the Fourteen Points as the basis of a peace.

Then when the end came, our President delivered himself into the hands of Clemenceau, Viviani and Tardieu. On his way to Paris, he stopped at Manchester, where he was received as a god, as one journalist put it. It is on the record that C. P. Scott, the editor of *The Manchester Guardian,* said to him, "Mr. Wilson, you hold Europe in the palm of your hand."

The President looked puzzled, not grasping the significance of the remark. And the amazed Scott turned to a friend and muttered, "He doesn't know it."

Scott was perfectly right. He did not know it, and one has only to read the proceedings of the conference that took place in Paris to understand how right the famous editor was. When the man who had saved Great Britain and France from defeat returned to America, he learned about the secret treaties his friends had made during the war, and before Congress he admitted that neither the British nor the French deputations that came here had informed him of the existence of them.

In St. Louis he told the people, "This war, in its inception, was a commercial and industrial war. It was not a political war."

At St. Paul he made the following announcement: "The German bankers and the German merchants and the German manufacturers did not want this war. They were making conquest of the world without it, and they knew it would spoil their plans."

If anybody desires to know why and how we got into this mess and cannot get out of it, all he has to do is to read the story of Woodrow Wilson, as it unfolds after March, 1917. Whether this knowledge would make the unfortunate taxpayer wise enough to protest to his representative or senator, or even to the President, no one can tell. Many men would say, "It's too late, the damage is done."

Pretexts for War

WHO NOW, IN THIS TURMOIL into which the world has been thrown takes the trouble to reconsider the reasons for committing people to war? Not one case of conflict will bear examination of the statements made by the heads of government. The pretexts have been so far removed from the real motives that have actuated them that they may be placed in the category of yarns which deserve contempt.

Who remembers the case of the *Sussex,* and the war-like frame of mind of our legislative wise-men who assembled in February, 1917, to hear the address of Woodrow Wilson? If it were possible to canvass the men in the Senate and the House, I doubt very much whether one could be found who could tell an inquirer much about it. It was the pretext, the chief one, used by the President as a *casus belli.*

The *Sussex* was a cross-channel steamer that was not following the route prescribed by the British Admiralty for merchant ships. Wilson said that she was sunk by a German submarine and that American lives were lost. This was not true. She was not sunk; indeed, she was towed into Boulogne. And no American lives were lost! The wretched legislators—at least ninety per cent of them—rose in their wrath and gave the President power to send American lads to the European trenches.

No one pretends to tell us why a war is necessary simply because foolhardy people take the risk of crossing the English Channel from Dieppe, when mines and submarines are known to be in the waters round about. It was the same with the *Lusitania* in the spring of 1915. Americans were warned not to sail on the vessel, but they took the risk. I lost a sister who had been warned several times of what might happen to the vessel. The ship had entered the port of Liverpool the previous voyage, flying the American flag, and captains in the port the last time she sailed west predicted that she would never return.

Suppose a James Reed or a Robert LaFollette had risen after Wilson's speech and called upon his colleagues to give a little more consideration to what a declaration of war might entail. One or the other might have pointed out that there was some doubt about the sinking of the *Sussex,* and it might be wise to learn a little more about it. For that event happened eleven months before Wilson used it as a pretext.

Furthermore, suppose they had been clairvoyants and, through some strange process, knew the nature of the secret treaties for the division of spoils which had been made by Great Britain, France, and Italy. Suppose they had asked Congress to demand the information about them, which

neither Balfour nor Viviani gave to the President. Would even that belligerent Congress have committed the American people to war to help gather the territorial fruits provided for in the secret treaties? I doubt it, for the United States was not to be offered the bite of a single apple. She was to pay for the cost in the lives of her men sacrificed upon the altar of Mammon, the god of ill-gotten gains.

These things we should keep in mind, for legislators are just as easily taken in as Simple Simon himself. They are so wedded to the idea that their success depends upon preferment and patronage of their executive superiors that they find it hard to resolve to be themselves, independent thinkers acting in the interest solely of the people who find a living for them.

The Neutrality of Belgium Re-examined

TAKE ANOTHER CASE of the ineptitude of members of a legislature. In the last week of July, 1914, the British Cabinet had to find a reason for committing the nation to war. We know from the works written by Lord Loreburn, former Lord Chancellor, and Lloyd George that only the inner cabinet knew of the country's understanding with France. It had been kept secret from the House of Commons for eight years.

When questions were put to Asquith and Grey by members about secret commitments in case of war, they lied. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary assured the House several times that they were under no obligation to send a military force across the Channel to support the left flank of the French. As the crisis grew in gravity and that fatal week drew to its close, the inner cabinet realized that, when the cannon began to roar, Great Britain would be without a reason for entering it.

Therefore, it was necessary to find a pretext, which was discovered in what was called the Belgian treaty of 1839. As Lloyd George tells us in his *Memoirs,* this was not decided upon until Sunday, August 2nd.

There were perhaps only three men in the House of Commons who knew that these were not Belgian treaties; that they were given to the Netherlands, and that there was no obligation on the part of Britain alone to defend Belgian territory. I cannot believe that Asquith and Haldane did not know it had been decided in the days of Lord Salisbury that, in the case of a war between France and Germany, Great Britain could not prohibit the traversing of Belgian soil by the German army.

Ninety-five per cent of the members of the House accepted the statement of Grey, made on August 3rd, but only ten or a dozen remembered the

denials that had been given to questions by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, put by those who had very good reason to think that Great Britain was secretly tied to France and Russia.

In February, 1915, a London paper published a full account of a controversy that took place in 1887 upon the so-called Belgian treaties. Great Britain at that time was in a humiliating position, for the Germans were carrying all before them. And, perhaps, it was too much to expect that members who believed in Grey's statement about Belgium would study the case and realize that he had been fooled by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary; that the reason given for joining France in the conflict was the veriest pretext.

The revelations concerning the decisions of 1887 were startling. It was then decided (1) that England is under no guarantee whatever except such as is common to the other signatories—Austria, France, Russia, and Germany; (2) that the guarantee was not specifically of the neutrality of Belgium at all; and (3) that it was given not to Belgium but to the Netherlands.

When those who realize what the turmoil of the world means and what dangers confront us, it seems to be only an act of preservation of a State and its people for politicians to learn why and how the world has been turned upside down owing to the utter ignorance of legislative bodies. It is not this State nor that State, this dictator or that dictator, who is to be singled out for blame. It is the people themselves who will persist, generation after generation, in ignoring the history of these conflicts. They remain steeped in their own stupidity, and repeat time and time again the blunders of their political masters, which make for poverty and create the conditions upon which dictators rise to power.

Think of the consequences of that first week of August, 1914, and what has taken place since the Treaty of Versailles! Of course, it is a sheer waste of time to think of what might have been. If the members of the House of Commons had known at the time of the Agadir crisis of Great Britain's secret understandings with France and Russia, there would have been no war. These conflicts raised the Frankensteins of Bolshevism and totalitarianism.

Port Washington, N. Y.

> *A people which in its corporate capacity abolishes the natural relation between efficiency and reward could not possibly survive. Either it will expose itself to . . . slow decay, or it will be conquered and absorbed. . . .*
>
> MAX HIRSCH