

"WEAK NATIONS HAVE NOT THE SAME RIGHT TO LIVE"—VON BERNHARDI

JAMES BRYCE ANALYZES THIS AMAZING DOCTRINE

Theory of Militarism as Outlined by German Is Discussed by Eminent English Statesman and Its Weaknesses Exposed.

SCHEME OF SELF-PRESERVATION IS DISCOUNTED

By Viscount (James) Bryce.

(From the Philadelphia Public Ledger, London, Oct. 19.—The great war has had some unexpected consequences. It has called the attention of the world to the doctrine of self-preservation, which strikes at the root of all international morality as well as of all international law, and which threatens a return to primitive savagery which every tribe was wont to plunder and massacre its neighbors.

These doctrines may be found set forth in the widely circulated book of General von Bernhardi, entitled "Germany and the Next War," published in 1911, and professing to be mainly based on the teachings of the famous professor of history, Heinrich von Treitschke. To readers in other countries, and I trust to most readers in Germany also, they will appear to be an outburst of militarism run mad, a product of a brain intoxicated by love of war and by superheated national self-consciousness.

They would have deserved little notice much less re-attention, but for one deplorable fact, viz., that action has recently been taken by the government of a great nation (though, as we hope and trust, without the approval of its nation), which is consistent with them and seems to imply belief in their soundness.

This fact is the conduct of the German imperial government in the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, which Prussia, as well as Great Britain and France, had solemnly guaranteed by treaty (made in 1839 and renewed in 1870) in invading Belgium when she refused to allow her armies to pass through France, the other belligerent, had explicitly promised not to enter Belgium, and in treating Belgian cities and people against whom she had no cause of quarrel with a harshness unprecedented in the history of modern European warfare.

Acting on Bernhardi's Doctrines.

What are these doctrines? I do not for a moment attribute them to the learned class in Germany, for whom I have profound respect, recognizing their immense services to science and learning; nor to the bulk of the civil administration, a body whose capacity and uprightiness are known to all the world, and to whom I am sure all the people generally. That the latter hold no such views appears from Bernhardi's own words, for he repeatedly complains and denounces the tendencies of his fellow-countrymen. (Note—See pages 10-14 of the English translation and note the phrase: "Aspirations for peace seem to poison the soul of the German people.") Nevertheless, the fact that the action referred to, which these doctrines seem to have prompted, and which cannot be decried as a mere act of German policy, is taken and has thus brought into this war Great Britain, whose interests and feelings made her desire to do them and to all that they involve.

I certainly have no prejudice in the matter, for I have been one of those who, for many years, have promoted good relations between the German and the English peoples, that ought to be friendly, and that never before had been enemies; and in the beginning of August last that between them at least there would be no war, because Belgium neutrality would be respected. For what I am sure, the English and German friends of peace sought to maintain good feeling. We had hoped, as some leading German statesmen have recently said, that the beginning of the war might enable Great Britain, with the co-operation of the United States, our closest friend, to militate against the long antagonism of Germany and of the French, with whom we were already on good terms, and to so improve their relations as to secure the general peace of Europe.

Motives Appear Uncertain.

Into the causes which frustrated these efforts and so suddenly brought on this war I will not enter. Many others have dealt with them; moreover, the facts, at least in England, seem to me to be clear, and as the documents seem to prove them to be, appear not to be known to the German people, and the motives of the chief actors are not yet fully ascertained.

One thing, however, I can confidently declare: It was neither commercial rivalry nor jealousy of Germany, nor the desire to bring Great Britain into the field, nor was there any hatred in the British people for the German people, nor any wish to break their power. The leading political thinkers and historians of England had given hearty sympathy to the efforts made by the German people, from 1815 to 1866 and 1870, to attain to a position of equality with the French, with the parallel efforts of the Italians. The two nations, German and British, were of kindred race and linked by many ties. To the German people even now we feel no sort of enmity. In both countries there were doubtless some persons who desired war and whose writings, apparently designed to provoke it, did not misrepresent general national sentiment; but these persons were, as I believe, a small minority in both countries.

Bernhardi's Fraze of War.

I turn to the doctrine set forth by von Bernhardi and apparently accepted by the military caste to which he belongs. Briefly summed up, they are as follows: His own words are used except when they are necessary to abridge a lengthened argument: "War is in itself a good thing. It is a biological necessity of the first importance." (P. 13.) "The inevitableness, the idealism, the blessing of war as an indispensable and stimulating war of development must be repeatedly emphasized." (P. 37.) "War is the greatest factor in the furtherance of culture and power. Efforts to secure peace are extraordinarily detrimental as soon as they can influence politics." (P. 28.) "Fortunately these efforts can never attain their ultimate objects in a world

MIGHT MAKES RIGHT ASSERTS VON BERNHARDI

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"The blessing of war as a stimulating law of development must be repeatedly emphasized."

"War is the greatest factor in the furtherance of culture and power. Efforts to secure peace are extraordinarily detrimental as soon as they can influence politics."

"Efforts directed towards the abolition of war are not only foolish, but absolutely immoral and must be stigmatized as unworthy of the human race."

"Courts of arbitration are pernicious delusions. The whole idea represents a presumptuous encroachment on natural laws of development, which can only lead to the most disastrous consequences for humanity generally."

"The maintenance of peace never can be the goal of a policy. Efforts for peace would, if they attained their goal, lead to a general degeneration as happens everywhere in nature where the struggle for existence is eliminated."

"Huge armaments are in themselves desirable. They are the most necessary precondition of our national health."

"The state's highest moral duty is to increase its power."

"The state is justified in making conquests whenever its own advantage seems to require additional territory."

"Self-preservation is the state's highest ideal and justifies whatever action it may take if that action be the sole judge of the morality of its action. It is, in fact, above morality, because morality is a human creation, or, in other words, recognized rights (i. e., treaty rights) are never absolute rights; they are of human origin and, therefore, impermanent and changeable. There are conditions in which they do not correspond to the actual truth of things. In this case infringement of the right appears morally justified."

"In fact, the state is a law unto itself. Weak nations have not the same right to live as powerful and vigorous nations."

"Any nation in favor of collective humanity outside the limits of the state and nationality is impossible."

ors, claiming her by right of the strongest; they came on the faith of a legal title which, however, fantastic it may seem to us today, the Italians themselves, and indeed, the whole of Latin Christendom, admitted. And, the greatest and most patriotic of Italians, welcomed the Emperor Henry VII into Italy, and wrote a famous book to prove his claims, vindicating them on the ground that law and right and peace, the noblest title which these emperors chose to bear was that of Emperor of the World.

In the Middle Ages, when men were always fighting, they appreciated the blessings of war much less than does today. Bernhardi, and they value peace, not war, as a means to civilization and culture. They are not learned in the school of Treitschke that peace means decadence and war is the true civilizing influence.

The first great thoughts that brought man into true relation with God came from a tiny people inhabiting a country smaller than Denmark. The religion of treaties; but there are other considerations affecting those states which ought to appeal to men in all countries, to strong nations as well as to weak nations.

The small states whose absorption is now threatened have been a potent and useful—perhaps the most potent and useful—factor in the advance of civilization. It is in them and by them that most of what is most precious in religion, in philosophy, in literature, in science and in art has been produced.

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The Right Honorable Viscount James Bryce, Formerly Ambassador from Great Britain to the United States.

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In modern Europe what do we not owe to little Switzerland, lighting the torch of freedom 600 years ago and keeping it alight through all the centuries when despotic monarchies held the rest of the European continent? And what to free Holland, with her great men of learning and her painters surpassing those of all other countries save Italy? So the small Scandinavian nations have given to the world famous men of science, from Linnaeus downward, and poets like Tegner and Bjornson; scholars like Madvig; dauntless explorers like Fridtjof Nansen. England had in the age of Shakes-

peare, Bacon and Milton a population little larger than that of Bulgaria today. The United States in the days of Washington and Franklin and Jefferson and Hamilton and Marshall counted fewer inhabitants than Denmark or Greece. In the most brilliant generations of German literature and thought, the age of Kant and Lessing and Goethe, of Hegel and Schopenhauer and Fichte, there was no real German state at all, but a congress of principalities and free cities—Independent centers of intellectual life in which stood the scientific production of the two succeeding generations have raised, just as Great Britain also, with eight times the population of the year 1600, has had no more Shakespeares or Mil-

MILITARY SCIENTIST IS REFUTED BY ENGLISHMAN

Bryce Points Out the Brilliant Achievements of the Small State in All Periods of the World's History in Answer to Arguments of German.

UNITY THAT NOW EXISTS IN WORLD IS RECALLED

him go. "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht. World history is world tribunal." History declares that no nation, however great, is entitled to impose its type of civilization on other nations, even the autocratic or Anglo-Saxon, is entitled to claim the leadership of humanity. Each people has in its time contributed to the world's civilization, and each, in its own way, and the world is far richer thereby than if any one race, however gifted, had established its permanent ascendancy.

Of the Anglo-Saxon race do not claim for ourselves any more than we admit in others, a right to dominate by force or to impose our own type of civilization on other peoples. Perhaps we have not that assured conviction of our superiority which the school of von Bernhardi expressed for the Teutons of north Germany. We know how much we owe, even within our own islands, to the Celtic race; and, though we must admit that peoples of Anglo-Saxon stock have, like the Celts, made some mistakes and sometimes abused their strength, let it be remembered what have been the latest acts they have done abroad.

Culture Decayed in Imperial Rome.

No fiction is more palpably contradicted by history than that relied on by the school to which von Bernhardi belongs, that the Roman empire, magnificent and artistic, flourishes best in great military states. The decay of art and literature in the Roman world began just when Rome, as an empire, was at its height. The great and ordered state. The opposite view would be much nearer the truth, though one must admit that no general theory regarding the relation of art and letters to governments and political conditions has ever yet been proved to be sound. The knowledge of current history may be estimated by the fact that he assumes (1) that trade rivalry makes war probable between Great Britain and the Indian princes and peoples are likely to revolt against Great Britain should she be involved in war, and (2) that the extinction of the minor languages to take such an opportunity of severing their connection with her.

The world is already too uniform and is becoming more uniform every day. A few dead languages, a few types of civilization, a few types of character, are spreading out from the seven or eight greatest states and extinguishing weaker languages, forms, and types. Although great states are stronger and more populous, their peoples are not necessarily more gifted, and the extinction of the minor languages and types would be a misfortune for the world's future development.

We may not be able to arrest the forces which seem to be making for that extinction, but we certainly ought not to strengthen them. Rather we ought to maintain and defend the smallest of them, and to support the weaker states which were delivered from the tyranny of sultans like Abdul Hamid did the intellect of Europe welcome the successive European liberations of Greece, Serbia, and Rumania. It is in the hope that these countries would in time develop out of their present crude conditions new types of culture, centers of productive intellectual life.

General von Bernhardi invokes history as the ultimate court of appeal. He appeals to Caesar; to Caesar to let

him go. "Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht. World history is world tribunal." History declares that no nation, however great, is entitled to impose its type of civilization on other nations, even the autocratic or Anglo-Saxon, is entitled to claim the leadership of humanity. Each people has in its time contributed to the world's civilization, and each, in its own way, and the world is far richer thereby than if any one race, however gifted, had established its permanent ascendancy.

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Praises American Altruism.

The United States has twice withdrawn their troops from Cuba which they could have easily retained; they have resisted all temptations to annex any part of the territory of Mexico, in which functions of government, the citizens were for three years in constant danger. Great Britain also six years ago restored the amplest self-government to the African republics, the public, having already agreed that the maintenance on equal terms of the Dutch language; and the citizens of these republics, which were in arms against the Dutch, spontaneously came forward to support her by arms under the gallant leader who then commanded the Boers; they have not only retained the territories of those princes, allowing them to adopt heirs when the successors of their own families failed, and leaving them as much as possible of the original functions of government, but spontaneously come forward to support her by arms under the gallant leader who then commanded the Boers; they have not only retained the territories of those princes, allowing them to adopt heirs when the successors of their own families failed, and leaving them as much as possible of the original functions of government, but spontaneously come forward to support her by arms under the gallant leader who then commanded the Boers; 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