

**GERMANY, FRANCE,
RUSSIA, & ISLAM.
WITH A FOREWORD BY
GEO. HAVEN PUTNAM**

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J. L. Smith

Germany, France Russia, and Islam

By

Heinrich von Treitschke

*Translated into English
for the First Time*

With a Foreword by
Geo. Haven Putnam

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FOREWORD

THE following essays were brought into print between the dates of 1871 and 1895. They cover a varied group of subjects, but they are alike characteristic of the method of thought of the author and of the assured conclusiveness of his opinions. Treitschke does not make space for historic doubts or probabilities. He has the satisfaction of having arrived at final opinions in regard to actual conditions, while his predictions for the future are almost as assured as his descriptions of the present. The first essay in point of date was written in 1871 while the provisions of the settlement with France were being put into shape by the authorities. It would hardly be accurate to say that these provisions were under consideration with the people of Germany for, under the conditions existing, the people had very little to say in regard to the terms of the treaty. It is possible, however, that the views of Bismarck and Moltke (views which were accepted with little question by the old Emperor) may have been influenced, or at least have been strengthened, by the counsel of so good an advocate of Imperialism as Treitschke. In any case, the adjustment finally arrived at was

in substantial accord with Treitschke's recommendations. Treitschke phrases the German claim as follows:

The sense of justice to Germany demands the lessening of France. Every intelligent man sees that that military nation cannot be forgiven, even for the economic sacrifices of the war, on the payment of the heaviest indemnity in money. Why was it that, before the declaration of the war, and before a single German newspaper had demanded the restitution of the plunder, the anxious cry rang through Alsace and Lorraine, "The dice are to be thrown to settle the destiny of our provinces"? Because the awakened conscience of the people felt what penalty would have to be paid in the interests of justice by the disturber of the peace of nations.

The term "disturber of the peace" is one that might properly be recalled in 1914.

Says Treitschke, again indulging in this case in prophecy which we may at this time feel not to have been well founded:

The statesmen of the present day, whenever they have realized the altered equilibrium of the Powers, will feel that the strengthening of the boundaries of Germany contributes to the security of the peace of the world. We are a peaceful nation. The traditions of the Hohenzollerns, the constitution of our Army, the long and difficult work before us in the upbuilding of our united German State, forbid the abuse of our warlike power.

Europe might well wish that this counsel of the Imperial historian had been more thoroughly followed in the twentieth century.

In regard to the rightfulness of securing control of the provinces, Treitschke writes as follows:

In view of our obligation to secure the peace of the world, who will venture to object that the people of Alsace and Lorraine do not want to belong to us? . . . These territories are ours by the right of the sword, and we shall dispose of them in virtue of a higher right—the right of the German nation, which will not permit its lost children to remain strangers to the German Empire. We Germans, who know Germany and France, know better than these unfortunates themselves what is good for the people of Alsace, who have remained under the misleading influence of their French connection outside the sympathies of new Germany. Against their will, we shall restore them to their true selves.

There is a naïveté in the admission that the people of the “lost provinces” have no desire to come into the family fold of Germany. The higher German wisdom knew forty-four years ago what was best for these people just as it knows to-day what is best for the people of Belgium who are, in like manner, being taken into the “kindly” fold of the German Empire.

The following reference to France indicates that the assumption of a superiority of German civilization is not a discovery of the twentieth century:

They [the French] have felt the weight of our sword, and we challenge the whole world to say which of the two combatants bore himself with the greater manliness, uprightness, and modesty. At all times the subjection of a German race to France has been an unhealthy thing; to-day it is an offence against the reason of History—a vassalship of free men to half-educated barbarians.

With reference to Treitschke's claim, which was confirmed as the claim of Germany, that the appropriation of Alsace and Lorraine constituted a "restitution" of territory and of peoples that had been stolen from Germany, it may be in order to ask whether there does not apply, or whether there ought not to apply, to issues between nations as to those between individuals, some statute of limitations? A period of one hundred years, for instance, in which time three generations of men have come into activity, might properly be accepted, under a common-sense code of international relations, as sufficiently long to bar out grievances or appropriations that were back of the birth of the great-grandfathers of living men. If in the civilized relations of states, for which the world is now hoping, some such principle is accepted, an important portion of the texts, or the pretexts, for aggressive wars, will have been removed. It is in any case a dangerous doctrine for a Prussian to propagate that there is no time in the future in which the status of territory can be considered as fixed. If there was good foundation for the claim

made by Prussia in 1871 that France must be held responsible for making restitution for the "robberies" of Louis XIV, question might well be raised as to the propriety of the restitution by Prussia of the Silesian provinces appropriated by Frederick the Great, and of the territories of Schleswig-Holstein and Hanover "annexed" under King William I. It would have been wiser if the Prussian historian and the Prussian diplomat of the time had left the word "restitution" out of their documents and had let the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine rest on the simple fact of desire and of conquest.

Treitschke makes frank admission of the fact now known to history when he says:

We owe it to the clear-sighted audacity of Count Bismarck that this war was begun at the right time—that the Court of the Tuileries was not allowed the welcome respite which would have permitted it to complete the web of its treacherous devices. . . . The war began as a work of clear and statesmanlike calculation.

Treitschke was clear-sighted enough to understand that this war had not been forced upon Germany by France, but was the result of the definite scheme of Bismarck.

Treitschke emphasizes, and with good historic grounds, the terrible and stupid barbarities committed by the armies of Louis XIV in certain towns and provinces of Germany. It would be