

# THE PEACE CONFERENCE

## Record of a Month's Proceedings at Paris, Introduced by Premier Lloyd George's Official Summary

[PERIOD ENDED APRIL 18, 1919]

*David Lloyd George, the Premier of Great Britain, in an address to the House of Commons on April 16, reviewed the decisions of the Peace Conference so far as they could be made public at that time. His statement was the only official declaration regarding the proceedings up to the time this issue of CURRENT HISTORY went to press, and it is presented herewith as an authoritative introduction to the magazine's own account of the month's developments at Paris. The doings of the Conference during March and April were not made public, and though many reports of agreements were published from time to time, most of these were not confirmed officially and hence have been excluded from the article that follows Lloyd George's summary. The British Premier said:*

THE task with which the peace delegates have been confronted is indeed a gigantic one. No conference that ever assembled in the history of the world has been confronted with problems of such variety, of such perplexity, of such magnitude, and of such gravity. The Congress of Vienna was the nearest approach to it. It had to settle the affairs of Europe. It took eleven months. But the problems of the Congress of Vienna, great as they were, sink into insignificance compared with those that we have to settle at the Paris Conference.

It is not one continent that is engaged. Every continent is affected. With very few exceptions, every country in Europe has been in this war. Every country in Asia is affected by the war except Tibet and Afghanistan. There is not a square mile of Africa which has not been engaged in the war in one way or another. Almost the whole of the nations of America are in the war. In the far Southern Seas, islands have been captured and hundreds of thousands of men have gone to fight in this great struggle. There has never been in the whole history of the globe anything to compare with this.

Ten new States have sprung into existence. Some of them are independent, some of them seem dependent, some of them may be protectorates; and, at any rate, although we may not define

their boundaries, we must give indications of them. Boundaries of fourteen countries have to be recast. That will give some idea of the difficulties of a purely territorial character that have engaged our attention.

But there are problems equally great, equally important, not of a territorial character, but all affecting the peace of the world, all affecting the well-being of men, all affecting the destiny of the human race, and every one of them of a character where, if you make a blunder, humanity may have to pay.

Armament, economic questions of commerce and trade, questions of international waterways and railways, the question of indemnities—not an easy one—and not one that you can settle by telegrams. [Referring to a telegram sent to him by 370 members of Parliament asking that Germany be required to pay the cost of the war.] International arrangements for labor, practically never attempted before—a great world scheme—have been adopted.

And there is that great organization, the great experiment—an experiment, but one upon which the hope of the world for peace will hang—the Society of Nations.

All of them and each of them separately would occupy months, and a blunder might precipitate universal war. It may be near or it may be distant, and all the nations, almost every nation on

earth, is engaged in consideration of these problems.

### WORKING UNDER PRESSURE

We were justified in taking some time. In fact, I don't mind saying that it would have been imperative in some respects that we should take more time but for one fact, and that is, that we are setting up a machinery that is capable of readjusting and correcting possible mistakes—and that is why the League of Nations, instead of wasting time, has saved time, and we have to shorten our labors, work crowded hours, long and late, because while we were trying to build we saw in many lands the foundations of society crumbling into dust. We had to make haste.

I venture to say that no body of men have worked harder and that no body of men ever worked with better heart. I doubt whether any body of men has worked under greater difficulties. Stones were crackling on the roof and crashing through the windows, and sometimes wild men were screaming through keyholes. [This referred to the attacks on him by the Northcliffe newspapers.] When enormous issues are dependent upon it, you require calm deliberation, and I ask for it. I ask for it for the rest of the journey, because the journey is not at an end. It is full of perils—perils for this country, perils for all lands, perils for the people throughout the world.

I beg that at any rate men who are doing their best should be left in peace to do it, or that other men should be sent there. There are difficulties rather more trying to the temper than to the judgment, but there are intrinsic difficulties of an extraordinary character.

You are dealing with a multitude of nations, most of them with a problem of its own, each and every one of them with a different point of view, even where the problems are common, looking from different angles at questions, and sometimes, perhaps, with different interests. And it requires all the tact and all the patience and all the skill that we can command to prevent the different interests from conflicting.

I want the House and country to bear

that in mind. I believe that we have surmounted these difficulties, but it has not been easy. There are questions which have almost imperiled the peace of Europe while we were sitting there.

I should like to put each member of this House through an examination. I am certain I could not have passed it. Before I went to the Peace Conference, I had never heard of Teschen, but it very nearly produced an angry conflict between two allied States, and we had to try and settle the affairs of Teschen. And there are many questions of that kind where missions have been sent and where we have got to settle differences in order to get on with the different problems of the war.

Those questions are of importance to small States, but it was the quarrels of the small States that made the great war. It was the differences of the Balkans, I believe, that disturbed Europe, created an atmosphere of unrest which began the trouble, roused the military temper, and I am not at all sure that it did not incite the blood lust.

One of the features of the present situation is that Central Europe is falling into small States. The greatest care must be taken lest causes of future unrest be created by the settlement which we make. In addition, we have before us a complete break-up of three ancient empires, Russia, Turkey, and Austria.

### COMPLEX RUSSIAN PROBLEM

I have heard very simple remedies produced on both sides regarding Russia. Some say: "Use force." Some say: "Make peace." It is not as easy as all that. It is one of the most complex problems ever dealt with by any body of men. One difficulty is that there is no Russia. Siberia, the Don region, and the Caucasus have broken off; and then there is some organization controlling Central Russia. But there is no body of men that can say it is the Government for the whole of Russia.

Apart from all questions whether you can, under any circumstances, recognize the Bolshevik Government, you could not apart from this question recognize it as the de facto Government of Russia, because it is not, and there is no other

Government you could call the de facto Government of Russia.

You have got a vast country in a state of complete confusion and anarchy. There is no authority that extends over the whole land. It is just like a volcano which is still in furious eruption, and the best you can do is to provide security for those who are dwelling on the lava that it may not scorch other lands.

It is very easy to say about Russia, "Why do not you do something?" To begin with, let me say that there is no question of recognition. It was never proposed, never discussed, for the reasons I have given. I can give two or three more. There is no Government representing the whole of Russia. The Bolshevik Government has committed crimes against allied subjects and has made it impossible to recognize it even as a civilized Government. And the third reason is that it is at this moment attacking our friends in Russia.

What is the alternative? Does anyone propose military intervention? I want you to examine it carefully and candidly before any individual commits his conscience to such an enterprise. I want you to realize what it means. First of all, there is the fundamental principle of foreign policy in this country that you never interfere with the internal affairs of other countries. Whether Russia is Czarist, Republican, Menshevist, or Bolshevik, whether it is reactionary or revolutionary, whether it follows one set of people or another, that is a matter for the Russian people themselves.

#### WARNING ON INTERVENTION

The people of this Government thoroughly disapproved of the Czarist autocracy, its principles, methods, and corruption. But it was a question for Russia itself. And we certainly disagree fundamentally with all the principles upon which is founded the present Russian experiment, with its horrible consequences—far-reaching bloodshed, confusion, ruin, and horror. That does not justify us in committing this country to a gigantic military enterprise in order to improve conditions in Russia.

Let me speak in all solemnity and with a great sense of responsibility. Russia

is a country that is very easy to invade but very difficult to conquer. It has not been conquered by a foreign foe, though it has been successfully invaded many times. It is a country very easy to get into, but very difficult to get out of.

You have only to look at what has happened within the last few years to the Germans. They captured millions of Russian prisoners, taking many guns. The Russians had no ammunition, and there was barely any one to resist them. And at last the Russian armies fled, leaving their guns in the field. Neither M. Kerensky nor any of his successors could get together 10,000 disciplined men; and yet the Germans to the last moment, while their front was broken in France and their country was menaced with invasion, had to keep a million men in Russia. They had entangled themselves in the morass and could not get out of it. Let that be a warning at times when we are told that the Bolshevik Army is comparatively few and that we can conquer Russia. You would be surprised at the military advice given to us as to the number of men that would be required. And I should like to know where they are to come from.

Supposing you had them, that you gathered overwhelming armies and conquered Russia, what manner of Government are you going to set up there? You must set up a Government that the people want. Does anybody know what Government they would ask for? And if it is a Government we do not like, are we to reconquer Russia till we get a Government we do like?

Let me give another illustration. We have an army of occupation now and I know what it costs. You cannot immediately leave Russia until you restore order, and that will take a long time. Has any one reckoned what an army of occupation would cost in Russia?

The Rhine is expensive, yet it is not so far from Britain. But Russia, with its long line of communications, its deficient transports, its inadequate resources! I have read criticisms in this House where the House showed a natural desire to control expenditures in this country on railways and canals. My right honorable friend with all his energy could not spend

in a quarter of a century as much money on railways and canals as in a single year on a military enterprise in Russia.

I share the horror for Bolshevist teaching, but I would rather leave Russia Bolshevist until she sees her way out of it than to see Britain bankrupt. That is the surest road to Bolshevism in Britain.

#### WHY KOLCHAK WAS SUPPORTED

I only want to put quite frankly to the House my earnest conviction that if we assume military intervention in Russia it would be the greatest act of stupidity that any Government could possibly do. But, then, if that is the case, why do you support Kolchak and Denikin and Khar-koff? I will tell the House with the same frankness.

When the Brest-Litovsk treaty was signed there were large territories of population in Russia that would have neither hand nor part in the shameful act, and they revolted against the Government that signed it. And let me say this—they raised arms at our instigation, and largely at our expense. It was a sound military policy. Had it not been for these organizations which we improvised, the Germans would have secured all the resources which would have enabled them to break the blockade. They would have got through to the grain and minerals of the Urals and the oils of the Caucasus, and, in fact, they would have been supplied with almost every essential commodity of which the four or five years of rigid blockade had deprived them.

Bolshevism threatened to impose by force of arms its domination on those populations which had revolted against it. They were organized at our request. If we, as soon as they had served our purpose and had taken all the risks, had said, "Thank you, we are exceedingly obliged to you. You have served our purpose. We no longer need you. Now let the Bolsheviki go their way," we should have been mean and thoroughly unworthy.

As long as they stand there, with the evident support of the populations behind them—where there are populations, like those in Siberia and in the

Don and elsewhere who are opposed to Bolshevism—they are offering a real resistance. Since we asked them to take this stand, which contributed largely to the triumph of the Allies, it is our business to stand by our allies.

#### RUSSIA MUST SAVE HERSELF

We are not sending troops, we are supplying munitions, because if Russia is to be redeemed she must be redeemed by her own sons, and all they ask is that they should be supplied with the necessary arms to fight for their own protection and their own freedom. In lands where the Bolsheviki are antipathetic to the feeling of the population, I do not in the least regard it as a departure from our fundamental policy not to interpose in the internal affairs of any land that we should support General Denikin, Admiral Kolchak, and General Khar-koff.

What are we doing next? Our policy is what I called "to arrest the flow of lava"—that is, to prevent the eruption of Bolshevism into allied lands. For that reason we are organizing all the forces of the allied countries bordering on the Bolshevist territory, from the Baltic to the Black Sea—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania. There is no doubt that those populations are anti-Bolshevist.

The Bolsheviki may menace them or not. Whether they do or not, we shall be ready for any attempt to overrun Europe by force.

That is our policy, but we do want peace in Russia. The world will not be pacified as long as Russia is torn and rent by civil war. We made our effort (I make no apology for it)—an effort to make peace among the warring sections, not by recognizing anybody, but by inducing them to come together with a view of setting up some authority in Russia which would be acceptable to the whole of the Russian people and which the Allies could recognize as the Government of that great empire.

We insisted that it was necessary that they should cease fighting. But with one accord, I regret to say, they refused to accede to this essential condition. Therefore the attempt was not crowned

with success. The Soviet Republic would not accede to the request that it should cease fighting. On the contrary, they suggested that we were doing it purely because our friends were getting the worst of it.

I do not despair of a solution in time. There are factors in the situation even now which are promising. Reliable information which we have received indicates that while the Bolsheviki are apparently growing in strength Bolshevism itself is rapidly on the wane. It is breaking down before the relentless pressure of economic facts.

### NO TIME TO INTERVENE

This process must inevitably continue. They cannot carry on a great country upon such methods. When Bolshevism, as we know it, and as Russia to her sorrow has known it, disappears, then the time will come for another effort at re-establishing peace in Russia. But the time is not yet. We must have patience and we must have faith.

You are dealing with a nation which, after being misgoverned for centuries, has been defeated and trampled to the ground, largely through the corruption, inefficiency, and treachery of its Governments. Its losses have been colossal. All that largely accounts for the frenzy that has seized upon a great people. That is the reason why the nation is going through the untold horrors of a fanatic and lunatic experiment.

But there are unmistakable signs that Russia is emerging from the fever, and when the time comes, when she is once more sane and calm and normal, we will make peace in Russia. It is idle now to say that the world is at peace. \* \* \*

There are men of all nationalities constantly going to Russia and coming back with assertions, but we have had no approaches of any sort or kind. I have only heard reports that others have got proposals which they assumed came from authoritative quarters, but these have never been brought before the Peace Conference by any member of that Conference, and therefore we have not considered any. \* \* \* There is some suggestion that an American mission came back. It is not for me to judge the

value of those communications, but if the President of the United States had attached any value to them he would have brought them before the Conference, and he certainly did not.

This Russian situation is a question of the first magnitude and great complexity, but on this I am clear. I do entreat the House of Commons and the country not to contemplate the possibility of another great war. We have had quite enough of fighting.

### GENERAL PEACE TERMS

I should say something about the general terms of peace. After a long discussion, not an hour of which was wasted, we have arrived at a complete understanding on all the great fundamental questions affecting peace with Germany. We hope that by next week they will be presented to the German delegates. \* \* \*

The idea that America and Europe have been at hopeless variance at the Conference is untrue. No one could have treated with more sympathy the peculiar problems and the special susceptibilities of Europe with its long and bitter memories and national conflicts than President Wilson.

We have never, during the whole of this Conference, forgotten the poignant sufferings and sacrifices in this war of the country in whose capital the conditions of peace are being determined. We have not forgotten that France has been rent and torn twice within living memory by the same savage brute. We have not forgotten that she is entitled to feel a sense of security against it, and upon all questions that have come before us we came to conclusions which were unanimous.

### REASONS FOR SECRECY

Now a word about publicity. We considered that question and we came to the conclusion, which was unanimous, that to publish these terms before they were discussed with the enemy would be a first-class blunder. I know in the criticisms there has been a lot of silly talk about secrecy. Yet no other peace conference has ever given so much publicity. I am referring now to the official

communications, issued by the Conference, and, honestly, I would rather have a good peace than a good press.

There are one or two reasons why we came to the conclusion that we would not publish the terms before they were discussed. No peace terms of any kind ever devised or promulgated can satisfy everybody. I am not referring to mere political and personal attacks on them, but to honest criticisms inspired by higher and more sincere motives. Some people will think that we have gone too far, and others that we have not gone far enough. In each country people will suggest that the interests of the country have been sacrificed for some other country, and all that will be published.

Supposing there were men in this country who thought the peace terms too severe. There would be speeches and leading articles. These speeches and articles would be published in Germany out of all proportion to the others, and it would appear in Germany as if British public opinion were against the peace terms as being too harsh. That would encourage resistance in Germany and make it impossible for us to handle the Germans.

I want to make another point. Supposing the terms proposed by Bismarck had been published in France before they were discussed, what would have happened? The Communists would have been strengthened by the adherence of men who from patriotic reasons would have supported anarchy in preference to what they considered hard terms. To publish the peace terms prematurely before the enemy had opportunity to consider them would be to raise difficulties in the way of peace, and we mean to take the action necessary to prevent their publication.

Before the war was over we stated our peace terms. On behalf of the Government I made a considered statement, considered by every member of the Cabinet, as to what we conceived to be the terms on which we could make peace. That was last year. At that time those terms received the adherence of every section of opinion in this country. There was no protest from

any quarter. A few days afterward President Wilson proposed his famous Fourteen Points, which practically embodied my statement.

[The speaker then referred to the attacks on him by the Northcliffe newspapers and reaffirmed that he stood by his pledges made prior to the last election and had nothing to retract. He proceeded as follows:]

### A JUST PEACE

We want peace. We want a peace that is just, but not vindictive. We want peace, a stern peace, because the occasion demands it, the crime demands it; but its severity must be designed not to gratify vengeance, but to vindicate justice. Every clause in the terms must be justified on that ground.

Above all, we want to prevent a repetition of the horrors of the big war by making the wrongdoer repair the wrongs and losses which he has inflicted by his wanton aggression; by punishing each individual who is responsible, and by depriving the nations which menaced the peace of Europe for half a century with flourishing the sword of their weapons. I stand by my pledges by avoiding a condition which by creating a legitimate sense of wrong would excite national pride to endlessly seek opportunities for redress. The most permanent security of all is the power of the nations of the earth federated with a firm purpose of maintaining peace.

I just want to say one other thing, because I am going back, if this House wants me to go back, unless it prefers another. There are many eligible offers. But whoever goes there is going to meet emissaries of the enemy, the enemy with whom we have been fighting for five years. Whoever goes there must go there feeling that he has the fullest confidence of Parliament behind him. I know that Parliament can repudiate the treaty when it is signed, but it will be difficult to do it once the signatures are attached, and so before any one goes there Parliament must feel that at any rate it knows that whoever is there will carry out his pledges to the uttermost of his power.

[The speaker then said: "I have no more to say."

on him by The London Times and London Mail. He accused Lord Northcliffe, the owner, of intriguing to become head of the Government and declared that the attempts of his newspapers to sow dissensions among nations was "a black crime against the world." He closed his address as follows:]

### GERMANY PROSTRATE

It is essential that the ordinary machinery of commerce and industry be set going. You cannot do that without peace. **There are the men in nearly every trade with their hands on the lever waiting for the announcement.** It is essential that the enormous expenditure of war should be cut down ruthlessly and as soon as possible. Peace is necessary, otherwise our effort will be squandered.

One of the beneficent results will be that the great continental menace of armaments will be swept away. The country that has kept Europe armed for forty years is to be reduced to an army which is just adequate to police her cities, and her fleet, which was a source of terror to us, a hidden terror, will now be just enough to protect her commerce. But we must profit by that commerce. Europe must profit by that, and not Germany alone.

I know there is a good deal of talk about recrudescence of the military power of Germany. You get paragraphs about what Germany is going to do, that she is going to get on her feet again, and about her great armies. That is not the case. With difficulty—that is our military information—can she gather together 80,000 men to preserve order. Her guns and her weapons of offense on sea and on land and in the air have been taken away.

A very keen observer who has just

come from Central Europe told me: "I have seen a world going to pieces, men helpless, half-starved, and benumbed, no authority, but no revolution because men have lost heart."

Two British soldiers crossing a square in Vienna saw a hungry child. They took out a biscuit and gave it to her. You have seen when you throw a bit of bread on the ground how birds flock from every part, birds you have not seen before. A hundred children came from nowhere for food. It was with difficulty that these two British soldiers escaped with their lives. That is the real danger, the gaunt spectre of hunger stalking through the land. The Central Powers are lying prostrate and broken, and these movements of the Spartacists and Bolsheviki and revolutionaries in each of these countries are merely like the convulsions of a broken-backed creature crushed in savage conflict.

Europe itself has suffered more in the last five years than ever in its whole blood-stained history. The lesson has been a sharper one than ever. It has been demonstrated to vaster multitudes of human beings than ever what war means. For that reason the opportunity of organizing the world on a basis of peace is such a one as has never been presented to the world before.

And in this fateful hour it is the supreme duty of statesmen in every land of Parliaments on whose will the statesmen depend and of those who guide and direct public opinion which has the making of Parliaments, not to soil this triumph of right by indulging in angry passions of the moment, but to consecrate the sacrifice of millions to the permanent redemption of the human race from the scourge and agony of war.

