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Lieut.-General (Retired).

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IN THESE MOMENTOUS TIMES.

NOVEMBER, 1915.

LONDON :
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Some Swedish Reflections

IN THESE MOMENTOUS TIMES

The great nations now fighting each other with desperate courage have certainly, each in its measure, advanced human culture—Germany surely not least, nor by any means excepting Russia, with her contributions to the spread of culture in Northern Asia. The lapses into barbarism now taking place must be looked upon as a consequence of the fierceness of the struggle and its unparalleled magnitude, and of the consciousness, which is present in the minds of all the contending nations, that this is a “fight for existence.”

In connection with the following reflections I must in my humble measure protest against too one-sided a conception of the great world war. For it cannot, indeed, be denied that large sections of the Swedish nation have decidedly sided with Germany and are, one might almost say, as much Germans as Swedes.

In fact, feelings run so high that many certainly have come to consider that it is not quite proper for a good Swede to harbour sympathies at the same time for the Germans and for any other of the belligerent nations.

However, some reason, some explanation ought to be given for such sentiments, all the more so when the nations primarily concerned are the two Western powers and Germany. Our relations with England and France have been for centuries past, almost without exception, of a friendly nature and it was only on rare occasions that these Powers were our enemies. On the other hand political harmony with Germany has frequently been lacking in various respects.

We need not go back for more than a generation to find that the danger which then threatened the northern countries came from the south. In 1848 to 1849, when the Danes were fighting against the Germans, a Swedish armed force was lying for several months on Fünen, ready in certain events to fight by the side of the Danish army. In 1864, indeed, it did not come to this, but on the other hand many

hundreds and hundreds of Swedes of all classes flocked to Denmark to fight side by side with the Danes against the growing power which was threatening the North-Germanic nations from the South. But Prussia conceived other and more ambitious political aims, and Germany, since re-united, felt content with the accomplished union of German nationalities and the military exploits by which it had been achieved. The feeling of a menace threatening from the south has since died away in Sweden and if we escape both a violation of our neutrality during the violent crisis through which Europe is now passing, and any prejudice, in one way or another, to our national independence, we may still for a long time to come look southward without increased apprehension. Of course we do not know what a more distant future may have in store for us, whether from Germany or the Western Powers.

In explanation of the fact that a great part of the Swedish public entertain distinctly favourable sentiments and a warm sympathy for Germany, and, coupled therewith, a certain animosity

towards the Allies, one may certainly point in the first place to a quite natural and irresistible admiration for the collective vigour which the whole German nation is able to display, for the systematic thoroughness in the smallest details, and the clear consciousness of purpose with which the whole gigantic struggle now proceeding has been prepared for. All, the meanest as well as the greatest in the land, were prepared for what was to come, and no one lost his head in the fateful moment. Many a neutral, and not least our Swedish nation, has an enormous amount to learn from the calm earnestness with which the Germans grasped the sword to go into the fight for their country's greatness.

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After these reflections on our relations to Germany and the strong impression which she has made on us, it may perhaps be of interest to examine whether certain conditions among the Allied Powers with whom Germany is now at war might be of a nature to justify that animosity against the Allies which undeniably animates such large portions of the Swedish public.

Taking France in the first place, it can scarcely be denied that the Swedish people, notwithstanding all memories of mutual friendly relations, does not feel itself closely bound to the French nation by similar ties of sympathy. The impression has existed that the patriotic feeling did not always stand above all other interests in public life, and various features of private life have been repugnant to Swedish sentiment.

The desire to protect one's own country against external enemies has been able to unite most nations to combined effort, but not so the Swedish. It was only under the pressure of warlike complications of a magnitude such as the world had never seen, that one year's compulsory military service was at last decided upon. But as this means a greater sacrifice than large sections of the Swedish people are willing to make for the independence of their country, there is good reason to fear that powerful efforts will be made if not to annul entirely, at least to prevent the carrying through of this decision to the fullest extent needed to secure the national defence. The French on the other hand have accepted

three years' military service in order to safeguard the national independence of their country and, in the war now being fought, all are coming forward with equal readiness to offer their lives for their country. If war should come upon us, even we Swedes would no doubt without hesitation come forward to fight for our country, but that would not necessarily mean its salvation, for only those nations can conquer who have known how to prepare for the fight in the days of peace.

As regards readiness to make sacrifices for our country, we have therefore little cause to exalt ourselves, and as regards private life we know from the statistics that the same faults which have led to the weakening of the French nation have already taken such deep root in our nation as to make the danger no less imminent among us.

If therefore those Swedish minds who think French conditions repugnant will make comparisons seriously and without prejudice they will surely be less severe in their judgment on the French nation.

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All the fierce criticisms launched by

Swedes against the English on account of England declaring war on Germany are almost senseless, and I cannot account for them otherwise than by assuming that these Swedes are so thoroughly permeated with German sentiments that they are deaf to those which may stir other nations. The British nation is after all still quite a vigorous people and cannot well be dead to all sentiment of self-preservation. The Foreign Minister, in Parliament, defended England's declaration of war with the words: "France to-day, England to-morrow!"

It appears from these words that in England's opinion Germany's intentions were clear and unmistakable:—To annex Belgium and to levy a contribution of some tens of milliards on France. England foresaw that, with these milliards, a German navy, considerably stronger than her own, would be created, and that thereby her own fate would be sealed within something like ten years. A nation which, situated like the British and with an eye to the future, would not have drawn the sword on the day that Germany declared war on France and Belgium, would indeed have almost forfeited her

right to remain a free and independent people.

But undoubtedly England's intervention falsified Germany's calculations, and this may, first and foremost, account for the Germans' violent hatred of the British. It may indeed be that Germany's strength is, already, so overwhelmingly great that she can crush all together, but this could have been done with incomparably lesser sacrifices if she were fighting Russia and France now, and England in some years to come.

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In the minds of many Swedes, sentiments of animosity and rancour against England may also have been evoked by all the talk which has been heard about the unheard-of cruelty of the British in trying to starve out a whole nation, with women and children. One may readily admit that the English would have been better advised to abstain from an attempt to overcome their enemies in this way, for one can predict with some confidence that the attempt will fail. But it is unfair to brand the English on this account as cruel. There is scarcely any warlike measure, apart from actual

fighting, which is more generally applied than trying to withhold from the enemy supplies of necessaries of all kinds, and hence, in the first place, necessities of life. The means applied to this end are blockade of the whole country or of certain regions, either from the coast or from inland, and investment in the case of sieges. I think no objection has ever been raised before against the full justification of using this means. Nor has anyone, not even a Frenchman, ever complained against the Germans because during the siege of Paris in 1870–71 they exposed nearly a couple of millions of women and children to starvation to such an extent as to compel them in the end to consume quite unnatural articles of food. But although, by this measure, the British have therefore not in any way acted unjustifiably towards the Germans, they have undoubtedly, from the standpoint of international law, offended thereby against the citizens of neutral countries.

For, as a direct blockade of the enemy's frontiers was impracticable, England tried by measures of different kinds, more or less contrary to international law, to enforce the blockade, so to speak, across

the neutral countries. These, however, have decidedly the right of carrying on, without hindrance, commerce and traffic, except in contraband of war, with England's enemies as no blockade of their frontiers has been declared and is properly maintained. Nor is, indeed, the supply of contraband of war, if done by private parties, in the least contrary to international law, though quite naturally each of the belligerents, on his part, is entitled, even without blockade, to prevent such traffic. In doing so, however, if no resistance in one form or the other is offered, they must not apply such means as might endanger the lives of non-combatants whether belonging to a neutral country or to the country with which they are at war. When therefore the Germans torpedo English and neutral merchant vessels, frequently, in doing so, sending the crew and passengers to the bottom,—this, even if the vessel carries contraband, is not only revolting in itself, but also contrary to the most elementary dictates of international law.

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It has also evoked great indignation, not only in Germany, but also in neutral

countries and not least in Sweden, that the British Government has notified the English merchant fleet, that in an emergency and in order to escape an attack by submarines, they may hoist a neutral flag. The German authorities have also pointed out that this deception on the part of England at sea may easily give rise to attacks on neutral vessels with consequent loss of cargo and human life, as frequently German warships may have cause to suspect that British tonnage and British cargo are concealed beneath a neutral flag.

But one cannot but feel great surprise at such complaints being raised by Germany against England, seeing that Germany herself by Imperial Ordinance has granted to her naval commanders authority to hoist, in certain events, any merchant flag they choose, and this on German warships, while the British notice only applies to merchantmen—at any rate nothing of the kind has hitherto been brought to light in connection with the British navy.

The German prize regulations, ordained by H.M. the Emperor on the 30th of

September, 1909, and published on August 3rd, 1914, direct in §82 as follows: "If the commander desires to stop a vessel, he shall, by signal or blast of the siren, call upon the same to stop. Simultaneously with such signal, but not later, the flag and pennant shall be hoisted; by night the former shall be illuminated. During pursuit it is not necessary to show the naval ensign; it is permitted to carry any merchant flag whatsoever."*

* * * *

We have witnessed great dissatisfaction in our country at England making war, in league with the Slavs, on Germanic nations, and thus supporting Slav culture at the expense of German culture.

But if there is anything that could be pointed to as justifying this talk about German culture being sacrificed in favour of Slav culture, cause for this has least of all been given by the Slavs. On the contrary, the Slav leaders, ever since the time of Peter the Great, have tried to spread Western culture and, not least,

* The German version is to be found, in the original wording, in the Foreign Section of the Naval Staff, and it is from this that the translation reproduced above has been made.

German culture among the Russian people—which indeed is apparent from the mere fact that Germans were permitted to settle in Russia in large numbers and that thereby these Germans were given the opportunity of prominently asserting themselves in all spheres.

We have also heard statements to the effect that we Swedes in particular have certain responsibilities, both as an outpost of Western civilisation against Slavism and for the preservation of Swedish culture in Finland. It does not seem quite clear what these responsibilities are. But we are not likely to achieve anything by platonic discussions, and probably the only course left to us, if the above-mentioned interests are prejudiced by Russia, would be resort to more forcible means.

Is it not likely, after all, that the majority of Swedes would shrink from plunging their country into war for such a reason, even under the most favourable circumstances?

But it is questionable whether, at the present time, there is really any cause

for much talk about "higher culture." In material and also in intellectual respects culture has certainly made great advances, but moral culture is quite a different thing and, to judge from the present methods of warfare, humanity stands very low indeed in this particular sphere of civilisation.

* * * *

But, it may be urged, even apart from the cultural aspect, one ought to oppose Russia's desires of expansion and continued pushing forward towards Central Europe. Might not this insistence on the desire of expansion in that direction have as little justification as the apprehensions as to the suppression of German culture ?

One would have to go back for more than a century in history in order to find any instance of intrusion on Russia's part into the countries of Central Europe. This was when Russia in concert with Prussia and Austria divided Poland, torn by internal struggles. The most considerable territorial expansion within Europe which has since occurred is no doubt the acquisition of Finland.

But has Russia, since the division of Poland, in any other way proved a menace

to Central Europe and more especially to Germany? Is there a single important point on which German and Russian interests clashed during the last century? Hardly! On the contrary, intimate and friendly relations between these two Powers have been, so to speak, traditional, and it was only in connection with the German-Austrian alliance that, gradually, their relations cooled, and this was solely the result of Russia's and Austria's conflicting interests in the Balkans.

Early in the last century, Russia, jointly with England and Germany, fought most strenuously against France, the country which at the time, by its military superiority, was a menace to Europe, and the allied nations succeeded by united efforts in finally breaking down its ascendancy. Even Sweden took part in this "War of Liberation," and her most immediate comrades in arms, besides the Germans, were the soldiers of Russia, of whom a considerable number formed part of the Army led by the Swedish Crown Prince.

Some decades later we again find Russian armies in Central Europe. In

1849 Hungary was in rebellion, and as the Emperor Francis Joseph, who is still on the throne, was unable to quell it by his own power, the loss of the Hungarian crown appeared certain. Then Russia stepped in and succeeded in quelling the rebellion and saving Francis Joseph's double crown.

This is, approximately, how during the last century the "Russian peril" to Central Europe presented itself, whilst now no words can be found which are strong enough to expose its constant menace.

On the other hand, as regards Northern Europe, and the conditions with regard to Sweden in particular, as Russia's nearest neighbour, the great majority of Swedes are indeed unanimous that the external peril which in quite recent times has seemed to be most menacing to Sweden came from the East, and that, as regards the future, this peril did not seem remote.

We have had a distinct reminder of this in the cases of Russian espionage which have become known to us. The strategic railways also, which during the last decade have been built in

Finland, could not but rouse our attention. There may, it is true, be quite legitimate reasons for these if only on account of the danger of possible descents on the West coast of Finland, which might have been anticipated in the event of war with Germany, and which danger, perhaps, was not so very remote at the commencement of the present war, and possibly may still threaten before the end of it—but, however this may have been or still may be, it is quite feasible that these railways may also be of the greatest importance in the event of a war with Sweden.

But apart from these circumstances, Swedish sentiments could not fail to be affected by the harsh treatment meted out to Finland by Russia. Even though one ought, in a certain measure, to be guarded in judging the internal political conditions of another country, our sentiments nevertheless can hardly be deemed unreasonable when we consider that, in many instances, the manner in which Finland was treated was very brutal. Quite naturally, we have been unable to persuade ourselves, with cold logic, that this really did not concern us, and, in

fact, the treatment which Finland underwent added to the disfavour with which Swedish sentiment has regarded the neighbour in the East.

On the other hand one is scarcely justified in concluding from this harshness against Finland on Russia's part that Sweden runs the risk of war which many fear. Whatever the constitutional relations may be between Russia and Finland, there cannot, of course, result therefrom any restriction of Russia's right to take, in view of external political conditions, such measures, even in Finland, as she may think necessary for her own security. Russia's treatment of Finland is therefore a matter which is not, in itself, connected in any way whatever with her political relations to Sweden.

It is quite natural, then, that the apprehensions of Swedes of the present day are directed towards the east, and these apprehensions can certainly not be said to be unfounded, especially when, apart from the causes mentioned above, we try to understand certain geographical and economic factors as they must present themselves to our neighbour in the east.

The great Russian nation has during the last few years made great advances in material development, its industries are striving in various directions to render themselves more and more independent of foreign countries and the financial administration of the State has advanced so far as to make the revenues of the State Budget, under normal circumstances, cover the expenditure. Among the measures which have lately been adopted, the organisation of rural land allotment in the provinces, when after a decade or so it will have produced its effect, will be as important to Russian agriculture as similar measures proved to be, nearly a century ago, to the Swedish.

But certain conditions stand in the way of the natural development of the Russian people. The empire has but few outlets towards the oceans of the world, and the two which exist in European Russia—disregarding the route via the Arctic Sea—are not available under all circumstances; the route through the Dardanelles on account of an International Convention and that through the Belts as a natural consequence of the enormous superiority of the German Empire. It is only natural

in these circumstances, that Russia's leaders should have been seeking a possibility of rendering their country independent of the two geographically natural outlets, which for various reasons were liable to be closed. In this quest, they may be presumed to have contemplated, among other routes, that across the northern part of our country.

The route through the Dardanelles has been closed to her, in certain events, ever since the peace of Paris in 1856; that through the Belts not until recent decades. Until about 50 years ago Russia did not feel greatly cramped as regards her outlet through the Belts nor was the need of such an outlet particularly pressing, and the Swedish people felt little apprehension of serious danger menacing from the East. But in proportion to the prodigious development of German Power, Russia felt more and more definitely that the route through the Belts could not under all circumstances be relied upon to remain open; hence the need of a free outlet now asserted itself more and more. As a natural consequence, her thoughts may thus have been directed towards some outlet across more northerly regions and

before long every clear-sighted man in Sweden could not but recognise the danger which this might involve.

The construction of the fortress of Boden was the first measure taken to meet this possible danger.

The disquietude as regards the menace from the East, the origin of which has been touched upon above, and the justification of which must be evident to all, has quite certainly been a very powerful factor in the pro-German leanings in the present war, which among large sections of our people has been quite remarkable, for they imagined that they might rely on protection from the great German nation against the danger from the East, which, perhaps rather precipitately, they believed threaten them almost at any moment.

It may, indeed, be true that every growth of power of one nation may be antagonistic to the interests of a neighbouring nation, but nevertheless it is still a very far cry from this to taking up a definitely hostile attitude such as might lead to warlike complication; it might well be considered very doubtful whether

a resort to force of arms against Northern Scandinavia would really be of sufficient concern to Germany to induce her to take the risk of stepping in. Of course we are quite unacquainted with the views and ideas which govern the minds of Germany's leaders on this question. It may nevertheless be of some interest and not altogether without value for our own judgment to recall what has been said at various periods on this very subject by men who have certainly had opportunities for forming at least a definite opinion.

Some ten years ago there appeared in Sweden a prophetic pamphlet entitled: "How we lost Norrland," which caused a great sensation. The author wrote anonymously, but it appeared from the whole presentation of the subject that he was familiar with German conditions and German views and sentiments. The cause of our losing Norrland was represented to be the outbreak of war between Germany and Austria on the one side and Russia and France on the other. Germany proposed to Sweden that she should take part in the war as Germany's ally, but Sweden declined and declared in favour of neutrality. However a separate treaty

of peace was soon concluded between Russia and Germany, and Germany continued the war against France alone. This separate treaty of peace contained a secret clause concerning Russia and Sweden.

Very soon after the conclusion of the Russo-German peace Russian troops were conveyed to Finland and before long the Russian Minister in Stockholm delivered to the Swedish Government a note which, in the main, was to the effect that Sweden must either go to war with Russia or cede to her Upper Norrland with its mining fields, as well as a large portion of Northern Norway with Victoria harbour and the Lofoten fisheries; this note also revealed the fact that the Russian Government had communicated with the German Government and received full approval of these points of view.

England, which otherwise would certainly have been inclined to give us her support, had fallen a prey to radicalism, and hence no help could be expected from her. An attempt was then made to obtain Germany's support, but she replied by a reminder that we had rejected the hand of friendship which she had proffered to us.

Thus far the author of the pamphlet.

An idea running on similar lines to that of the secret clause in the Russo-German treaty of peace as imagined in the above-mentioned pamphlet by which Germany left a free hand to Russia for pursuing her interests in Northern Scandinavia, might perhaps not be altogether foreign to the minds of Germans of the present day. One might infer this from the statements made by Colonel Bouveng* on his first return from the interesting studies which he made in Germany during the present war. For he says, in speaking of Sweden's attitude towards the world war, that he has not heard one voice expressing a desire on the part of Germany, which is conscious of its own strength†—that

* According to an interview published in "Nya Dagligt Allehanda," of December 15th, 1914.

† This observation: "conscious of her own strength" is undeniably justified. With close upon 10 million men whom she herself can put into the field, well equipped and led by officers trained professionally for the army, Germany in conjunction with Austria has at her disposal land forces which both in numbers and military efficiency are considerably superior to the forces which her opponents can command. At the same time she has the advantage of unified command over the combined military strength of Germany and Austria and of being able to utilise to the utmost—better than her opponents can do—this unprecedented strength by transferring troops freely from one front to the other according to the needs of the military situation.

Sweden should come in on her side. On the other hand he has come across many who opined that by their vacillating attitude in the struggle between their kinsfolk and other nations the Swedes had managed to sit down between two stools. "For," it was also said, "a situation might arise, in which our consent to compensation being sought in Scandinavia might involve for us greater advantages than safeguarding the interests of a neighbouring country which is indifferent to us."

The idea reproduced above of the anonymous author of the pamphlet, as to how the Germans might possibly act in certain events, to the serious detriment of our country, thus agrees substantially with the views put before Colonel Bouveng during his stay in Germany.* Neither

* Many will say, no doubt, that a firm alliance with Germany would have been the best means of securing the safety of Sweden, both in the situation pictured by the author of the pamphlet and in that now actually existing.

Several years ago I wrote in a pamphlet the words reproduced below, and I think they are rather apposite as a reply to this objection: "Certainly circumstances may arise in which our diplomacy may consider an alliance justified and proper, but every alliance, after all, is an undertaking the fulfilment of which may demand heavy sacrifices and in connection therewith might create conditions involving a real danger to the weaker party, for one must not overlook the fact that, whether one is allied to the victor or to the vanquished at the end of the war, one might be the very victim from whom the sacrifice needed to ensure a lasting peace might in the end be exacted."

the one nor the other is of cardinal importance ; nevertheless they are sufficiently significant to give pause to many Swedes who are inclined to trust blindly in Germany, and to inspire them with doubt as to the wisdom of relying with too much confidence on the kindred nation in the South.

Though it happened a long time ago, it may possibly be of some little interest in this connection to recall a certain incident. Towards the end of the seventies of last century there appeared in a Swedish periodical an essay entitled : " A story of the future." This pictured a Russian attack on Sweden and strangely enough, in this instance also, the anonymous author made it the central point of his story, that Germany in making peace after a war with Russia, gave Russia a free hand for action in Scandinavia.

My object in putting forward these reflections is among other things to show that the future safety of Europe as well as of our own country is not necessarily bound up with a further aggrandisement of the power of Germany.

It might rather be questioned whether

it would not be desirable for Europe, in fact for the whole world, that the ultimate balance of power should not be so displaced as to place absolute supremacy in all respects in the hands of one nation. It may indeed imply a certain security for all mankind that all power is not in the hands of one. Germany is at present incomparably the strongest power on land, but as a sea power she still has, according to human judgment, a superior, but one only—England. Ought we not perhaps, if we discard preconceived notions, to contemplate with a certain dismay the possibility of the issue of the war leading to the supremacy, both at sea and on land, of one power, instead of its being, as now, divided between two ?

England, who, even in the grave crisis which she is now passing through, is unwilling, or at least hesitates to resort to universal military service, can, for this reason alone, apart from her insular position, never usurp such supremacy. Her aspirations cannot therefore go further than the retention of the naval supremacy which she now holds. For the present therefore it would be Germany alone of whom it could be imagined that she might

conceivably combine such power in her own hands, as with the tens of milliards which a final victory would bring her, a fleet far more powerful than the British could be created; and the danger to mankind, constituted by the combination of supremacy on land and at sea in the hands of one nation could thus in the near future scarcely threaten from any country other than Germany.

Individuals may use moderation in the use of their power; they may have a feeling of responsibility, the voice of conscience may make itself heard, and in modern society there are always, in the last resort, legal limits beyond which the majority of individuals dare not go. But when it comes to nations, one can scarcely point to one single instance, in the whole of the world's history, in which a nation, when in a position of overwhelming strength, was swayed by moral sentiment alone in its conduct towards another, and there exists no power which could enforce moderation in the name of the law. Any nation thus circumstanced has therefore always been, and always must be, a source of great danger to other nations.

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After these attempts to show what the general interests of humanity demand, a question naturally suggesting itself to us Swedes is, whether and to what extent the special interests of our country coincide or clash with the general interest. When, in this country, we consider from what quarter danger may threaten, we usually look, as repeatedly emphasized in this essay, to the East for we have a distinct feeling that Russia, being liable in certain events to having her passage blocked both at Constantinople and past the Danish isles, might feel compelled to seek an outlet to the ocean further north. Such an outlet might, it is true, be found beyond as well as across Swedish territory, but the mere possibility of the latter alternative gives us just cause for apprehension.

In the event of the Central Powers gaining such a decisive victory in the war as to give them a preponderant voice in the drawing up of the peace terms, it may be taken as a practical certainty that Russia will continue to be dependent on the goodwill of others as regards her outlet to the ocean. Presumably, she

will then try to obtain an outlet in the North.

If on the other hand the crisis, in its further course, should develop favourably to the Allied Powers, so that it is they who have the determining voice in the peace negotiations, one may assume (although perhaps not as confidently as in the other contingency) that Russia will in the future be able to rely on a free outlet via one or both of the geographically natural routes. This certainly does not mean that all inducement to seeking the possibility of an outlet further north will be entirely removed, but no one can reasonably dispute that this pressure will be considerably relieved.

If therefore we would view the development in the world's crisis solely from the Swedish standpoint, many and strong reasons might be given for the opinion that a peace in which the Allies have the determining voice would involve the greatest degree of safety for our country.

As a peace on such lines would also imply that the supremacy both at sea and on land would not be combined in the hands of one nation but would remain, as

hitherto, divided between two, it would appear to be both in the general and in Sweden's particular interest, that the Allied Powers should have a preponderant voice in the discussion of peace terms.

* * * *

But irrespective of the alarm caused by Russia's need of a free outlet, there are many in this country who think that Russia's policy with regard to Sweden has a much more ambitious goal, and aims at nothing less than the conquest of the whole Scandinavian peninsula. Of course, none of us are in a position to know what Russia's policy for the future may be, but apart from the fact that no tangible evidence of such intentions on Russia's part has been adduced, Russia should surely think twice before undertaking such a war of conquest pure and simple, as, in order to find an outlet to the open sea, she need not pass over Sweden. More than a century has passed since, jointly with Prussia and Austria, she divided Poland, and still she is far from having assimilated the conquered territory; surely it should seem exceedingly doubtful whether she would care,

from pure greed of conquest, to swell still further by adding two proud and restless nations—the Swedes and Norwegians—to the number of nationally somewhat unreliable elements already embodied in her vast empire.

It is nevertheless quite probable that the general feeling of alarm cannot be calmed by such arguments,—and that many will, in this respect, seek refuge in the hope that Germany would in the end oppose a Russian invasion of the Scandinavian peninsula. But Germany must in the first place think of herself and as, in any case, she commands the Southern Baltic and may, easily enough command also the Danish Isles and the Sound, and as moreover, regardless of who commands over this Scandinavian peninsula, her political position from the military point of view is quite secure and certain, it may reasonably be questioned whether she will care to embroil herself in great and altogether incalculable war risks for the sake of protecting Sweden. We might, in this respect, depend with greater reason on the Western Powers. In either case, that is both as regards Germany and the

Western Powers, there is indeed no occasion to doubt their goodwill, but the position of the Western Powers towards Russia, and their relations with her are of such nature that friendly advice will be received with confidence and may in itself act as a restraining factor—while this can scarcely be expected, within measurable time, with regard to Germany.

* * * *

However, there are considerations other than the menace from the east which call for attention, and which may involve danger to Sweden's independence. A powerful victorious Germany will certainly not content herself with what victory may be supposed to yield her,—Belgium and parts of France and Russia, and several tens of milliards. Nay, pride, as well as anticipation of future war in different parts of the globe have already suggested the idea of a Germanic union; this idea, which during the intoxication of success in the first months of the war was on the lips of so many Germans and in the hearts of all, has certainly, for the present, been thrust back to some extent, but is undoubtedly only awaiting new and final victories in order to take

possession of all as a necessary link in the chain of the further development to which all are ready to proceed. Those who are to be brought in the first place into such a Germanic Union are of course Holland and the Scandinavian countries ; a certain degree of independence is promised—as F. V. Lintz says in his exposition concerning a confederation of the Central States of Europe—but the union is nevertheless to be welded up constitutionally and completed by a Military Convention, etc.

Perhaps a beginning may be made by compelling us to join a Customs Union, or, as Professor E. Heckscher apprehends in his noteworthy article on “Sweden’s Economic Independence” (*Svensk Tidskrift*, vol. 6, 1915), by inducing our country to join some Central-European commercial-political offensive and defensive alliance, in which event, again, as he further sets forth in the same article, the superiority of the German nation in efficiency and consciousness of aim would render “inclusion in Germany’s commercial-political system a real danger to Swedish culture and Swedish industrial

life, if these are to remain Swedish and not to become Germanised."

If, now, this idea is pursued to its logical conclusion and we are economically and culturally joined to Germany, it must of course be manifest to every clear-sighted man that the day cannot be far distant when we shall also be attracted to Germany by political bonds. And, however humiliating this might be, it might, nevertheless, in the case here stated be preferable.

If now the Swedes, with regard to Germany, were only as unanimous as they are where Russia is concerned, we should still have a prospect of weathering even the storm which might threaten us from this quarter, but unfortunately there is no unanimity amongst us in this respect.

Large sections of the Swedish nation do not shrink from the thought of an attachment to Germany; to the commercial community an actual union, as opposed to a mere offensive and defensive commercial alliance, would mean a great impetus to trade, while the many who are now thinking with alarm of the possibility of the socialists gaining power in

this country, are all of them imagining that a union with Germany would involve a guarantee against socialistic excesses and, lastly, the leaders of our national defence would with an assured 2 years' compulsory military service feel convinced that in the coming struggles they could confidently lead Sweden's young manhood to honour and victory. How many of them all are likely, in the end, to resist the temptation, and to reject the idea that the advantages which might be gained would not be worth the sacrifice of the freedom and independence enjoyed by the Swedes from immemorial times? When, on the other hand, we consider that there are other Swedes—and many, thank God—who would rather fight to the very last than surrender the least vestige of our independence, our disunion, and hence our national weakness, becomes obvious.

The danger to Sweden lies in the fact that she has as her nearest neighbours two nations whose power, only a few centuries ago, was insignificant, but who subsequently, by conquests from nearly all their neighbours, rendered themselves

great powers, and of whom Germany at this moment may be said to be actually the most powerful in all the world. That Sweden's national independence may be menaced both from the South and from the East, must therefore be evident to the public at large. As regards the menace from the south, this needs particular emphasis since it is altogether absent from the minds of the majority of our Swedish people. Again, as regards the menace from the east, this should undoubtedly always be kept well in view, but here our task is incomparably easier as the people themselves are already thoroughly permeated with the consciousness of it.

In any case a small country like Sweden must carefully guard, in the face of such neighbours, against blind confidence on the one hand and against pusillanimous suspicion on the other.

But no matter what may be the future issue of the great upheaval we must, as our forefathers did in troublous times, rally around our King and round the honourable neutrality of which he is the

embodiment, and we must be resolved not only to defend, by his side, our national independence if war is forced upon us, but if need be, resist to the very last any attempt to impair in the slightest degree our right of free determination in all affairs of our country.

If, meanwhile, we make good use of our time to strengthen our defences and always keep clearly before our eyes that in the end we must rely on our own strength, we shall most certainly be able to face, with calm confidence, whatever the future may have in store.

November, 1915.



