

Germany Not Seeking Conquest, Says German

Professor Moritz Julius Bonn Denies That She Would Impose Her Culture on Other Nations by Doctrine of "Might Makes Right"

By Prof. Moritz Julius Bonn

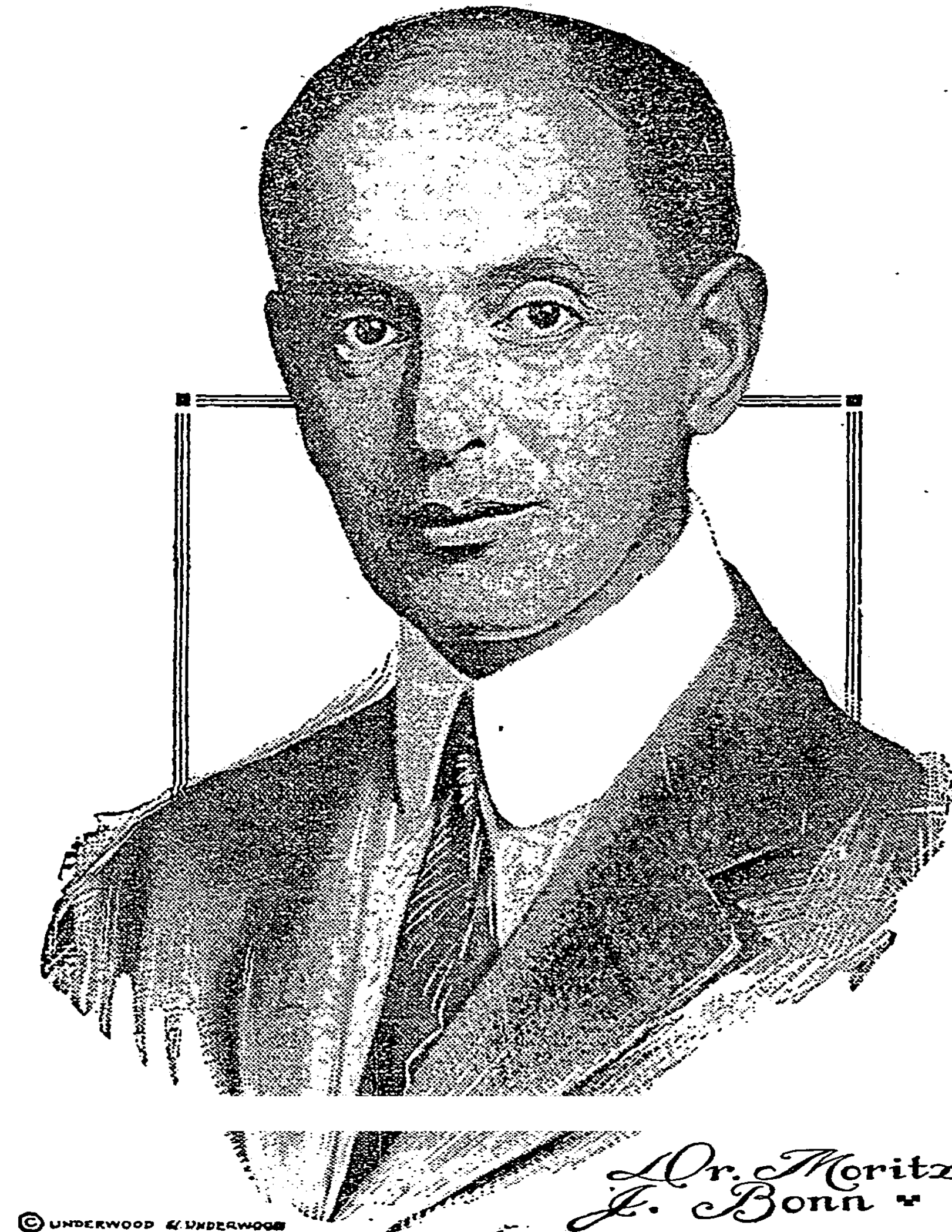
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IT is often said that a German victory would not merely disturb the balance of power existing in the world before the war, but would upset the standards of morals which have been customary among civilized nations; that it would be a triumph of the principle of national egoism and the affirmation of the belief that "might is right"; that it would nip internationalism in the bud and be the death knell of modern democracy.

Is that really the case? No doubt it would have been a great triumph for the cause of peace if the great European conflict could have been averted—not merely postponed—by international mediation, especially as such a thing was never done before when the security of any nation seemed to be at stake. When England forced the Boer republics into war for fear they might become the nucleus of an independent South African republic she did not ask for mediation. Nor did Russia appeal to an international tribunal when she wanted to push back Japan as a possible competitor in the Far East. The same powers which loudly proclaim today the principle of internationalism stood up for national egoism. The foremost exponent of the new creed, Sir Edward Grey, was willing to use force without mediation as late as 1911, when England threatened Germany with war because she considered the compensations too great which Germany was demanding from France for the annexation of Morocco.

In view of these plain facts, the historian of the future will no doubt regret that mediation did not prevent the worldwide calamity; he will not acknowledge the claim of the allied statesmen that they stood for just internationalism. For when they proposed the conference for settling the Austrian-Serbian conflict they were well aware of the fact that the whole Serbian policy, which ended in the murder of the Austrian Archduke, was instigated by Russia. Russia, supported by her allies, would have participated in and dominated the international conference. Surely the right to instigate political murder and to protect the Government involved in it by an appeal to a packed international jury is not a part of the higher international morality.

The only lesson which can be learned from the failure of the conference idea is this: Arbitration in vital questions is impossible as long as the powers which are to act as judges are bound by alliances to plaintiffs or defendants. If these alliances, some of them composed of very divergent interests, will play the same part in the future which they have



played in the past there will be no room for an international court, for there will be no unbiased judges, and the principle that "might is right" will be maintained as it has been done in the past.

"Might is right" is by no means a German invention. England no doubt wanted to discard it on land, as she had no big standing army; she clung to it tenaciously on the sea, where the permanent superiority of the British fleet was the cornerstone of her naval policy. And the Allies have frequently expressed their fervent belief in it, when, after each defeat, they explained to their supporters that in a short time they would be superior in men and in material. If a handful of British volunteers had stopped the "military machine" of Germany in Belgium, the claim that "right is stronger than might" might perhaps have been made. Leonidas and his three hundred gained immortal glory by making it true when they saved Europe from the onslaught of the mighty East.

The Allies have done nothing of that sort. If they ever succeeded in beating down Germany they could scarcely ascribe their triumph to the righteousness

of their cause. They have talked too much about their superiority in men and in wealth; they could not claim that the victory gained by one-quarter billion white men, supported by one-half billion of colored followers, over one hundred and fifty million white men was due to the presence of "right" and the absence of "might." It would only show that numbers do tell, not that "right is might."

And it would scarcely be a triumph of democracy. If this war is won by the Allies, it is won by Russia. She planned it, and her wealth in men is the greatest asset of the Allies. She would profit most by victory, with the exception of Japan. If England came in with a grand dash just to be present at the finish, even that would scarcely be a victory for democracy. It would merely show that England had become successful after she had accepted the principles of "Prussian militarism." After such a success, British aristocracy, which has been losing ground during the latter part of the nineteenth century, would come back into its own again. Having saved Europe by "conscription" it can scarcely be expected to

give up that militarism which was the salvation of its country and of itself.

France, no doubt, is a democracy. She has borne greater burdens in this war than any other country. If the Allies should be defeated, it would not be on account of her shortcomings. Democracy, as represented by France, is not responsible for the strategic achievements of the Grand Duke Nicholas. She cannot be called to account for the initial blunders of British military dilettantism—why proclaim her inferiority when she was equal to her tasks? Why saddle democracy with failures which were not its own?

A German victory does not mean that the German institutions of today are just the thing for all the world. It would merely show that German institutions are suitable to the genius of the German people. It would not be a justification of monarchy all over the world; it would not reflect glory on Russian absolutism, which, by the way, is the real despotism. It would not endanger the institutions of other people. A German victory does not mean that Switzerland will cease to be a republic and be governed by a Hohenzollern Prince. It does not put American democracy on trial. The test of American democracy is not European achievements in Europe, but American successes at home and abroad. If American democracy solves its own problems it will be justified and need not fear the competition of foreign institutions.

We want a variety of institutions all over the world, not a dead level uniformity for all people. Nations should stick to their own institutions and develop them according to their own ideas. They need not fear disparagement if different institutions of opposite character flourish under different circumstances. They ought to give up that mischievous idea, born of mediaeval universalism, that they must impress their own institutions on unwilling neighbors. There is no danger that Germany will be influenced by such ideas and try to do missionary work abroad. Quite apart from the intellectual attitude of the German people, which does not favor such universalism, there are twenty-seven different State Constitutions in the German Empire, three of them republican. Even a victorious peace would not give Germany a free hand to overrun the world.

Such a peace would not bring about very great changes in Europe. The occupied parts of France would be given back; Belgium would be released. Very likely Courland, with a population partly German and partly Lithuanian, would be annexed by Germany. Poland would receive autonomy. Austria would probably permit the resuscitation of a somewhat reduced Serbia, for Hungary does not want the annexation of a further batch of Southern Slavs. Bulgaria would get the greater part of new Serbia; Greece might get a part of Albania; Austria would control the eastern Adriatic coast up to the Greek border. Turkey might lose some outlying districts.

German gains in land, men, and wealth in Europe would be very small, even if the cost of the war was not taken into account. Her colonies would be handed back to her, and in return for the surrender of Belgium and of occupied

France she would receive considerable extensions of her possessions in tropical Africa. The addition of some one hundred thousand square miles in tropical Africa would be an important gain to a country like Germany, whose colonial endowment was rather meagre; it would not affect considerably the balance of the world's power.

The cost of such a peace would fall mainly on Russia; a large part of the foreign races which she had oppressed systematically would be freed; her efforts to settle the affairs of the Balkan people in her own selfish interest would be defeated for good. If Turkey ever lost Constantinople, Bulgaria or Greece, which have a racial or historic right to it, would get it. Russia's claim to a warm-water port by the territorial control of a country whose inhabitants are not Russian is a flat negation of the much-vaunted principle of nationality. It is no better than would be a German demand for the Orkney and Shetland Islands and the Strait of Dover, which bar her from the free sea so long as they are occupied by the British. It would be a useless sacrifice of the principle of nationality, as well as of common sense. For the Mediterranean is quite as much an inland sea as the Black Sea, so long as England holds Egypt and the Strait of Gibraltar. And it is not very likely that the British Government will prove its faith in the principle of nationality by handing back Egypt, Gibraltar, and Malta to their rightful owners.

Russia, no doubt, will feel somewhat sore, but, as none of her own people are taken away from her, she will be able to organize them according to their own wants. She has been the great incubus on European politics for many years. That will be removed for some time to come. But she will gather strength as time goes on and, let us hope, use it in a wise way. She will always be a neighbor of Germany and Austria, though Poland as a buffer State may intervene. If Poland is successful and continues to live in friendly co-operation with Germany and Austria, the Russian danger will be considerably reduced. But the Polish problem is not easily solved. However well organized an autonomous Poland may be, she cannot ever compromise all Poles within her borders; she will always contain many non-Poles—Ruthenians, Lithuanians, and Jews. It is scarcely fair to expect such an amount of constructive statesmanship from Polish leaders as to avoid all pitfalls. Whatever is going to happen, Germany will be confronted by new problems in the east, the solution of which no victory in battle can assure.

The alliance between Germany and Austria has grown much firmer during the war. Austria may be weaker than Germany, but she is a big and powerful empire which has shown marvelous vitality. She has her own problems and her own ideas. The majority of her people

are not Teutons. Even without important new annexation, the Slavic influence in Austria will grow notwithstanding German and Hungarian resistance.

Austria is not a vassal State of Germany. If the Central Powers had been defeated she might have been shorn of her Slavic provinces and brought into a sort of dependency. As it is, she has been rejuvenated; she will be a faithful partner to Germany in European questions, but she would not sacrifice her manhood for wild plans of German world supremacy, the effects of which would fall on her own people.

France no doubt will be saddened, as she cannot recover Alsace and Lorraine; her losses in men and material have been awful; her military valor is shining more brightly than it ever did. It has won her the respect of her German neighbor and greatly increased the strength of her position after the war. Her weight on the western border will not be diminished.

As to England, she is engaged in the first really costly war that she ever has waged. But, as far as the number of human lives is concerned, she will come off fairly well. Her organization of commerce and finance has been excellent. She would deserve nothing but praise for the great organization she has evolved, if it were not for the loquacity of her statesmen, who have continually promised goods which they were unable to deliver.

She has shown the world at large that the weapon on which she chiefly relied, sea power, is an excellent secondary instrument, incapable of producing decisive results when used against a strong Continental power. The combined fleet of the Allies has cut off the Central Powers from most of their overseas trade. This is not due to the superiority of the British fleet. It is partly due to geographic position. England holds the keys of the Mediterranean; England and France control the Strait of Dover; the only outlet for German shipping, not directly under the Allies' guns, is the mouth of the North Sea between Norway and Scotland. This opening can be easily patrolled by a fleet stationed in Scotland. Measured by the velocity of modern patrol boats, there is scarcely a greater distance between the Shetland Islands and the Norwegian coast than the width of the Strait of Gibraltar in the days of the sailing vessel. Germany's position here is somewhat similar to that of Russia in relation to the strait at Constantinople. Where geography does not favor British sea power, it has achieved nothing. It has not effected a landing on German soil; it has not kept the German flag away from the Baltic.

Geographical position is but one of the causes of the partial success of the allied blockade. Direct overseas trade in war times is not essential to a country like Germany. The real success of the blockade is due to Russia and France. If they

were neutral, Germany could draw from them all the provisions which she might want. The few overseas goods which Europe does not produce would be imported indirectly via France or Russia. Neither of these countries could be forced to prevent the re-exportation of imported goods, as small countries like Holland and Denmark have been, for fear of having their own supplies stopped.

It was the custom in other wars to get such supplies in an indirect way; international law specifically provided for the continuation of this practice, until the Allies broke it. The British Navy has done a great deal of important subsidiary work for the Allies; it has closed a stretch of about 300 miles, stopping Germany's approach to the ocean. The chief blockading is done by the armies on the Continent.

This is not due to want of efficiency on the part of the British Navy. It is due to the inherent limitations of sea power, which this war has clearly brought out. An island country, depending on sea power, can greatly annoy a Continental power. It can destroy its direct overseas trade and interfere with its indirect trade, if the neutrals permit it. It cannot defeat land power except by an alliance with other land powers. While an island power like England or Japan can be crushed on the sea, a Continental power can only be broken on land or in her outlying possessions.

England is a very dangerous enemy if allied to some continental power; isolated she cannot deal a decisive blow. As her empire is insular, she will always be dependent on sea communications and liable to collapse when they are cut. She can prevent invasion by maintaining a big army; she cannot strike with that army abroad, if no allied or neutral country gives her a chance to land it. The safety of a continental power cannot be destroyed by sea power; her foreign trade may suffer and her foreign possessions can be kidnapped; only if she embarks on an aggressive overseas policy in foreign lands does she become exposed to decisive blows.

So far as these questions are concerned the war has undoubtedly diminished England's prestige; she will no longer be the proud arbiter in the world's councils. But her own strength has not dwindled; she will be knit more closely with her dominions in a "United Empire" than she ever was before. And since she has learned the art of military organization from the hated Prussian, she will be able to defend herself against all invasion. If she accepts the principle of the free sea, which she herself advocated until lately, she will not be exposed to a policy of starvation. Her worldwide resources in men and treasure would always make her a powerful ally whenever the fate of Europe hung in the balance.

Outside of Europe, Japan has arisen as the new ruler of the East; she is the

only belligerent nation to whom this war has given all the blessings of victory without its cost.

Next to her stands the United States. The war, perhaps, has made it more vulnerable in relation to Japan; it has increased American wealth enormously; it has made the United States realize the necessity of organization. And as the Central Powers have shown that a big territorial unit, whose citizens have organizing genius, cannot be starved into submission, even if sea power and land power are combined against them, the United States may safely rely on its own marvelous power. It can easily organize. It has some outlying possessions, to be sure, where it is vulnerable, but none of its vital spots can ever be hit if it relies on its own resources.

It seems pretty clear that even a victorious Germany will be surrounded by States strong enough to make aggression rather risky. She will have powerful neighbors in the future as she has had in the past. The chief problems confronting her will be European problems.

No doubt she will be the strong power in Central Europe, as she has been during the last twenty-five years, not because she is aggressive, but because seventy million people, industrious, well educated and well organized, must be stronger than neighboring nations one-half their size. This is a physical fact, not aggressive statesmanship.

A nation flanked as Germany is, by the oncoming Slavic races in the East and the established nations of Europe in the West, is not at liberty to indulge in foreign adventures. She must aim at concentrating her people within her borders by foreign commerce and industry, not by trying domination over other European races across the sea.

It would be suicidal for her to attempt a settlement in South America. She would have to stake large military and naval forces on the accomplishment of tasks which never could be solved. She would gain the enmity of the United States and all Latin America. By dint of unheard-of military efforts, she might succeed in getting a footing on the Southern continent and the monopoly of trade of some dearly-won colony. But she would lose most of her business with the other South American countries and with the United States as well. She would have to transport a large part of her army to foreign lands and keep them there as a garrison, at the mercy of any sea power or combination of sea powers.

She is invincible as long as she concentrates her strength at home. If she tried to threaten the existence of any nation overseas, be it the United States or any South American nation or a British dependency, she would not long remain a menace to the world. Her strength would ebb away from her in impractical endeavors across the sea, and she would easily succumb to a coalition at home.