

Annexation of German territory incumbent upon Holland

by

Dr. L. C. E. van Gaten



AMSTERDAM

L. J. VEEN'S UITGEVERS MAATSCHAPPIJ N.V.

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An English version of the Dutch pamphlet is made necessary by the astounding lack of knowledge and indifference about Germany and the German people among our Canadian, English and American allies. We learn that a great many of the conquerors fraternise with the vanquished, — men and women —; it seems that they do not know anything about the unspeakable German atrocities; they behave towards the German people as they would after a football match. They make a distinction between the Nazi's and the great majority of the German people. This is so great an error, that, if it were generally accepted, a third all-destroying war would be inevitable within twentyfive years. This pamphlet attempts to change the opinion of millions of English speaking people by making clear that the future of humanity and civilisation — so far as human power reaches — depends upon making it absolutely impossible for Germany to make war again.

Those who have to decide the future status of Germany after the war, will have to frame every measure to serve one single purpose — to avoid any further outbreak of war. It is not necessary to enter into an academic discussion as to whether war is an essential element of international relations. The vital point is to create conditions under which war will be as unlikely as possible. Considerations of internal politics or economic interests must be strictly subordinated to this one point. If such considerations lead towards the great goal, so much the better.

An ultimate annexation of German territory by Holland must be regarded from this point of view. The question is, therefore, whether an enlargement of the territory of our country will tend to insure the peace of Europe.

The possibility of answering this question depends upon one condition, namely that we recognise Germany as the only possible disturber of peace in the near future, just as it was the instigator of this war in the past. We need not enter into the motives which stirred up

Germany; Hitler has told us more than often enough what these were during the months and years, when Germany had it all its own way. No one need doubt that the same, or new grounds will be found if Germany should be allowed the chance to recover sufficiently from its defeat. We can form some idea of what the fate of the world would then be. The possibility of a war in Europe emanating from another source it is unnecessary to calculate at present, if ever, in my opinion. Even important social-political readjustments in the West, which undoubtedly will take place, do not mean war.

To restrain Germany from her pugnacious tendencies, two means may be employed: in the first place we may try to make the German people understand not only that a war is not necessary, but that on the contrary it is very undesirable; in the second place Germany may be brought into such a condition that waging war is impossible to her.

The first aim would be served by the re-education of the German people so often spoken of. It is beyond question that the German is at bottom militarist in heart and soul. It may be doubted whether this quality belongs to him as

a hereditary race characteristic or is a consequence of education on the lines of dominating German ethics. It is hardly necessary to discuss the question of racial characteristics, because the German people in no way constitutes a race, perhaps less than anyone of the West-European peoples.

Nevertheless it has definite characteristics like any other people. By far the best of these is its musical genius. If Germany ever had to defend its right to a place in civilisation it would be on this ground far more than anything else — including all its "Dichten und Denken" — that its claims should be laid. This great musical gift is centuries old; it is impossible to create fertile musical talent by education, or even to teach true musicality, so that a certain amount of an inherited turn for music certainly must be accorded to a large part of the German people, although the encouragement in this direction, neglected elsewhere, is not without importance. This is not connected with the Germanic race taken as a whole; England is one of the least musical nations of Western-Europe, while Italy is one of the most. Just as German musicality has had its very great effect upon German

musical practice, so it seems to be with the influence of military Prussia upon the rest of Germany. To this must be added the preponderating political importance of Prussia as a most favourable factor.

Waging war and playing music, generating war and creating music, lie far from one another in the human spirit. Proselytes in the one field are won by an appeal to and the stimulation of the noblest gifts of humanity; supporters in the other field can only be secured by argument, compulsion, catch-words — devices right or wrong — at all events without bringing to life any latent gifts.

But one condition is essential: the mass that is to be worked upon must be docile. Here, in my opinion, lies the key to the solution of the problem. In 1914 the whole social-democratic party was docile, in 1939 all Germany, Nazi or anti-Nazi, everyone — even those who three years later pretended to regret it — applauded the treacherous attack upon Holland. They all believed what was written or told to them in 1914—1918, all accepted without criticism, Hitler's and Goebbels' prophesies and dictums, and they continued to accept them long after

they had been carried beyond reason or applicability. Those who did not were killed or sent to concentration camps.

This blind and tacit docility¹⁾ of the German is a different thing to the suggestibility of the mass, which is found or may occur anywhere, and is directly connected with the emotionality. In a sense emotionality is inherent in German docility; but the succession of solicitation and obedience is to a great extent a kind of short-circuit; neither emotion nor persuasion are causally active. Blind docility does not only apply to military matters. It is the keynote of German education in the family, at school and in society, and the grave danger is, that the German accomodates himself to any system,

¹⁾ I take their well known insolence towards inferiors to be a compensating trait rather than the reverse, although in the Prussians we feel inclined to regard the insolence as primary. Outside Prussia sentimentalism is probably a widespread fundamental trait, which is compensated by uncouth cruelty. It is impossible to write a detailed psychology of a people: to describe the German from data which this war has furnished would require a more extensive range of terms expressing caddish brutality, than our language contains.

however much he might be at variance with it, if he were left free. This it is that constitutes the danger of a greater Germany in the heart of Europe, which — rightly or wrongly — feels itself to be threatened, seeks a way of escape and at the instigation of a pugnacious government looks to war as the appropriate means of attaining its end.

There is no doubt whatever that this country, if it can acquire the means, will storm the world for the third time. It is incumbent upon us, in the interests of our descendants to endeavour to avert this calamity. Would a re-education, which would eliminate the lust for war in the dominant classes and the blind obedience of the masses, be the best way to do it?

In any case it would be absolutely essential to make all those who were concerned in the Hitler régime, from the Hitlerjugend up to the leaders, all male and female, completely innocuous to the European social system. They should not be allowed to propagate, even if they were deported to equatorial Africa or any other remote region. On no account should they be treated with the same cruelty as they have meted out to us and hundreds of thousands of

others. This would give to the re-educators a people, which perhaps after 50 or 60 years might be admitted into a community of nations living in accordance with human dignity. But is it possible to believe in any plan of re-education being carried through consistently by Germany's enemies? One of the privileges of the democratic peoples is the room for change of opinion in their successive governments. Moreover in such a length of time what may not happen in international politics that might destroy the whole re-educational scheme? Even the obvious ban on every kind of arms-production might sooner or later be evaded. If we are to have security the means applied must be more drastic, the great purpose warrants it. A unified Germany in the heart of Europa is too great, too powerful and too dangerous. To split it up into its earlier components of larger and smaller German states is naturally and historically unattainable. Moreover the small units inspired by the spirit of "Deutschtum" would always strive for re-union; supervision in this respect would be impossible however good re-education might be. The only solution is a reduction of Germany; it is the duty of the

neighbouring countries to carry out this reduction in the best and most reasonable manner. Therefore upon Holland rests the unavoidable duty of helping in the process to the best of her ability. That the annexation of some 10 or 20 thousand square K.M. of German territory would at the same time form a compensation for the losses she has suffered at the hands of the Germans in land and every kind of prosperity is certainly not without its importance. An "irredenta" is a horrible stumbling block, therefore the inhabitants of the soil to be annexed should be evacuated to the east. Emotional reasons for protesting against this should not be given too much weight after what we and others have been subjected to by the Germans. The measure should be applied without the cruelty with which it was carried out against us. But happen it must: however much a Westphalian peasant may resemble a Dutch farmer from Twente or the Achterhoek, he is a German born and bred.

The problem of where the 3 million or so deported Germans would be absorbed is not insolvable, even if this figure, (which is probably too high) were to be increased by the popula-

tion to be settled from the east, for far more Germans (more than 7 million at the end of 1944) have been killed in the war; an unknown number of opponents of the régime and Jews have been slaughtered, moreover at least 12 million prisoners of war and foreign forced labourers were "fed" in Germany for a long time during the war. Finally the reduction of population by the condemnation of war criminals counts for something, and even more the masses of incorrigibles who will have to be deported altogether, whose numbers run into millions (and who will not be counted as war-criminals so as to avoid too great mass-executions).

The argument that Holland has no need of an increase of territory for its growing population does not seem to me convincing. Why have we degraded our precious Zuiderzee to a mere lake, if it was not to gain more ground for agriculture and cattle breeding? Within measurable time we shall have further need of more arable land. If the suggested amount seems at first rather large, the charming Westphalian landscape, where forestry should be stimulated, would be a valuable acquisition as

recreation ground at the same time. The universally felt shortage of agricultural soil in Holland, where families can settle, is sufficiently urgent to insure the opportunities offered eastwards being eagerly accepted. The objection that the land to be had has been rendered unfit for immediate proper cultivation by the military operations is — even if it is true — of little and certainly only temporary importance. Naturally our argument assumes that Belgium on the same principle would move its frontiers eastwards, thus acquiring an important industrial territory. Of France with its declining population it is difficult to speak definitely. It is to be hoped that besides the retention of the Alsace and the acquisition of the Saar, it will annex German territory with the Rhine as eastern frontier. The way in which the curtailing of Germany on the east side must take place will depend chiefly upon the wishes of Russia and Poland, we do not need to enter into that here; what Russia and Poland have suffered in this war at the hands of Germany leads us to suppose that drastic measures will not be wanting. Schleswig-Holstein should naturally again become a part of Denmark.

Whatever the status of the South German countries, including Austria, may become, it must in any case be regulated so that it contributes to the primary necessity, that of forming a Germany, powerless to carry on war. It is only our purpose here to point out the part that will devolve upon Holland in the settlement. Anyone can see that this most terrible of all wars might have been avoided. The mistakes that have been made, from Versailles to the ghastly expedition to Munich, are all to be traced in the last resort to an insufficient knowledge on the part of the leading statesmen — from Wilson to Chamberlain — of the German character. It may be assumed that this ignorance is now removed. On these grounds it is to be expected that neither party politics, nor industrial and economical interests in our own country or any other will have a decisive voice in the determination of Germany's future fate, as far as this can be decided by human means. No one can tell what possibilities may arise in the future with respect to yet another world war, which would mean the final extinction of our civilisation.

But what we know for certain, is that in the

near future, Germany, if it remains intact and only bound by paper treaties, will march into war, even better prepared than in 1939 or 1940. It is the bitterly necessary duty of all of us to guard against this with every means in our power, and without a permanently disarmed and restricted Germany nothing will avail.

EPILOGUE

The day of capitulation.

The above article was written almost half a year ago. What since then has come to light, and what the world has experienced from the Germans strengthens my argument and confirms me in my opinion. I propose an extension of territory from Holland so that the Weser should become our eastern frontier, the Lippe the southern boundary, the Rhine from the Weser up to Gelderland the south-western border of the territory to be annexed. Our country would thereby become almost twice as large as it is now, and I am of opinion that we could absorb this increase without indigestion. The arguments in favour of this plan, I will not now enter into.