# Secretary Lansing on the Peace Treaty

SECRETARY LANSING, before sailing from France on July 12, gave the press correspondents a luminous estimate of the results of the Peace Conference. He said that he was leaving for home "pleased but not overcomplacent with the outcome of the past six months," and pointed out the perils as well as the benefits in the new peace. He said in part:

Many thoughts rush to mind on leaving the Peace Conference after six months of effort. Never before has such an international gathering been held, for here has been the meeting ground of twenty-seven nations to liquidate a world war and establish a new order and a laboratory where already a system of world cooperation has been born out of necessity.

Out of it all has come the most important international document ever drawn—the treaty of peace with Germany—a document which not only meets the issues of the present war, but also lays down new agreements of the most helpful, most hopeful, character. The nations are bound together to avert another world catastrophe; backward peoples are given a new hope for their future; several racial entities are liberated to form new States; a beginning is made toward removing unjust economic restrictions, and the great military autocracies of Central Europe are destroyed as the first step in a general disarmament.

The treaty is, of course, not all that we had hoped for. It could hardly be expected to be. Too many conflicting interests were involved, as well as too many legitimate documents which would tax the most perfectly balanced mind. Nearly every one will find in it weaknesses both of omission and commission, provisions inserted which might better have been left out, and provisions left out which might better have been inserted.

Such a document must, however, be examined both against the background of its creation and in the large sweep of its spirit. From that point of view we may call it a stepping-stone from the old international methods to the new. If it still holds some of the distrusts and hatreds of the war, which Germany has full well earned for herself; if its construction has been hindered by memories of secret pacts and promises, it must be borne in mind that it carries with it the evident purpose to throw off the old methods of international intrigue and plotting.

But the present treaties are but the starting point of world reconstruction. Now that the general principles have been laid down it remains to execute them; and by that I mean, not so much retributive action against nations which have recently run amuck in the world, but rather the cleansing and healing processes that shall really make good our hopes and aspirations.

Undoubtedly there is a great danger in the world today. Many people have thought that the mere signing of the treaty with Germany marks the ending of the world peril. Public opinion seems to have breathed a sigh of relief and lapsed back into apathy. Concentration of thought on world problems is weakening now, when it is most essential, and the forces of disintegration and reaction have been given a freedom of action far greater than when the world was on its guard.

The situation today is serious. Western civilization is still dazed by the shock of four and a half years of destruction. Industry and commerce are not yet restored. All of Europe is impoverished; parts of it are starving. Its whole political fibre has been shot through. Russia and Hungary are gripped by subversive political doctrines. Austria-Hungary and Turkey as empires have ceased to be. Poland and Czechoslovakia are struggling to their feet as members of the family of nations. All that complicated machinery of society which took decades to elaborate and a world war to tear down, cannot be replaced over night by a wholly different machinery.

Many problems remain unsettled. Territorial adjustments to secure the rights of people to live under their own flag as far as possible in the tangled skein of European nationalities may be effective. Attainment of the Polish frontiers on all sides, particularly in East Prussia, is very difficult. The Teschen coal fields are still a source of contention between Poland and Czechslovakia. Hungary is interrupting the trade of all Central Europe. The Adriatic problem is still unsolved, as well as the fate of those large territories formerly under the Turk, including especially Asia Minor and Armenia.

World statesmanship will be sorely tried in the next few years. Two things are essential: First, an alert, intelligent, interested public opinion, and, second, cooperation of the nations. * * * The Peace Conference has been history's greatest instance of a unified world statesmanship directing the moral and material resources of the world's family of nations. To allow the spirit behind it to disintegrate at this moment of emergency, when united action is imperative, would be fatal to all the hopes of permanent peace with which we entered the war.