

History Formative assessment

Entry 1

March 29th, 1919

Dear diary,

The last few days have been a hectic whirlwind of discussions, debate and compromise. Playing the peace-maker is exhausting and no child's play. Since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, this is the grandest scale on which I've had to engage in peacemaking. 'On my right hand was Christ, Wilson', a diplomatic visionary and on the other 'Clemenceau, worse than Napoleon', a vengeful soldier. Although I do sympathise with Clemenceau as France's loss was unprecedented, but twenty-five billion pounds for reparations is an unreasonably high amount. France suffered immense loss and the costs of the reconstruction of entire cities, agricultural and industrial lands are astronomical. I truly felt bad, but that disagreeable and bad-tempered old savage who, despite his large head, 'had no dome of benevolence, reverence or kindness' made me revoke my sympathies immediately. In the past, he had the sheer audacity to say that I am not a true gentleman, that I wasn't informed enough and that I lacked a formal education. He has said that I am unable to see the world beyond Great Britain which is ironic, considering how he is blinded by his desire for revenge to the extent where he is veritably oblivious to the repercussions of dismembering Germany or charging high reparations. I only act from self-interest to maximise Britain's welfare. I couldn't allow Germany to become weakened just to fulfil that bloodhound's thirst for revenge. Germany is our chief trading partner and Britain needs to resume trade, especially now that we have serious economic losses to recover from. He also fails to comprehend that attempt to collect *all* the debts arising from the war would poison, and cripple the capitalist system.

Imagine Germany's plight. Already the blockade was killing German civilians and instigating revolution but I had to impose it to force them to sign the treaties. Germany is broken and the reparation charges would not only be catastrophic but exacerbate the conflict. Britain's conscience is already tainted, and Unrock Brockdroff Rantzau, an aggressive German diplomat delivered a speech that made us look like such despotic, villainous leaders. He went on about how thousands of non-combatants have lost their precious lives since November 11 through the blockade and how so many people were killed with cold deliberation. John Keynes, the British Treasury official, was also displaying his dissatisfaction about the high price of the reparations. He flocked around complaining, saying that an unfair peace will give Britain a bad conscience, suggesting that I am the one to blame for the peacemaking disaster. He argued that if high reparations were set, it would threaten the collapse of the banking system, certainly of Europe and maybe of the world. He kept trying to barge logic into everything, but I did not pay heed to a word he said and demanded pensions for war veterans. His arrogance and disdain was beginning to infuriate me as he couldn't even fathom how difficult getting a comprise out of that French tiger Clemenceau is. I wasn't suggesting charging skyrocketing amounts like Clemenceau. Originally I did put in a claim for '£25 billion of reparations at the rate of £1.2 billion a year'. Britain needs money for veterans, weaponry and the American debts crisis. However, later I realised that is too much to ask for.

However, there was an immense amount of pressure from the conservatives for a harsh peace and unfair reparations. I was worried about having to "face up" to the "400 Members of Parliament who have sworn to exact the last farthing of what is owing to them." The appeasers are also firm and stubborn in their thinking and want a fair world peace. The defining struggle of this conference is wrestling with these forces of realism and vengeance and diplomacy and fairness. This constant state of conflict between Wilson and Clemenceau, the politically charged atmosphere, interferences of the Australian prime ministers and external pressures, all led to the Fontainebleau memorandum.

After a weekend of consultations with my personal advisors, I finally created the Fontainebleau memorandum to break the deadlock of the conference. Philip Kerr's frank words of advice really payed off. He had said to me before "You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force, and her navy to that of a fifth-rate Power but if she feels she has been unjustly treated she will find means of extracting retribution from her conquerors.' It would have been impossible for this to have happened without Kerr's wise words and the support of my advisors. Seeing the success of the strategy was truly a moment of euphoria. I remember talking to Sir George Riddell yesterday, sharing my joy with him. The truth is that we had finally got it our way, the German Navy has been handed over; the German mercantile shipping has been handed over, and the German colonies have been given up. I don't mean to sound boastful, but I truly was proud. However, the process of persuading all the members to append their signatures was unexplainably onerous. You wouldn't believe it, Clemenceau asked me what aims Britain would offer to sacrifice in order to convince Germany that the treaty was just.

His rejoinder nearly provoked me, but I brushed it off, as the political tensions were already high. But yet another problem arose. Britain was not happy. Those newspaper publishers, all they do is smoke cigarettes and worsen our problems, sitting idly in their chairs. When finally the deal closer to the £6 billion was successful, the Daily Mail began a campaign against me. I truly can never win. The stupid article included a published letter signed by 380 Conservative backbenchers demanding that Germany pay the full cost of the war. They accused me of departing from my original intentions, almost suggesting that I betrayed Britain by not obtaining the payments discussed from Germany. It is easy for them to sit in the parliament, while I am here trying to bring a compromise between starkly different personalities, and struggling to have global interests. Originally, I too demanded high amounts for reparations, and went with the public sentiment.

Re-elections are around the corner and I need to please the electors as well as the public but I realised that a weakened Germany would hinder the growth of Britain's trade and prosperity. I had to place my personal convictions above the public opinion. Germany's economic strength would enable the creation of employment opportunities in British companies that were selling goods to it. If Germany was crippled, that would mean unemployment in Britain as well. I never said Germany should not pay *any* reparations, I wasn't idealistic in my thinking like Wilson. But Wilson and I did agree on one thing, that Germany needs to be *punished*, not *destroyed*. An ailing Germany, drowning in debts, misery and chaos would make it vulnerable to the spread of Bolshevik Communism as well, a huge threat to the safety of Europe *and* the prevention of future conflicts. This is why I ensured that the memorandum also endorsed the creation of the League of Nations, to please Wilson and secure advantages for Britain. Our mutual support allowed me to persuade Wilson to make German colonies mandates of the League of Nations and Britain gained a right to look after many of them. This was a tremendous victory as essentially, it is an extension of the British empire. Britain no longer needs to agonise over the competition of the colonies with Germany or be concerned about the colonies attaining political autonomy as most of our colonies were allowed to join the League as full members, still governed by us. However, I had to ensure that Britain didn't lose its political dominance. I sent a stern conservative, Balfour, to strongly speak against the league, after the covenant had been established, to corroborate Wilson's promise that the League of Nations will not impede British political independence. All this went smoothly, however convincing Clemenceau to agree to the League of Nations was a laborious task. Oh how he detested Wilson. He was always concerned that Wilson's propositions in the conference would weaken the settlement from the French standpoint. 'If Wilson ended his allocution without doing any perceptible harm, Clemenceau's stern face temporarily relaxed, and he expressed his relief with a deep sigh. But if the President took a flight beyond, as he was occasionally inclined to do without regard to relevance, Clemenceau would open his great eyes in twinkling wonder, and turn them on me as much as to say: "Here he is off again!"' When Clemenceau finally agreed, it was because he perceived the League as an instrument of security to defend newly established European order. He was completely unaware of how

he was disillusioned, as I saw the league as a way to 'mobilise force against the aggressor' rather than waiting around, lobbying like a bunch of diplomatic idiots, finding ways together to avert conflict. But that wasn't all. It was incredibly hard to make Clemenceau abandon his idea of dismembering Germany. He would not compensate, and his dogged determination to not change his view reached a point where Wilson and I promised an alliance and vowed to protect France in case of a German attack or invasion. I'm not sure where Wilson truly stood on this but I did this only to gain his confidence and put an end to his obsession with the occupation of Rhine frontier. Frankly speaking, I do not plan to keep or implement this promise and this was a mere strategy to convince Clemenceau, and he fell right into the mouse's trap. They aren't wrong when they say that emotion blinds the truth in individuals. Clemenceau also agreed that Danzig should be made an independent city under the League of Nations instead of being governed by Poland.

Now, after these relentless discussions and games of rhetorics, I can finally breathe and labour in luxury at the Rue Nitot. I can finally enjoy Paris, marvel at the spectacle of the ice skating dandies and get a taste of the delightful sweet delicacies. I have truly done my part as the arbiter of Europe.

Sincerely

Lloyd George

Entry 2

June 31th, 1919

Dear diary,

It was a sad day today. I received a letter from John Keynes saying that he is resigning from his post as the representative of his Majesty's government in the peace negotiations. The following lines are hurtful to say the least "I can do no more good here. I've on hoping even though these last dreadful weeks that you'd find some way to make of the Treaty a just and expedient document. But now it's apparently too

late. The battle is lost. I leave the twins to gloat over the devastation of Europe, and to assess to taste what remains for the British taxpayer.”

This letter got me thinking on what I truly think of the outcome of the peace process. I had been too busy managing the multiple actors – Wilson, the big headed Clemenceau, our members of parliament who wanted the Kaiser’s head on a plate and our raucous press. At the risk of being pompous, the country and I as the leader have a lot to be proud of. Woodrow Wilson’s 14 commandments at the beginning of the process worried me a lot. His proposals would have seriously damaged British interests in Europe and around the world. But through perseverance and keen eye on our country’s self-interest, I managed a good outcome. It was not easy. Clemenceau was not a man I collaborated with easily. Between the choice of Wilson’s proposal and the French position, I had no choice. Clemenceau was bad-tempered and let his hatred of the Germans to extract a price that might have gone a touch too far. But this is not a time for self-flagellation. I have a number of things to be satisfied about but especially the settlement of territorial contentions, the secured seats for Canada, India, Australia, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa in the League of Nations despite the opposition from Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden and also the limits on German war machine. Germany is limited to 6 battleships, 6 light cruisers, 12 destroyers, 12 torpedo boats and only 1500 navy officers. German’s loss of arsenal, especially its reduced number of battleships and absence of submarines means that we can put an end to the naval race and declare ourselves winners. Britain can domineer the seas and regain its freedom to expand trading routes and colonies without the threat of maritime competition. However, in this process I have lost the support of Keynes.

For all his tiresome ways, I will miss John Keynes. He and I came from opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. We always had our differences but he was a perfectly good man with right intentions. For a man as smart as him, he sure had lofty views on pacifism. If the British public had stuck to the views of him and his friends, we have never entered the war or pressed for absolute victory. At the beginning of the peace negotiations, I did not agree to his initial proposal that we more or less accept the American proposals.

But as the peace process went on, I realised that John made some good points. There is a real danger that we might have extracted too heavy a financial price. And there was no need to allow the French to press German noses into mud by giving them access to German coal and also territories. I had to allow the French some leeway but they went too far. Germany will seek revenge, and mark my words, a great war will have to be fought in 25 years time.

We had many things in common – John and I. As I once told him, he is the most left wing of the market oriented intellectuals. And I was the most socialistic conservative leader he could find this side of the English channel. During our discussions, I discovered our joint admiration of the works of Tom Paine. Deep down, he liked my proposals for progressive taxation, old age pensions, national insurance and reform of the House of Lords. But either he saw me as too interfering in markets or not enough of a liberal when it comes to role of government in social spending.

And I think John also understood that I was not the war hawk that the media tried to make me. I told him that as late as August 2014, I was fundamentally opposed to British participation in the war since it was largely an Austria-Hungarian affair till that point. My opposition to the war along with many of my distinguished colleagues in the cabinet meeting on July 31, 2014 is on the record. But I was always clear that if Germany moved to attack the principality of Belgium or French ports, we should reconsider our position. But history is full of ironies. Once the war broke out, and I was forced to take over the leadership of the cabinet, I had to take a firm stance. People now just remember my aggressive utterances during that time and in the election period, completely forgetting my past positions. Perhaps, that is what political leaders need to live with. Realists and nationalists like me can never be understood by intellectuals. They are stuck in their woolly theories and world-views. The world of politics is about continuous compromise, and they fail to understand that. However, to my surprise, I received a hero's welcome back in Britain. When I returned, the king came out to meet

me at the railway station, 'which was completely unheard of in British history'. That made all the countless discussions, the dissatisfaction and the hardships of the last few months worth the trouble.

Yours,

Lloyd George

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