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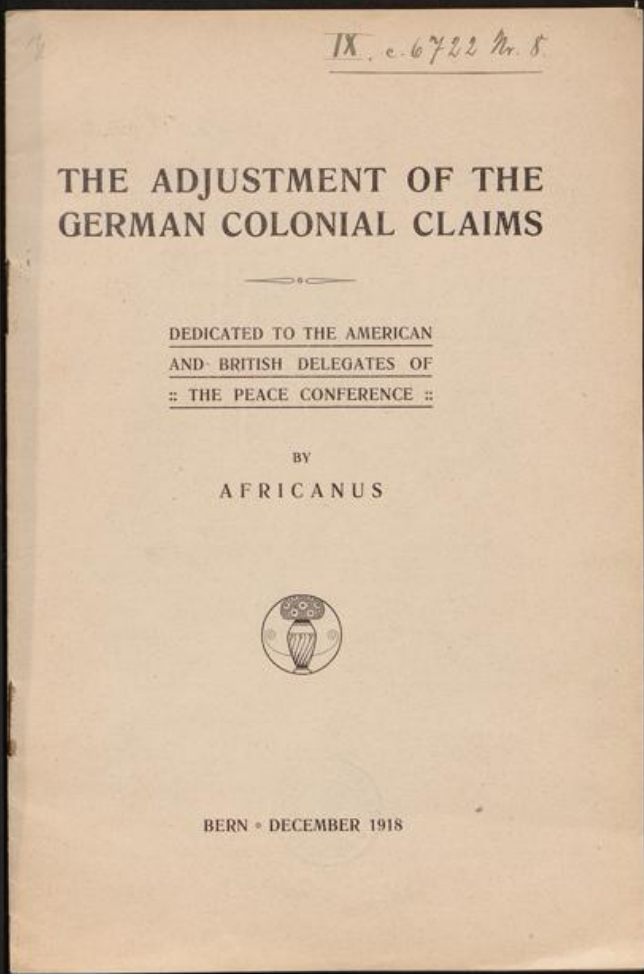
**DFG-Projekt "Digitale Sammlung Deutscher Kolonialismus"**

### **The Adjustment of the German colonial claims**

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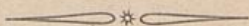
**Bern, 1918**

**urn:nbn:de:gbv:46:1-7908**



IX. c. 6722 Nr. 8.

# THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE GERMAN COLONIAL CLAIMS



DEDICATED TO THE AMERICAN  
AND BRITISH DELEGATES OF  
:: THE PEACE CONFERENCE ::

BY  
AFRICANUS



BERN \* DECEMBER 1918

1929:9



H.c. 6722-8

„Audiatur et altera pars“

When President Wilson in his celebrated speech of January the eighth 1918 issued to the world his Programme of Peace, which he said could be the only conditions of a just and durable peace, and which the Entente and Germany have accepted as a basis of the coming negotiations, he said in Point 5:

*„A free and open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claim of the government whose title is to be determined.“*

Since this emphatic declaration was made, several British and Colonial statesmen have made speeches urging the great danger to the peace of the world and particularly to the safety of the British Empire, if the Germans received back their Colonies as, it was pointed out, the Germans would certainly organize powerfull colonial armies and would utilize their coasts as a base for their submarines.

Meanwhile as the German people in accepting the conditions of the Armistice have acknowledged their military and seapower broken, it must be admitted, that the chief reasons for such arguments have passed away, and that the programme of President Wilson for a World's Peace would render the resumption of their military and naval activities at home or abroad utterly impossible. But so far nothing has been suggested concerning the possible return of her Colonies to Germany and it may be inferred, that in the future these suspicions may still cling to German colonial enterprise and render their efforts at successful colonisation practically useless.



Under these circumstances it would be interesting to make a short investigation of a much debated question viz. If in the past German Colonies were really a danger to other Powers and if in the future such a thing could become possible.

Such suspicions concerning military plans can surely be regarded by the late German Government with a free conscience, *as they never in their 30 years occupation made efforts toward fortifications or such military organisations, as could be considered aggressive towards their neighbours.*

What troops existed were only intended to keep order in the country. The reason, East African forces under General von Lettow-Vorbeck resisted superior numbers as long and successfully as they did, was due first to a most indomitable leader, and secondly to the fact, that two blockade runners managed to bring through some war material.

In an article appearing in the „National Suisse“ of the 6. Nov. 1918 it was stated, that the Germans themselves began offensive measures in Africa in an attack on the Belgian harbour Lukuga on Tanganika, Aug. the 22 nd. 1914, thereby *breaking the International Congo Act. This is an actual misrepresentation of facts, as the colonial war was without any doubt began in all German Colonies by the Entente.* To begin with we may take the attack made by the French on the German station Bonga on the Sanga (Cameroons) on the 6 th of August 1914. This post was not even aware that any war existed. On the night of the 7/8 th of August the German custom-station Singa on the Ubhangi was attacked by the Belgian temporary District Commissioner Tummers of Libenge, and than handed over to the French troops. This post had also no news, that war had broken out, as they had no telegraphic communication with other places, whereas the French in Bangui were already aware of it on August 5th.

On the 8th of August the English cruiser „Pegasus“ bombarded Daressalam, an open harbour and so began the war in East Africa. In South West Africa, hostilities were also commenced by the English on the 14th of September,

when they bombarded the undefended harbour of Swakopmund and on the 15th by the taking of the Station Ramansdrift on the Oranje river.

Notwithstanding these unexpected attacks on their Colonies the German Government communicated, through the Spanish, with Belgium and France with the view of securing their neutrality according to the Congo Act Article 11. Both France and Belgium were ready to acknowledge and consent to this, but on August the 17th the Belgian Ambassador in London communicated to Mr. Davignon the Belgian Minister of foreign affairs, that the British Government could not agree to the French and Belgian proposals.

The insinuation concerning — a future German colonial military activity — loses much of its reason, when it is remembered, how *frequently the German colonial Minister Dr. Solf has declared, in a time, when the German military power was certainly not on the decrease, that the Government would gladly consent to an entire prohibition of a militarisation of all the Colonies.* The Entente however chose to ignore these repeated statements, which can be well understood, if one bears in mind, that they themselves were employing at the time over two millions of coloured troops in this war, while in many Colonies native compulsory service was pressed forward as much as possible, especially in the French Possessions. That France fully intended to continue the development of her colonial army, is clearly shown by a recent article in the „Bulletin de l'Alliance française“, on „The military efforts of our Colonies“, while another article published in the „Journal des Internés français“ on October 13th 1918 deals with the same subject with undisguised frankness.

There is also much to be said about the many charges brought against Germany with regard to her illtreatment of Natives. When this matter comes before an unprejudiced commission, it will be discovered that these charges of brutality can only be brought against certain individuals, who have, in almost every case, incurred the severest criticism

from the German authorities and Press. Also there is an other question, which should be met with a more impartial judgment than it has received. I refer to the suppression of the Herero-and Hottentot rising, which in Germany itself was universally criticised as having been too severe in its measures. These much to be regretted events began by a treacherous attack on the white farmer population by the natives, which was carried out with the utmost cruelty, regardless of sex or age. It is not to be denied, that the steps taken, to bring the natives again into subjection, have been brutal, but in the history of England's colonial expansion, are there not many cases, where native risings were put down with equal or still greater severity? When we remember, that during the Indian Mutiny 1857

... „public speakers and writers were shrieking out for the vengeance, which must be inflicted on India when the Rebellion had been put down. For a while it seemed a question of patriotism which would propose the most savage and sanguinary measures of revenge. We shall see farther on that one distinguished English officer was clamorous to have powers given to him to impale, to burn alive, and to flay mutineers who had taken part in the murder of English women . . . . But when the fullest allowance has been made for all this, it must be said by anyone looking back on that painful time, that some of the public instructors of England betrayed a fury and ferocity which no conditions can excuse on the part of civilised and christian men . . .“  
(Mc. Carthy's Indian Mutiny)

so can we surely understand the feeling of other white men, whose kith and kin had been so brutally murdered by negroes. Until to-day we hear of English measures against rebellion being sharply criticised by their Press, and the comparatively late rebellions in Ceylon and Singapore 1915 were handled in such a way, that it caused the strongest censure in England.

Germans admit, that inexperience in dealing with natives has brought about some undesirable events, but *it does not*

*become England or other colonial Powers, who have in their young colonial days made just the same mistakes, to try and ruin Germany's future abroad on this account.* In most conquests, annexations and suppressions, there has been bloodshed and cruelty, as one, who reads the history of the Mahdi-rising and of the extinction of the Kabyles etc. must confess.

Germany was making rapid strides towards a better government of her Dependencies in Africa. This is admitted and admired by some of the highest British authorities. General Northey who lately commanded the British forces against General von Lettow-Vorbeck said in a speech on the 15th of June 1918 delivered in Capetown, that

... „the Germans were commanded by that redoubtable leader Lettow-Vorbeck whose hand I would be proud to shake, for not only was he a redoubtable enemy, but he fought clean from start to finish“.

Sir Harry Johnston, the former Governor General of Central British Africa said after the conquest of German East Africa in the „Daily News“:

„Germany was lucky enough to have been able to send out several Governors, who understood, how to keep on a friendly footing with the natives. As a matter of fact since about 1890 until the outbreak of war, the German Rule was by no means unpopular in East Africa. The leading chiefs were treated as we treat the Indian Rajahs, and the Arabs were so reconciled to the German Government, that they became their firm allies. European plantations were started in the beautiful hills of Usambara, in the mountains of Usagara and Ukinga. Steamboat traffic was established on the three great lakes and German science was highly successful in developing the riches of this extended territory.....“

Another well known Anglo-African and Colonial politician E. D. Morel in an article in the „Labour Leader“ entitled „The way out“ writes as follows:

.....,I am bound to state, that Sir Harry Johnstons proposal to exclude Germany from any share in African territorial sovereignty appears to me bad and impracticable. From the point of view of the interests of the native population it would be justifiable, if German Rule in Africa had shown itself very much worse then that of other Powers who have exercised, or who exercise African territorial rights. But it has not! There has been nothing comparable in German administration with the hideous tragedies of the Congo Free State and French Congo ....“

Those who bring forward accusations concerning future military plans and an illtreatment of the natives in the German Colonies cannot wish for or believe in a League of Nations. As in that case a general military and naval disarmament would play the leading roll, which would make it impossible for one nation, to impose its will on any other nation or people. If a general disarmament takes place, it is to be presumed, that Colonies will retain certain police forces and there cannot be the slightest possibility, that a small colonial Possession like that of Germany could be any danger to the enormous Possessions of her neighbours England and France; more easily could the contrary be feared.

Also it is to be hoped, that the League of Nations would provide for the protection of the natives. This could be arranged by *the institution of a permanent International Colonial Commission, (which could be attached to the future Arbitration Court) whose duty it would be, to safeguard all native rights, both land and private, and to effectually prevent any coercion of the coloured populations.*

In the coming peace negotiations it will be seen, if the Entente was sincere in her declarations, that the time for the conquest of other nations is for ever passed, as in every conquest by force lies the seed of future wars. Millions of people are waiting to hear, if the universal condemnation of Germany for grasping the fruits of her victory in the East was honestly meant, and if those opinions will be ho-

norably adhered to when the Entente has to deal with those, „to whom they do not wish to be just“.

One must admit, that the above mentioned sentiments are absolutely just and right, *if observed by all countries*. But will England, who has shown until the last Boer War an unparalleled system of conquest, be ready to conform to such a law? — Will France, who since 1871 has enlarged her colonial possessions tenfold by annexations in Tunis, Marocco, Westafrika and the Sudan, Madagascar and Tonkin put a curb on her policy of expansion? —

No one can be blind to the fact, that if the fate of the German Colonies is left only in the hands of Entente Imperialists and Annexionists, they will become a prize to the conquerors. Colonies which have been brought to their present state of development by German hard work and enterprise, whose pioneers faced death and hardships in the opening up of countries, which now never may repay the sacrifice of those brave lives. For instance it was left to the Germans to show Australia the possibilities of a country said to possess one of the worst climates in the world. Thomas J. Mac Mahon, member of the Sidney Chamber of Commerce in writing of his journey to German New Guinea says in the „British Australian“:

..... „The Germans there conduct themselves well, and gave no reason for unrest; they still hold the interests of the country in their hands, they have achieved wonders, and show unfailing proof, that New Guinea is an extremely rich land. The profits gained from their plantations is astounding.“

He then urgently recommended, that the German South Sea Colonies should be annexed by Australia!

Although English statesmen repeatedly declared during the war, that England had no intention of annexing Germany's Colonies, it amounts to the same thing in the end, whether England, her Dominions or any other friends of hers share the booty.

One great difficulty must be faced, if according to the proclaimed self-determination of all peoples, the Negroes of German Africa are to be included: it will be found utterly impossible to carry out such a system in a land, where so many tribes exist, who are often opposed to each other; and even if it were possible, it would bring as a consequence unending discontent amongst the natives all over the world. What is conceded to Duala-Manga in the Cameroons or to the Hottentot Chief Samuel in South West Africa, will be rightfully demanded by the Senegal Chief Samadu, the Kaffer Chief Ketchwayo in South Africa and by the Chief of the Senussi in Tripolis.

In Point 5 of President Wilson's speech he especially emphasises, „that the interests of the population concerned shall have equal weight“, this means nothing less than consulting the Negroes themselves, and if we remember that these natives, many of them of the most limited understanding, have been watching for four years the conquest of the Possessions of their former masters, it must strike every thinking person, their opinion would be utterly prejudiced against the losers in the struggle and so practically valueless; nor must it be forgotten, that an active anti-German Propaganda during the last few years must have had its effect amongst the natives.

Certainly it is to be desired, that the more advanced peoples in Africa, such as those on the Westcoast, should have a voice in their destiny, all this could be regulated by the Commission already alluded to.

In contradiction to certain reports that in the German Colonies the Natives were kept in a sort of slavery, it must be stated, that all their domestic and tribal affairs were settled by their own Chiefs, and that in cases of Europeans versus Natives there were always Natives among the Jury in every Court. The German Government appointed also Labour Commissioners to guard the interests of the coloured labourers. Until the great war there existed in *none* of the



tropical European Possessions in Africa either self-government or self-administration by the Negroes.

*A far more vital question for the present would be the reestablishment of the Solidarity of the White Race in Africa, which has been so wantonly destroyed by those who unfettered the Colonial War. The „Ethiopean Danger“ is not yet out of sight, especially when we consider the fact, that for instance in South Africa there are four natives to every white man, in Tropical Africa more than a hundred to one.*

English Labour Unions demand an „*Internationalisation of Equatorial Africa under the control of the League of Nations*“. This would practically mean a new and enlarged Congo Free State, which should include, besides the German Colonies, also the English, French, Belgian and Portuguese Possessions between the 15th degree of southern and northern latitude. In this State every nationality should be admitted and enjoy equal rights. But it is doubtful, whether all those who are chiefly concerned will agree to such a Union, and whether the question of administration will not prove too complicated. A better solution would be to leave every colonising people their own possessions and declare in all Free Trade.

*There is nothing that would so effectually bring about a worlds peace and peoples reconciliation as Free Trade and a general fair competition of all civilised nations, moreover it would be highly beneficial to the Colonies and their populations.*

It would be a very easy thing to expropriate Germany's Colonies in her present state of weakness, but would it be wise? —

The desire of the German people to colonise has grown every year stronger, especially after the bitter experiences of the Hunger-Blockade, and when her home politics are settled, this will become at once a burning question. A people of seventy millions needs, not only corresponding expansion, but freedom of movement and liberty of trade. The more these are curtailed, the more potently will the emigrating

spirit of the Germans make itself felt in never ending efforts to gain for themselves a field of action abroad. Efforts which will result in a still keener trade „competition“ and a more determined „penetration“ than ever yet brought down the malediction of her enemies.

One has read during the war, especially in the English Press, much concerning „German Intrigues“. As a matter of fact these intrigues generally mean German competition, which arose chiefly from the difference in the social-economical conditions of both countries and which became still more apparent after the English Trademark-Act („Made in Germany-Act“). Further, what was called German penetration was very often the result of the English Patent Laws, in consequence of which hundreds of German firms were compelled — in order to protect their patent rights — to establish manufactories all over the country. Before the war, intrigues probably existed in those countries where England had no sovereignty, but where she wished to create a monopoly for her goods or to establish political influence and looked with disfavour on every similar effort on the part of Germany. But be it understood, these feelings were just as largely shared by the Germans as by the English. During the last four years the fiercest warfare has been carried on against Germany's economical life throughout the whole world; she has naturally done her best to revenge herself when possible, but wherever one travelled before the war, it was the German settlers, who appeared to be the most prosperous, the most orderly and the most loyal to the country they had adopted.

If the former colonial Possessions of Germany are compared with those of other countries, it will at once be seen, that Germany's share was too small for her enormous population and her economical activity.

France had (1910) a population of 39 Millions and abroad she held 11 Millions Square Kilometers carrying a population of 50 Millions, of which 40 Millions are spread over 10 Millions Sq. Km. in Africa alone. Great Britain had



46 Millions of inhabitants and she owned in Colonies 30 Millions Sq. Km. with a 375 Millions population, of which 47 Millions were in Africa, occupying territories as big as those belonging to France, if Egypt and the Sudan were included. Portugal with her 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Millions of inhabitants possessed in Africa 2 Millions Sq. Km. with a population of 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Millions, and Belgium with her 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Millions inhabitants held 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Millions Sq. Km. in the Congo Free State peopled by 20 Millions of natives.

Against this Germany's people numbered 68 Millions and abroad she owned but 3 Millions Sq. Km. carrying 16 Millions of natives.

Also in contrast with the French, Germany's oversea trade was almost double that of the former country. In France in 1911 the deathrate exceeded the birthrate by 36,000 yearly, whereas in Germany the yearly surplus of birth was 800,000, whose nurishment and employment always presented fresh difficulties. It must be also acknowledged, that in the German Colonies equal trading rights were given to all nations, as in the English, while the French extended to their own countrymen every advantage and preference in the matter of custom duties, concessions etc. to the exclusion of other countries.

If the above mentioned colonial Powers would give of their immense colonial Possessions some portion to Germany, naturally for adequate compensation, as was suggested in the negotiations pending in the years 1898 and 1912, and over which England and Germany had come to an understanding in June 1914, it might bring appreciable advantages to all sides. The above mentioned agreement proposed that in order to bring Germany's Colonies together, certain portions of the Belgian and French Congo, Mosambique and Angola should be ceded to her thereby joining Cameroon, German East and South West Africa.

*If Germany possessed Colonies large enough to occupy the enterprise of her people and to supply her with raw material necessary for her large industries, as well as food*

*for her numerous population at home and offering her extended markets for her trade „German penetration“, „Dumping“, and „Intrigues“ would cease for ever.*

Before the war English and Colonial Statesmen freely acknowledged Germany's need for Colonies and were ready to take into account the oversea development of that country. Moreover they saw that a larger colonial Possession by Germany was the best guarantee for a world's peace.

That this was the Opinion of many prominent men and that these convictions were frankly recorded in English history, the following will show:

..... „The disputes with Germany were terminated by mutual concessions, though and our concessions, certainly extensive, did but register the fact that our Government recognized the naturalness and the justice of the claims of Germans to have some share in the last courses of that worldbanquet on which in earlier and less strenuous ages we had so plentifully and profitably dined. After all, it was only the leavings which were in dispute in the eighties; and it was both dignified and just, not to haggle about them too obstinately....“ ..... A people which increases fifty per cent in a generation must be a colonising people, must have a great overseas commerce, must therefore have a great navy.“ (J. Holland Rose, Germany in the Nineteenth Century).

If these were the opinions of many men of sound judgment before the war, it is hard to understand, why they and their Allies should not retain these views to-day, especially, as they have had the satisfaction of achieving their War aims.

In the celebrated speeches of President Wilson and Lloyd George of January 1918 they emphatically declared, that there was no desire on the part of the Allies to destroy Germany or the prosperity of her people, they only wished, that they should take an equal place amongst other nations in the world, but not the place of the Dictator. This „equal place“

is what Germany demands, that and no more! There is room for All in the World! — There must be also room for the German people, who have intellectually, technically and socially attained so much, and who have given to the world so many pioneers of civilisation and culture.

What may one expect, when in the future, under a liberal Democratic Government the German people find opportunity, to unfold their capabilities still more in self-development and progress, when past mistakes and errors are comprehended and corrected, when a young and enterprising Nation can come again in touch with others in mutual admiration and self-respect! —

But no right-minded man can believe, that when President Wilson spoke of „a free and open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims“, he meant to deprive Germany of her Colonies. Those who at the Peace Conference advise the dispossession of Germany of her Colonies will be doing, not only injustice and wrong to the people of a highly populated country, but a double injustice would be done in adding to the Colonies of less populated states at the expense of the vanquished.

*Let those Statesmen who are to-day so bitterly attacking a fallen Nation beware: the result of their influence will surely bring strife and discord! — Men, who, having power and influence over millions, can advocate revenge against the People for the faults of Governments, are no friends of — Peace!*



