

# FAIR DIVISION OF SILESIA

## League's Clear-Cut Decision Offers Substantial Justice to Both Sides

By MERIAN C. COOPER.

**T**HE fate of Upper Silesia, a little precious nugget of land tucked away in the centre of Europe, has just assumed an enormously important place in the history of the world.

To Silesia came four men—a Japanese, a Brazilian, a Spaniard and a Belgian. These four men were equipped with huge powers. They were the representatives of the civilized and civilizing forces of the world, grouped together in a league to enforce world justice, or they were just four little men of stranger races sent by a larger and yet more futile committee of mixed people to talk and talk and nothing more. It is just this difference as to what these men really were, and what they could do, that makes Upper Silesia a question of such tremendous importance. If the decision of the Council of the League of Nations holds—and it seems now as if it will—despite the angry claims of Germany and Poland, and the scarcely less unreconcilable state of the diplomatic minds of England and France, it will mean that a new spirit, a new power has begun to function in this strife-torn, chaotic world of ours. The success of this decision will affect to a degree, the importance of which cannot be overestimated, the minds of those men who are meeting at the disarmament congress in Washington for the first practical step in an international combination for world peace and justice which has ever been accomplished. Something practical is what has been needed to convince men that the peoples of the world can act not as separate, selfish little races, but together as united mankind.

The howl of astonished anguish which is now being emitted by Germany over the decision of the Council of the League of Nations is real enough, yet a study of the actual boundary line settled upon shows that Germany has received no injustice. It is true that she has lost three small German cities—Beuthen, Königshütte and Kattowitz—where the plebiscite voting showed a majority of German population, but, in like manner, Germany has been given Glewitz and Zabrze, in which the plebiscite vote was won by Poland. In actual territory Germany has received almost three-quarters of the entire Upper Silesian plebiscite area. And yet she howls. She wants it all. At the present writing no dispatch has reached American newspapers from Poland, yet, having been in Poland during the Korfanty Silesian revolution, and being fully cognizant of the popular sentiment there, I am quite sure that Poland also thinks that this decision renders her a grave injustice.

### Allies' First Purpose.

To understand the bitterness of both Germany and Poland it is necessary to review what has happened about Upper Silesia since the signing of the armistice. In the turmoil and confusion in Central Europe after the wreck of the German war machine both the mixed German and Polish population of Upper Silesia commenced a private little war of their own for possession, which has continued, off and on, until today. The first draft of the peace terms presented by the allied and associated powers at Versailles on May 29, 1919, gave Upper Silesia outright to Poland. A consider-

able portion of the German answer in protest was devoted to the Silesian question. The reply of the Allies granting a plebiscite admits that there is a difference between the claims of Poland to Upper Silesia and her right to Posen and West Prussia in that the latter two districts had been lost to Poland when the Polish territories were dismembered by the partition, while Upper Silesia had not. But this document went on to say, speaking of Poland's Silesian claims:

"It is emphatically not true that she has no claim which could be supported on the principles of President Wilson. In the district to be ceded the majority of the population is indisputably Polish. Every German book of reference, every schoolbook, teaches the German child that the inhabitants are Polish in origin and speech. The allied and associated powers would have been acting in complete violation of the principles which the German Government itself professes to accept had they left unregarded the Polish claims to this district."

The Poles cannot forget that Lloyd George was one of the constructors of this response by the Allies to Germany. It is, therefore, easy to comprehend the storm of indignation which passed over Poland when Lloyd George, in his speech before the British Parliament in May of this year, completely turned coat and declared Upper Silesia to be both racially and historically German.

The Poles also think they have a distinct grievance in the manner in which the plebiscite was held. The Allied Commission permitted a class of voters known as the "plebiscite emigrants" to vote. This class included persons born on the plebiscite territory, but not residing there, called "natives but not residents." During the year and a half of preparation before the plebiscite Poland was in the throes of a great and almost overwhelmingly disastrous war with Russia, and was unable to obtain the return of her emigrant population to Silesia, while Germany, with a far more stable Government and in every way better equipped and organized, managed to so far take advantage of this plan that she sent 182,000 voting emigrants back to Silesia, while Poland only returned some 10,000. This gave as a result that over 25 per cent. of the total German vote were persons returned specially for the purpose of voting who did not actually reside in Upper Silesia, while the number of returned Polish emigrants amounted to only 2 per cent. The effect of this on the actual plebiscite vote was to give Germany a winning margin in many of the disputed districts.

When the count of this March 20 plebiscite was known the Polish population of Upper Silesia made a grave error. Under the leadership of a hot-headed, patriotic, but very able Pole, Korfanty, the Poles attempted by revolution to take Upper Silesia by force of arms. This action of the Upper Silesian Poles, which was not officially supported by the Polish Government, was to turn popular sympathy throughout the world in favor of Germany. The German reply itself was to answer force by force. France took the side of Poland, England that of Germany—both purely for selfish and political reasons—and it seemed for days as if Europe once more was to be

engaged in a sanguinary and unnecessary war. By very determined and forcible means the Allied Commission in Silesia was finally able to halt hostilities and to force more or less general disarmament of the opposing forces. The contest then went before the Peace Conference in Paris. France refused to desert its ally, Poland. To France a strong Poland on the eastern flank of Germany is imperatively necessary. Also the French military experts are convinced that a Germany short of its Silesian coal mines and industrial district would be a less formidable enemy. Lloyd George, on the other hand, apparently believes that Germany must have the wealth of Upper Silesia to aid in the fulfillment of her reparation obligations. So England remained firm in its support of the German claims.

### A Fair Decision.

Thus it was that the allied leaders—at a complete deadlock—determined to let the matter be decided by the Council of the League of Nations, which, until this time, had since its formation steadily been growing weaker and weaker in actual political importance in Europe. The action of this Council on the Upper Silesian question showed an amazing sanity and strength contrary to the expectation of the greater portion of the European people. It selected a commission of four who seemed as nearly impartial as possible. Of the four nations represented, if a sentiment of partisanship existed it most surely was on the side of Germany. Spain was notably throughout the war a pro-German country; Japan with its present desire for renewal of the English-Japanese alliance would appear to wish to follow out England's determination to give Silesia to the Germans; Brazil is known to have a large and exceedingly powerful German population. Belgium alone could be considered pro-French, and, therefore, pro-Polish. On the decision of such a commission it would seem that Germany had the odds in her favor. That a storm of protest came from Germany when the decision of the League of Nations was made known indicates that Germany would have protested any decision that did not give her all of Upper Silesia. The commission, if partial at all, was partial to her, but Germany believes she should have the whole hog. Therefore, the wailing and gnashing of teeth. In like manner I am sure that Poland considers herself harshly treated by this same decision which Germany finds so unacceptable and galling.

A careful review of the League of Nations Council Commission shows what is as near an act of impartial justice as is now possible. Of the country districts Poland receives Pless and Rybnik, in both of which she had an overwhelming majority in the plebiscite vote, Germany receives all the country districts to the north and centre, Rosenberg, Kreuzberg, Opoln, Grosstrelitz, Tost, Kosel, Oberglogan, Löbeschütz and Ratibor, despite the fact that Grosstrelitz showed a small Polish majority in the plebiscite voting. In the industrial area, Germany received Glewitz and Zabrze though Poland had a majority in both these places. The districts of Tarnowitz and Lublinitz are divided. In the former Poland had a large majority in the plebiscite voting while Germany had a small majority in the latter. The loss of the cities of Königschuette and Kattowitz, where Germany had decided majorities, is the chief cause of the Teuton protest, although these cities lie in the centre of country districts which voted decidedly for Poland. About the districts of Polish majority which the commission gives to Germany the Germans say nothing.

It is evident that the League of Nations Council Commission decided as nearly as possible to divide the actual economic wealth of Upper Silesia between the contending parties while at the same time regarding the wishes of the population expressed in the plebiscite vote. Then, by an excellent plan of economic and political stipulations respecting legal currency, customs, railways, water and electrical supplies, guaranteed that the normal economic and political life of divided Upper Silesia shall continue until time has cooled the hot hatred roused during the last two years of conflict.

This decision of the League of Nations on Upper Silesia is illuminatingly important. Here are two contending nations, both believing themselves to be right on a matter so vital that they are willing to fight "to the last man" to gain their ends. In the near distance one sees the allies of each ready to back them to the utmost limit for coldly selfish purposes. All Europe is involved in the quarrel. A decision by the contending powers or by a council composed of its allies proves utterly impossible. The old solutions of such a case were by war or arbitration. Here the old style arbitration failed. The Supreme Council, with France representing Poland and England supporting Germany, can decide nothing. With the peace of Europe hanging in the balance, that a council composed of representatives of nations, two of which are located on the other side of the globe, has successfully found a solution to the quarrel, and that the League of Nations is enforcing this solution, gives an example of the righteousness and power of united world action which points to the dawn of a new era for mankind.