

THE  
PEACE NEGOTIATIONS  
A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

BY  
ROBERT LANSING

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

# THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

BY  
ROBERT LANSING

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
*The Riverside Press Cambridge*

COPYRIGHT, 1921, BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

*Copyright is reserved in the following countries under the copyright convention proclaimed July 13, 1914: Argentine Republic, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Salvador, Uruguay, and Venezuela.*

*All rights reserved, including that of translation into foreign languages, including the Scandinavian*

## CONTENTS

I. REASONS FOR WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE	3
II. MR. WILSON'S PRESENCE AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE	14
III. GENERAL PLAN FOR A LEAGUE OF NATIONS	28
IV. SUBSTITUTE ARTICLES PROPOSED	48
V. THE AFFIRMATIVE GUARANTY AND BALANCE OF POWER	77
VI. THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN AND THE CECIL PLAN	81
VII. SELF-DETERMINATION	91
VIII. THE CONFERENCE OF JANUARY 10, 1919	106
IX. A RESOLUTION INSTEAD OF THE COVENANT	109
X. THE GUARANTY IN THE REVISED COVENANT	122
XI. INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION	126
XII. REPORT OF COMMISSION ON LEAGUE OF NATIONS	134
XIII. THE SYSTEM OF MANDATES	149
XIV. DIFFERENCES AS TO THE LEAGUE RECAPITULATED	162
XV. THE PROPOSED TREATY WITH FRANCE	178
XVI. LACK OF AN AMERICAN PROGRAMME	190
XVII. SECRET DIPLOMACY	213
XVIII. THE SHANTUNG SETTLEMENT	243
XIX. THE BULLITT AFFAIR	268
CONCLUSION	278

## APPENDICES

I. THE PRESIDENT'S ORIGINAL DRAFT OF THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, LAID BEFORE THE AMERICAN COMMISSION ON JANUARY 10, 1919	281
---	-----

II. LEAGUE OF NATIONS PLAN OF LORD ROBERT CECIL	295
III. THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES	299
IV. THE FOURTEEN POINTS	314
V. PRINCIPLES DECLARED BY PRESIDENT WILSON IN HIS ADDRESS OF FEBRUARY 11, 1918	317
VI. THE ARTICLES OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES RELATING TO SHANTUNG	318
INDEX	321

## THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

## CHRONOLOGY

The Declaration of the Fourteen Points	<i>January 18, 1918</i>
Declaration of Four Additional Bases of Peace	<i>February 11, 1918</i>
Departure of Colonel House for Paris to represent the President on Supreme War Council	<i>October 17, 1918</i>
Signature of Armistice, 5 A.M.; effective, 11 A.M.	<i>November 11, 1918</i>
Departure of President and American Commission for France	<i>December 4, 1918</i>
Arrival of President and American Commission in Paris	<i>December 14, 1918</i>
Meeting of Supreme War Council	<i>January 12, 1919</i>
First Plenary Session of Peace Conference	<i>January 25, 1919</i>
Plenary Session at which Report on the League of Nations was Submitted	<i>February 14, 1919</i>
Departure of President from Paris for United States	<i>February 14, 1919</i>
President lands at Boston	<i>February 24, 1919</i>
Departure of President from New York for France	<i>March 5, 1919</i>
President arrives in Paris	<i>March 14, 1919</i>
Organization of Council of Four	<i>About March 24, 1919</i>
President's public statement in regard to Fiume	<i>April 23, 1919</i>
Adoption of Commission's Report on League of Nations by the Conference	<i>April 28, 1919</i>
The Shantung Settlement	<i>April 30, 1919</i>
Delivery of the Peace Treaty to the German Plenipotentiaries	<i>May 7, 1919</i>
Signing of Treaty of Versailles	<i>June 28, 1919</i>
Signing of Treaty of Assistance with France	<i>June 28, 1919</i>
Departure of President for the United States	<i>June 28, 1919</i>
Departure of Mr. Lansing from Paris for United States	<i>July 12, 1919</i>
Hearing of Mr. Lansing before Senate Committee on Foreign Relations	<i>August 6, 1919</i>
Conference of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations with the President at the White House	<i>August 19, 1919</i>
Hearing of Mr. Bullitt before Senate Committee on Foreign Relations	<i>September 12, 1919</i>
Return of President to Washington from tour of West	<i>September 28, 1919</i>
Resignation of Mr. Lansing as Secretary of State	<i>February 13, 1920</i>

# THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

∴

## CHAPTER I

### REASONS FOR WRITING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE

“WHILE we were still in Paris, I felt, and have felt increasingly ever since, that you accepted my guidance and direction on questions with regard to which I had to instruct you only with increasing reluctance. . . .

“ . . . I must say that it would relieve me of embarrassment, Mr. Secretary, the embarrassment of feeling your reluctance and divergence of judgment, if you would give your present office up and afford me an opportunity to select some one whose mind would more willingly go along with mine.”

These words are taken from the letter which President Wilson wrote to me on February 11, 1920. On the following day I tendered my resignation as Secretary of State by a letter, in which I said:

“Ever since January, 1919, I have been conscious of the fact that you no longer were disposed to welcome my advice in matters pertaining to the negotiations in Paris, to our foreign service, or to international affairs in general. Holding these views I would, if I had consulted my personal inclination alone, have resigned as Secretary of State and as a Commissioner to Negotiate Peace. I felt, however, that such a step might have been misinterpreted both at home and abroad, and that it was my duty to cause you no embarrassment in carrying forward the great task in which you were then engaged.”



The President was right in his impression that, "while we were still in Paris," I had accepted his guidance and direction with reluctance. It was as correct as my statement that, as early as January, 1919, I was conscious that he was no longer disposed to welcome my advice in matters pertaining to the peace negotiations at Paris.

There have been obvious reasons of propriety for my silence until now as to the divergence of judgment, the differences of opinion and the consequent breach in the relations between President Wilson and myself. They have been the subject of speculation and inference which have left uncertain the true record. The time has come when a frank account of our differences can be given publicity without a charge being made of disloyalty to the Administration in power.

The President, in his letter of February 11, 1920, from which the quotation is made, indicated my unwillingness to follow him in the course which he adopted at Paris, but he does not specifically point out the particular subjects as to which we were not in accord. It is unsatisfactory, if not criticizable, to leave the American people in doubt as to a disagreement between two of their official representatives upon a matter of so grave importance to the country as the negotiation of the Treaty of Versailles. They are entitled to know the truth in order that they may pass judgment upon the merits of the differences which existed. I am not willing that the present uncertainty as to the facts should continue. Possibly some may think that

I have remained silent too long. If I have, it has been only from a sense of obligation to an Administration of which I was so long a member. It has not been through lack of desire to lay the record before the public.

The statements which will be made in the succeeding pages will not be entirely approved by some of my readers. In the circumstances it is far too much to expect to escape criticism. The review of facts and the comments upon them may be characterized in certain quarters as disloyal to a superior and as violative of the seal of silence which is considered generally to apply to the intercourse and communications between the President and his official advisers. Under normal conditions such a characterization would not be unjustified. But the present case is different from the usual one in which a disagreement arises between a President and a high official of his Administration.

Mr. Wilson made our differences at Paris one of the chief grounds for stating that he would be pleased to take advantage of my expressed willingness to resign. The manifest imputation was that I had advised him wrongly and that, after he had decided to adopt a course contrary to my advice, I had continued to oppose his views and had with reluctance obeyed his instructions. Certainly no American official is in honor bound to remain silent under such an imputation which approaches a charge of faithlessness and of a secret, if not open, avoidance of duty. He has, in my judgment, the right to present the case to the American people in order that they may decide

whether the imputation was justified by the facts, and whether his conduct was or was not in the circumstances in accord with the best traditions of the public service of the United States.

A review of this sort becomes necessarily a personal narrative, which, because of its intimate nature, is embarrassing to the writer, since he must record his own acts, words, desires, and purposes, his own views as to a course of action, and his own doubts, fears, and speculations as to the future. If there were another method of treatment which would retain the authoritative character of a personal statement, it would be a satisfaction to adopt it. But I know of none. The true story can only be told from the intimate and personal point of view. As I intend to tell the true story I offer no further apology for its personal character.

Before beginning a recital of the relations existing between President Wilson and myself during the Paris Conference, I wish to state, and to emphasize the statement, that I was never for a moment unmindful that the Constitution of the United States confides to the President the absolute right of conducting the foreign relations of the Republic, and that it is the duty of a Commissioner to follow the President's instructions in the negotiation of a treaty. Many Americans, some of whom are national legislators and solicitous about the Constitution, seem to have ignored or to have forgotten this delegation of exclusive authority, with the result that they have condemned

the President in intemperate language for exercising this executive right. As to the wisdom of the way in which Mr. Wilson exercised it in directing the negotiations at Paris individual opinions may differ, but as to the legality of his conduct there ought to be but one mind. From first to last he acted entirely within his constitutional powers as President of the United States.

The duties of a diplomatic representative commissioned by the President and given full powers to negotiate a treaty are, in addition to the formal carrying out of his instructions, twofold, namely, to advise the President during the negotiation of his views as to the wise course to be adopted, and to prevent the President, in so far as possible, from taking any step in the proceedings which may impair the rights of his country or may be injurious to its interests. These duties, in my opinion, are equally imperative whether the President directs the negotiations through written instructions issuing from the White House or conducts them in person. For an American plenipotentiary to remain silent, and by his silence to give the impression that he approves a course of action which he in fact believes to be wrong in principle or contrary to good policy, constitutes a failure to perform his full duty to the President and to the country. It is his duty to speak and to speak frankly and plainly.

With this conception of the obligations of a Commissioner to Negotiate Peace, obligations which were the more compelling in my case because of my official position

as Secretary of State, I felt it incumbent upon me to offer advice to the President whenever it seemed necessary to me to consider the adoption of a line of action in regard to the negotiations, and particularly so when the indications were that the President purposed to reach a decision which seemed to me unwise or impolitic. Though from the first I felt that my suggestions were received with coldness and my criticisms with disfavor, because they did not conform to the President's wishes and intentions, I persevered in my efforts to induce him to abandon in some cases or to modify in others a course which would in my judgment be a violation of principle or a mistake in policy. It seemed to me that duty demanded this, and that, whatever the consequences might be, I ought not to give tacit assent to that which I believed wrong or even injudicious.

The principal subjects, concerning which President Wilson and I were in marked disagreement, were the following: His presence in Paris during the peace negotiations and especially his presence there as a delegate to the Peace Conference; the fundamental principles of the constitution and functions of a League of Nations as proposed or advocated by him; the form of the organic act, known as the "Covenant," its elaborate character and its inclusion in the treaty restoring a state of peace; the treaty of defensive alliance with France; the necessity for a definite programme which the American Commissioners could follow in carrying on the negotiations; the employment of private interviews and confidential agreements in reaching

settlements, a practice which gave color to the charge of "secret diplomacy"; and, lastly, the admission of the Japanese claims to possession of German treaty rights at Kiao-Chau and in the Province of Shantung.

Of these seven subjects of difference the most important were those relating to the League of Nations and the Covenant, though our opposite views as to Shantung were more generally known and more frequently the subject of public comment. While chief consideration will be given to the differences regarding the League and the Covenant, the record would be incomplete if the other subjects were omitted. In fact nearly all of these matters of difference are more or less interwoven and have a collateral, if not a direct, bearing upon one another. They all contributed in affecting the attitude of President Wilson toward the advice that I felt it my duty to volunteer, an attitude which was increasingly impatient of unsolicited criticism and suggestion and which resulted at last in the correspondence of February, 1920, that ended with the acceptance of my resignation as Secretary of State.

The review of these subjects will be, so far as it is possible, treated in chronological order, because, as the matters of difference increased in number, they gave emphasis to the divergence of judgment which existed between the President and myself. The effect was cumulative, and tended not only to widen the breach, but to make less and less possible a restoration of our former relations. It

was my personal desire to support the President's views concerning the negotiations at Paris, but, when in order to do so it became necessary to deny a settled conviction and to suppress a conception of the true principle or the wise policy to be followed, I could not do it and feel that to give support under such conditions accorded with true loyalty to the President of the United States.

It was in this spirit that my advice was given and my suggestions were made, though in doing so I believed it justifiable to conform as far as it was possible to the expressed views of Mr. Wilson, or to what seemed to be his views, concerning less important matters and to concentrate on those which seemed vital. I went in fact as far as I could in adopting his views in the hope that my advice would be less unpalatable and would, as a consequence, receive more sympathetic consideration. Believing that I understood the President's temperament, success in an attempt to change his views seemed to lie in moderation and in partial approval of his purpose rather than in bluntly arguing that it was wholly wrong and should be abandoned. This method of approach, which seemed the expedient one at the time, weakened, in some instances at least, the criticisms and objections which I made. It is very possible that even in this diluted form my views were credited with wrong motives by the President so that he suspected my purpose. It is to be hoped that this was the true explanation of Mr. Wilson's attitude of mind, for the alternative forces a conclusion as to the cause for his re-

sentful reception of honest differences of opinion, which no one, who admires his many sterling qualities and great attainments, will willingly accept.

Whatever the cause of the President's attitude toward the opinions which I expressed on the subjects concerning which our views were at variance — and I prefer to assume that the cause was a misapprehension of my reasons for giving them — the result was that he was disposed to give them little weight. The impression made was that he was irritated by opposition to his views, however moderately urged, and that he did not like to have his judgment questioned even in a friendly way. It is, of course, possible that this is not a true estimate of the President's feelings. It may do him an injustice. But his manner of meeting criticism and his disposition to ignore opposition can hardly be interpreted in any other way.

There is the alternative possibility that Mr. Wilson was convinced that, after he had given a subject mature consideration and reached a decision, his judgment was right or at least better than that of any adviser. A conviction of this nature, if it existed, would naturally have caused him to feel impatient with any one who attempted to controvert his decisions and would tend to make him believe that improper motives induced the opposition or criticism. This alternative, which is based of necessity on a presumption as to the temperament of Mr. Wilson that an unprejudiced and cautious student of personality would hesitate to adopt, I mention only because there



were many who believed it to be the correct explanation of his attitude. In view of my intimate relations with the President prior to the Paris Conference I feel that in justice to him I should say that he did not, except on rare occasions, resent criticism of a proposed course of action, and, while he seemed in a measure changed after departing from the United States in December, 1918, I do not think that the change was sufficient to justify the presumption of self-assurance which it would be necessary to adopt if the alternative possibility is considered to furnish the better explanation.

It is, however, natural, considering what occurred at Paris, to search out the reason or reasons for the President's evident unwillingness to listen to advice when he did not solicit it, and for his failure to take all the American Commissioners into his confidence. But to attempt to dissect the mentality and to analyze the intellectual processes of Woodrow Wilson is not my purpose. It would only invite discussion and controversy as to the truth of the premises and the accuracy of the deductions reached. The facts will be presented and to an extent the impressions made upon me at the time will be reviewed, but impressions of that character which are not the result of comparison with subsequent events and of mature deliberation are not always justified. They may later prove to be partially or wholly wrong. They have the value, nevertheless, of explaining in many cases why I did or did not do certain things, and of disclosing the