

LIECHTENSTEIN.

15858

22 JUL 19 AM

1. Liechtenstein is a Principality with a population of about 10,000. In the West and on the South it borders with Switzerland; on all other sides with Vorarlberg, being completely surrounded by the two, so that it has no access to the outer world except through Switzerland or Vorarlberg. It is of no importance in any way except for the fact that the main line of railway from Zurich to Vienna passes through its territory.

2. There seems no doubt that Liechtenstein is at this moment a sovereign and independent State. Not to go into earlier history, it was included in 1815 in the Germanic Confederation in the same position as the other smallest German States; on the dissolution of the Confederation in 1866 any restriction on its sovereignty which arose from its membership of the Confederation disappeared. It is one of the curiosities of history that though with the other South German States and Austria it was involved in the war of 1866 with Prussia, apparently through inadvertance, it was excluded from the Treaty of Peace. From 1866 to 1914 it has technically maintained its position as an independent State. In 1876 it entered into a Treaty with Austria-Hungary by which commercial union which had existed since 1852 was renewed and modified. This Treaty established very close relations between Liechtenstein and Vorarlberg and in practice assimilates the administration of Liechtenstein to that of Vorarlberg in regard to such matters as international customs excise. The Treaty however throughout scrupulously maintains in all matters of form the sovereign rights of the Principality of Liechtenstein, for instance Austrian officers and servants stationed in Liechtenstein have for the time of their service



in Liechtenstein to promise obedience and fidelity to His Supreme Highness the Prince of Liechtenstein. In the Treaties of Brest Litovsk, so far as they deal with matters of customs, Liechtenstein is specially mentioned and not included in Austria-Hungary.

Apparently such correspondence as has been necessary between Liechtenstein and other countries was before 1914 in fact conducted through the Minister of Foreign Affairs at Vienna, but the evidence on this point is not accessible here.

It is also to be noted that the reigning Prince of Liechtenstein has held service under the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the diplomatic service. None the less, close as the relationship has been, there is no doubt that Liechtenstein was in fact up to 1914 a sovereign and independent State.

3. The Government of the Principality maintains, and I think maintains successfully, the position that Liechtenstein has observed neutrality. There is no military service in the Principality and no army, and there is no evidence that the inhabitants of the Principality have fought in the Austrian Army. They appeal to the statement made by Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons on November 17th, 1914:

"I am informed by the United States Ambassador that the Sovereign Principality of Liechtenstein considers itself neutral in the present hostilities. No prohibition of commercial or other dealings with the subjects of the Prince has been published."
Hansard, 1914, Vol. LXVIII, Page 310.

There has been on several occasions correspondence between the Government of Liechtenstein and the Entente Powers, but the difficulties which arose seem to have been concerned not with the neutrality of the State, but with questions as to enforcement of the blockade and the action of individual citizens of Liechtenstein. Correspondence was carried on by the Government of Liechtenstein through the channel of the Swiss and, before the entrance of America into the war, the American

diplomatic representatives at Vienna. During the course of the war M. Emil Beck appears to have been appointed diplomatic representative of Lichtenstein.

There seems to me no doubt that Liechtenstein has in fact not been involved in the war and it remains therefore not only an independent, but also a friendly State.

4. The Prince of Liechtenstein has by two notes, undated, which reached the British Delegation on June 5th, asked (1) to be represented as a neutral at the Peace Conference, and (2) to be admitted as a member of the League of Nations.

A point to which he clearly attaches much importance is that he is the owner of a castle and large property within Czecho-Slovakian territory and he is apparently desirous to establish the principle that if he is recognised as he desires, there would be international recognition to certain privileges attached to this property. I assume that in this he is misinformed, and that his rights of ownership in property held in another Southern State would in no way be affected by his recognition as a Sovereign Prince.

It does not appear that any answer has been sent to either of these notes.

5. It will however clearly be necessary that a definite decision as to the international status of Liechtenstein should be taken. The practical problem obviously depends upon the future of Vorarlberg and in general on that of German-Austria. We have the following alternatives: (a) if Vorarlberg remains a part of the Republic of Austria, there seems no reason why Liechtenstein should not continue in the position it has previously held. It would be a Sovereign State; for practical purposes it would be essential that it should be very closely joined for customs and other purposes either to the Republic of

of Austria or to Switzerland. Probably what would happen would be that the Principality would enter into relations with the Republic of Austria similar to those which have already existed, but if he preferred to join himself in a Customs Union to Switzerland and the Swiss were willing, no objection need be raised by any other Power. It is to be noted that the Prince has recognised the Republic of Austria and sent a diplomatic representative to Vienna.

(b) It is however possible that Vorarlberg may eventually join the Swiss Confederation. In that case Liechtenstein would be an enclave entirely surrounded by Switzerland. Under these circumstances we have two possible courses. Liechtenstein might give up its international status and join the Swiss Confederation; it is however to be assumed that the Swiss would not accept this so long as the monarchical form of Government remained. On the other hand, without actually joining the Confederation Liechtenstein might enter into a relationship to it similar to that which Monaco has towards France, or San Marino to Italy, preserving merely the fiction of sovereignty.

In the latter case Liechtenstein would obviously cease to have any possibility of independent intercourse with other States. In neither case does it seem that any immediate action is required from the Allied and Associated Powers, but it may be suggested that it would be a mere act of courtesy that some answer should be made to the communications which have been received. Such an answer might come either from the Principal Allied and Associated Powers jointly or from each of them individually. The purport of the answer in either case would be merely that they have taken note of the communications addressed to them, that they recognise that Liechtenstein is in fact an independent and friendly State, and that they are willing that the future relations

of Liechtenstein to the States to which it is contiguous should be determined by a friendly arrangement made with them.

6. The only matter which remains is the application for Liechtenstein to enter the League of Nations. I do not think that there is any other State comparable in size from which such an application has been received or is likely to be received. The only parallel cases in Europe are Monaco, San Marino and Andora, and they are obviously excluded because they are in fact complete enclaves and no longer maintain even the appearance of international sovereignty. The question will eventually have to be decided by the League of Nations itself; I see no reason why Liechtenstein should not be admitted provided it does not enter into any Treaty with another State by which it divests itself of the international status which it now possesses.

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(How disposed of.)

Position of Liechtenstein. (Docket.)

Discusses international position of Liechtenstein. Up to 1914 it was undoubtedly a sovereign & independent state & there appears to be no evidence to refute claim that it has observed neutrality during the war. Refers to notes from Prince Liechtenstein requesting representation at Peace Conference & admission to League of Nations. Points out close association of question with that of Vorarlberg & discusses alternative solutions if latter should remain in Austria or should join Switzerland. No immediate action is required by Allies but some acknowledgment should be sent to notes of Prince. There appears to be no reason why Liechtenstein should not be admitted to League of Nations.

(Minutes.)

List.

7.11.19
2/7

W. Wilson

See page 100

I have asked Mr

Balfour to propose at the

Council of Four that the

question of the Vorarlberg and

of Liechtenstein be referred to

the same committee that is

dealing with the "Italian clause"

of the Austrian treaty.

Mr. Balfour is generally

in favour of not now dealing with

the

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(Last Paper.)

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(Action completed.)

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