

*Co-operation by Sovereign States*

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COMMUNITIES MUST BE UNIFIED WITHIN THEMSELVES before their governments can work together effectively for common ends. That is why the development of nationalism was a condition precedent to the building of any co-operative international organization.

Parochial loyalties, so pronounced in the Canadian province of Quebec, and in the southern states of the United States, unquestionably impede the growth of nationalism and make the centralized direction of a nation's foreign policy more difficult. Yet the doctrine of home rule, or "state's rights" as the localization of political power is known in our Federal Republic, represents much more than a mere conservative fidelity to inherited customs.

As charity begins at home, so should political action. Aristotle was convinced of this and it was also the constant theme of such great Hebrew prophets as Isaiah. Faith in local self-government, in which the American colonists were well trained, is the foundation of the Constitution of the United States. A staunch New Englander, Gamaliel Bradford, pointed a nice paradox when he chose *Lee the American* as the title for a biography of the patriotic Virginian whose technical treason still seems

to many as laudable as that of George Washington before him.

The political dilemma partially solved for the United States by its Constitution, but still largely unresolved for the world as a whole today, is how to achieve the benefits of orderly inter-state co-operation without sacrificing the values inherent in state sovereignty.

The type of consolidation most frequently attempted is that which was described long since in the ancient fable of the Gordian Knot. Alexander, told that whosoever could unloose that recalcitrant tangle would hold the gorgeous East in fee, proceeded to slice the knot apart with his sword.

This method of arbitrary subjection, by military dictatorship, has been attempted time and again. The militant Communism of Soviet Russia is only the latest exposition of the theory of world rule by an elite or "chosen" people. And it is not without highly respectable indorsement. Isaiah has been mentioned. While he predicted the day when nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares", he also promised Zion that: "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers".<sup>1</sup>

The political lesson of the New Testament, as distinct from the Old, is that in the sight of God there are no such people as "the sons of the alien". In this gospel of universal brotherhood and natural human dignity lies one of the great landmarks of political, as well as religious, thought. For it led naturally, and indeed continues to lead, towards concerted Christian effort for the unity of

<sup>1</sup> Chs. 2:4 and 61:5.

peoples based on "the tolerance of variety" rather than "the imposition of uniformity".<sup>2</sup>

Roman political theory, under the Empire, was that all conquered peoples should coalesce with Rome, on terms that were frequently both generous and enlightened. A large measure of autonomy was given to the many provincial towns, more willingly because their government was generally modelled on that of Rome itself. Local customs were respected. Diversity in all matters not of major imperial interest was tolerated. But the provinces were always subject. And as the strain of imperial defense became more burdensome, as taxation increased and the machinery of government became more complicated and more centralized, the amount of local autonomy was steadily curtailed. The Roman Empire was never a union of equal sovereignties, and became steadily more of a military dictatorship, as its end approached.

Almost alone of the cities brought within the Roman Empire, Athens, because of its cultural repute, was permitted a nominal independence. And it was in Athens, where the citizens "spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing", that the Apostle Paul first foreshadowed the philosophy of modern international organization. In Paul's words: "God that made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> F. Melian Stawell: *The Growth of International Thought* (New York: Henry Holt & Company; 1930), Ch. I.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 17:21, 24-26.

It is not within the competence of this study to weight, or even catalog, the reasons why early and medieval Christendom failed to achieve any lasting political unity in Europe. But it is certain that the Protestant Reformation, whether or not justified by results, both coincided with and stimulated the separatist nationalisms on which the contemporary effort for international organization is based.

Scientific progress, especially the conjunction of stratoplanes and atom bombs, has now gone far to reduce national frontiers to the insignificant proportions in which Paul saw them. Also we have begun to learn again what Paul realized on the road to Damascus—that ideas permeate political barriers; that the future does not belong, as he told the Athenians, to those who “think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device”.

Foreign policy, like any other aspect of politics, must have some “Godhead”, some permanent standards, or else be merely opportunistic. It could well be that to achieve peace the foreign policy of the future will have to adhere more closely to the teachings of Paul than to the less ethical methods of either Alexander or Machiavelli.

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THE FIRST world-wide attempt to find a workable substitute for modern international anarchy was the League of Nations. This heroic effort was a natural sequel to a

war that had demonstrated simultaneously the destructiveness of modern weapons, the organizing capacity of the modern state, and the inability of traditional foreign policy to keep that capacity channeled within the dykes of peace.

The name of an American President—Woodrow Wilson—is indis severably linked with the establishment of that League of Nations which his country never joined. Controversy over whether this nation should or should not have done so has tended to obscure the enormous political importance of the action that *was* taken—the full-scale participation of this Republic in what was essentially a European war.

American intervention, after the uneasy neutrality of 1914–17, insured the defeat of Germany. But in doing so it was instrumental in creating a wholly new political pattern, accounting for much of the pronounced instability of international politics after 1918.

American participation prevented the negotiated peace, in the traditional European manner, which otherwise would almost certainly have terminated the first World War. American participation therefore helped to put an end to the British Balance of Power policy which, as explained in Chapter III, was wholly incompatible with the dictated settlement of Versailles.

Simultaneously, and in the event unfortunately, President Wilson introduced non-European leadership into the making of a peace that, however worthy in the intent, resulted in the exacerbation of European hatreds to a degree where no foreign policy was able to cope with

them. Although the United States was instrumental in bringing about this unhappy "settlement", it refused any guarantee of its permanence. Neither the interventionism of 1917 nor the isolationism of 1919 were necessarily mistakes. But the two, taken in conjunction, constitute one of history's historic foreign policy blunders.

Because of the then predominant isolationism Americans, in 1919, either were not interested in, or were generally antagonistic to, the idea of preserving peace by balanced power. So, somewhat reluctantly, British statesmanship abandoned the doctrine that for four centuries had served it well, to line up with the developing American objective, which was a "League to Enforce Peace". Thus, primarily through Anglo-American effort, the League of Nations was born. The project did not evoke any great contemporary enthusiasm in other countries.

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IN THE BACKGROUND of the League was a long series of "Grand Designs" and "Projects of Perpetual Peace" intended to secure for the system of nation-states something of the centralized authority that had characterized both the medieval church and the earlier empire of Rome. One of these forerunners, especially interesting to Americans, was William Penn's *Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe*. This was first published

in 1690, eight years after great Quaker politician had written *The Frame of Government of Pennsylvania*, still the foundation of the Constitution of that state.

Penn's scheme for European federation is surprisingly modern in thought, though the archaic language is often difficult for all but patient readers. It envisaged an annual General Assembly of governmental delegates "before which sovereign assembly should be brought all differences depending between one sovereign and another that cannot be made up by private embassies before the sessions begin."<sup>4</sup>

Although a Quaker, Penn clearly anticipated the development of collective action against aggression. The only three ways in which "peace is broken", he said, is "to keep, to recover, or to add [control of territory]". His formula was to have the proposed Assembly offer arbitration in every international dispute. If the arbitral judgment were refused or rejected and hostilities begun by one government, then, in Penn's words: "all the other sovereignties, united as one strength, shall compel the submission and performance of the sentence, with damages to the suffering party, and charges to the sovereignties that obliged their submission."

Penn's theory of collective action against aggression was more than two centuries ahead of its time. It was revived, as a suggested "masterstroke", by Theodore Roosevelt, in his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1910. Five years later the essence of Penn's plan was put forward, in developed form, by William Howard Taft,

<sup>4</sup> William Penn: *Peace of Europe* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.; 1942), p. 8.

like T. R. then also a Republican ex-President. In a speech at Cleveland, on May 12, 1915, Mr. Taft laid down four fundamental provisions for a "League of Peace", of which the final one read:

"The members of the League shall agree that if any member of the League shall bring war against any other member of the League, without first having submitted the question, if found justiciable, to the arbitral court provided in the fundamental compact, or without having submitted the question, if found non-justiciable, to the Commission of Conciliation for its examination, consideration and recommendation, then the remaining members of the League agree to join in the forcible defense of the member thus prematurely attacked."<sup>5</sup>

The move to establish "sanctions", as collective economic or military action against an aggressor came to be known, was not only of American origin, but was also entirely nonpartisan in its initial development. The leadership of the League to Enforce Peace was primarily Republican, but as early as the autumn of 1914 President Woodrow Wilson was thinking along these lines. Soon after the outbreak of the European war he anticipated that "all nations must be absorbed into some great association of nations whereby all shall guarantee the integrity of each so that any one nation violating the agreement between all of them shall bring punishment on itself automatically."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Theodore Marburg: *Development of the League of Nations Idea* (New York: The Macmillan Company; 1932), pp. 703-17.

<sup>6</sup> For documentation, v. Felix Morley, *The Society of Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution; 1932), especially Ch. I.



The later Republican hostility to the League of Nations, spearheaded by Senators Brandegee, Borah, Hiram Johnson, Knox and Lodge, had many facets, aside from the traditional antagonism to a development criticizable as an "entangling alliance". Mistrust of the greatly exaggerated "super-state" aspects of the organization was one. Doubt as to the desirability and efficacy of the sanctions provided by Articles X and XVI of the Covenant was another. There was a dubious but shrewd effort to detach Irish-Americans from traditional Democratic loyalties by propaganda asserting, with little validity, that the League would prevent Irish independence. President Wilson's failure to take any Republican Senators to the Peace Conference, and other instances of executive intransigence, undoubtedly contributed to the Senate failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, of which the League Covenant was made Part I.

This unfortunate integration of a punitive treaty with a charter for peaceful international organization was the source of much of the American hostility to the League. The intention, in welding the two discordant documents together, was of course to insure simultaneous Senate ratification of Covenant and Treaty. The outcome was that neither got ratified. From this not even Germany profited, since the separate treaty of the United States with that country did not lessen any of the penalties of Versailles. Some encouragement, however, was given to the Nazis, who were later able to reason that since many Americans had opposed the making of the Versailles "Dictate", they would presumably be indifferent to its breaking.

Another unfortunate effect was to spread the belief, in American thinking, that the President is justified in trying to circumvent Congressional control in the field of foreign policy.

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So the League of Nations came to its inauspicious birth. It had, however, introduced a new system for eliminating war, a plan not even considered by the Concert of Europe set up after the Napoleonic Wars. In place of any continental Concert or Balance of Power, hope for preserving peace was now centered on the idea of worldwide collective action against the aggressor, definable as such by action of an international organization and subject to punishment by that organization after definition. Every Member of the League was pledged to adapt its foreign policy to the obligations of the Covenant. And many of them conscientiously endeavored to do so.

“Half a league onward” was the cynical gibe, when the League of Nations formally established headquarters at Geneva, on May 5, 1919. Nevertheless, during the next twenty years, it achieved many solid accomplishments in the field of inter-governmental organization. This was especially apparent in the application of international administration, by an international civil service, to various technical undertakings. Here the League Secretariat further demonstrated the mutual benefits of that

pooling of sovereignty which had been foreseen in respect to the mails by the Universal Postal Union as early as 1874.<sup>7</sup>

Although never a member of the League, the United States early became an active participant in practically every aspect of its non-political program, from the control of narcotics to preventive action against plagues. American public opinion fully supported this effort to develop and systematize the network of international contacts, sponsored by but by no means confined to official agencies. As this network grew, its tangible accomplishment seemed to justify the insight of William Penn, who had argued that under his plan "sovereign princes and states . . . remain as sovereign at home as they ever were."<sup>8</sup> For some years, during the third decade of the Twentieth Century, it appeared that the League would really solve the problem of reconciling the preservation of national sovereignty with the progressive development of international co-operation.

The breakdown came with the demonstration that the Foreign Ministers of the Great Powers could not cope with the problem of disarmament. Penn had anticipated that under a League of Nations, composed of independent states, each national "war establishment may be reduced, which will indeed of course follow, or be better employed to the advantage of the public." Disarmament did not "of course follow" under the League of Nations. On the contrary, the effort to achieve disarmament proved to be the reef on which the organization foundered.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

The obligation of the League of Nations to achieve disarmament was explicit. In the first place the unilateral disarmament enforced on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles was justified by the pledge of voluntary action to this end on the part of the victors. Part V of that Treaty, specifying the details of German disarmament, said: "In order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations, Germany undertakes strictly to observe the military, naval and air clauses which follow . . ."

These subsequent German disarmament clauses, comprising 54 separate articles, concluded with one giving the Council of the League of Nations sole right to investigate their observance. Furthermore, Article VIII of the League Covenant made "the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety" a condition of League membership. That cautious wording clearly indicates the compromise between the French fear of Germany, and the Anglo-American faith in the efficacy of collective action.

A real effort, extending over several years, was made at Geneva to fulfill the disarmament obligations of the Covenant. In spite of active American governmental assistance it failed, and the failure was used as a legitimate excuse by Hitler for re-arming Germany. That, together with the Japanese aggression in China and the Italian attack on Ethiopia, sounded the death knell of the League of Nations.

Its last substantive action was at least courageous. On December 14, 1939, the Council and Assembly of the League by unanimous vote expelled Russia from mem-

bership, for refusing to accept mediation in the Soviet war of aggression against Finland. But under the impact of the greater war already started, this last gesture by the disintegrating League had little or no practical effect.