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AN ARMY AGAINST MILITARISM

GENERAL SMUTS ON THE LEAGUE

FROM OUR LEAGUE CORRESPONDENT
GENEVA, DEC. 31

General Smuts broadcast a New Year's message on the cause of the League of Nations through Radio Nations this evening.

What, asked General Smuts, is the case against the League?

The League is derided as at best a beautiful unpractical dream of visionaries and at the worst a deliberate device to perpetuate the dominance of the victors of the Great War and to secure their spoils. In any case, it is said, the League has, in fact, failed to give the security which it promised. . . . We are therefore asked to scrap it.

What is my reply? It is true that the Covenant is a vision, but not that it is visionary. It is the truest, most realist vision yet seen in the affairs of the world, and simply carries into world affairs that outlook of a liberal democratic society which is one of the great achievements of our human advance. Perhaps that is the real reason why the new dictators object to it. . . . The Covenant simply carries a step further the process by which the State has already succeeded in suppressing private feuds and public violence and has substituted peaceful Parliamentary action for both.

The Council marks the farthest point yet reached in our progress towards a cooperative peaceful human society. That is its greatness, that is also its weakness. But there is no going back. The light, once seen, should never sink below our human horizon again. That would be a betrayal of those who died in the Great War, a sacrifice of the generations yet unborn.

A TERRIBLE MISCHANCE

It is not true, continued General Smuts, that the Covenant was planned and intended as an instrument to carry out the Peace Treaty and to secure the spoils for the victors.

The historic fact is that the Covenant which now figures as Chapter I of the Peace Treaty was drafted and adapted by the Peace Conference in advance of the rest of the Treaty and without reference to it. It was only a later terrible mischance that linked the Covenant with the rest of the Treaty. That blunder contributed to the worst blow the League ever received, by keeping the United States of America out of the League when it vetoed the whole Treaty, and in later years it covered the League with much of the odium which attached to the carrying out of the Treaty. The Covenant was the innocent victim of this grave mistake, but in itself it is and was conceived as a self-contained document that could just as well have been, and I trust yet will be, an entirely separate international treaty.

It is true there have been defections, failures, losses. But in membership the League still remains a formidable army, able to do battle against militarism and reaction. . . . The sacred duty is laid on us to see the League through as a going concern. Once abandoned, such a structure may not be rebuilt in a century. . . . Let us therefore defend and maintain, in high faith and courage, this post conquered by such immense sacrifices, this rallying ground for the world in future. Let there be reasonable practical reform, but let there be no surrender.

TS THE LEAGUE AND LAW

AN INTERNATIONAL POLICE FORCE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—In your leading article of December 13, "Italy and the League," you wrote:—

Whether we like it or not, the world is not ripe for the creation of a super-State overriding national sovereignties and imposing by force obedience to the general will.

These words are curiously reminiscent of very similar statements made in the course of finding a solution for the problem of internal disorder which threatened England with anarchy in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. A few select but daring spirits in England had propounded the theory that the growth of the menace of uncontrollable aggressive crime and mob disorder was a simple consequence of the breakdown of the law. The remedy they proposed was the provision of the law with force in the form of police.

The idea was intensely unpopular, and leaders of all shades of political opinion combined to attack it. The mildest criticisms took the form of Press pronouncements that the country was not ripe for a police force, that it would be a tyranny which would make it a super-State interfering with national sovereignty in the form of the Parliament at Westminster, and that it would be destructive of "rights" of various kinds. Vested interests which stood to profit by the continued existence of disorder were especially vocal, and by various means were able to exercise strong pressure on Ministers.

In 1818 a Police Commission reported:—

Your Committee could imagine a system of police that might arrive at the object sought for (Prevention of Crime), yet . . . such a system would of necessity be odious and repulsive, and one which no government could be able to carry into execution.

In 1822 another Police Commission announced:—

It is difficult to reconcile an effective system of police with that perfect freedom of action and exemption from interference which are the great privileges and blessings of society in this country; and Your Committee think that the forfeiture or curtailment of such advantages would be too great a sacrifice for improvements in police . . . however desirable in themselves if abstractedly considered.

In 1829, in the teeth of popular hostility and an almost unanimous demand in the Press for immediate disbandment (in which, I regret to say, *The Times*, the friend of Peel, joined sorrowfully), the New Police appeared in the streets of London. In a very short time criticism was silenced by what they accomplished, and less than 30 years later the system had been adopted throughout the country. What the police have done since then in making all criticism of their existence and the possibility of their creation look ridiculous needs no comment.

Can it be said that opposition to the idea of international police throughout the world to-day is stronger than the opposition with which the idea of civil police was faced in England in the eighteen-twenties, or that the obstacles which stand in the way of the creation of international police are more mountainous and formidable than those which confronted Peel? The answer is, of course, in the region of conjecture. But, as to the need for it, there can be little doubt. International anarchy grows apace, and its weapons get ever more deadly. The obstacles are the same as those of a hundred years ago—fear of doing what is obviously right and adherence to an absurd idea of national sovereignty, which is no longer tenable in a crowded world. Besides, all countries which have signed the League Covenant have thereby signed away this old-time right to pile up arms behind the backs of their neighbours.

Yours, &c.,
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