

## MR. BALFOUR ON THE LEAGUE

*[This is a verbatim report of Mr. Balfour's important speech on the aims and work of the League of Nations, delivered before the representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, at the time of the Imperial Conference in London.]*

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I HAVE always been a League-of-Nations man, long before the League of Nations came into existence, and an experience now extending over one or two years has not only strengthened my conviction that the League of Nations is necessary, but also, I am sorry to say, my fears that it is an institution in many respects difficult to work. Perhaps I might begin by explaining where I think the special difficulties lie, before I go on to show how much the League has already done, and how hard it would be to create any other authority to take its place. It is true that some of our difficulties are only temporary. The statesmen who at Paris framed the Covenant of the League undoubtedly assumed that the Treaty of Versailles would rapidly and effectually settle the new frontiers, and redistribute territories in accordance with the wishes of the populations concerned, leaving to the League of Nations the relatively simple duty of maintaining rights clearly established, and preventing national differences from developing into national wars.

Everybody knows that these hopes have not as yet been completely fulfilled. The Treaty of Sèvres is still in dispute, and even the Treaty of Versailles has not been fully carried out. One of the most important objects, for example, of the latter was the determination of the boundaries of Poland. But the boundaries of Poland remain still unsettled. Another problem was the

status of Galicia. But the status of Galicia is still unsettled. Now everything that leaves Middle Europe in a perturbed condition really requires the League of Nations to deal with a situation never contemplated by those who framed the Covenant under which the League has to do its work.

Another thing that was perhaps not fully considered by the framers of the Covenant was the difficulty of dealing with semi-civilized populations in territories not under mandate. For instance, at the last assembly one of the problems that excited most interest was the problem of Armenia. The assembly was deeply moved, but quite helpless. Nothing effectual was done, nothing effectual could be done. The League could only make appeals in favor of a population which it was quite powerless to protect.

Perhaps, however, the most serious difference between the League as it was planned and the League as it exists arises out of the absence from its ranks of three of the greatest nations of the world, two of which are not, so far as we can see at the moment, very likely to join it in the near future—I mean America and Russia. I hope that Germany will at no very distant date become a member. But Russia will come in only when she has ceased to be what for the moment she is. And whether the Soviet Government endures or perishes, she is likely for some time to come to be a disturbing influence in the East of

Europe, which it will be difficult for the League of Nations to guide and control. These embarrassments are in their nature temporary; but there are others — due to the constitution of the League itself. There is the difficulty, for example, of manning the Council and the Assembly. This is partly the effect of the immense distances which separate many members of the League from our meeting-place in Geneva; but partly also, it is due to the fact that the statesmen best qualified by their position to deal with League problems, namely, the Prime Ministers and the Foreign Secretaries of the various nations, cannot possibly make a regular practice of attending its meetings.

Another difficulty which presents itself in our attempts to use the full machinery of the League is due to money. We made an attempt in 1920 to obtain funds by voluntary subscription from members of the League, in order to deal with typhus in Poland and the East of Europe. Typhus was at that time, and I fear still is, not merely a great misfortune to the countries bordering upon Russia, the great centre of the infection, but a menace also to nations lying farther to the west. Poland was, according to our information, making every effort to deal with this danger; the Council came to the conclusion that she should be supported, and we therefore issued an appeal for funds to the members of the League. The appeal was on the whole a failure, a failure partly due no doubt to the financial difficulties which beset the whole world, partly to the fact that most members of the League were remote from the peril with which we were endeavoring to deal. In some cases very liberal subscriptions were offered, but on the whole it was clear that, at least in existing circumstances, such appeals were not likely to succeed.

It is indeed evident that, under the

Parliamentary system, the expenditure of the League will always present an easy object of attack. The gain to the world of international coöperation is immense, but it cannot be allocated with any definiteness between the coöperating nations. It is always, therefore, easy for a Parliamentary critic to ask what advantage his particular nation derives from the expenditure which it is called upon to make, and in these days of universal poverty such questions fall upon sympathetic ears. If this very natural frame of mind is permitted to dominate policy, manifestly the League will perish. Some common sacrifice, however slight, is required if any common effort is to be successful. I believe this danger is not negligible, though I am sanguine enough to think that it will be successfully surmounted.

So far I have dwelt upon the obstacles which thwart and may even imperil the success of this great experiment. Let me now say a few words upon some of the reasons which require all men of good-will to do their best to make it a success; and here I can appeal not merely to speculative theory, but to actual experience. The League has been in existence since January 10, 1920, say, about a year and a half. In that time it has had to create its machinery, to organize its methods, and to devise means for pursuing what is without doubt a new adventure in the history of mankind. One would have thought that these facts alone would mollify the sternest critic, and that no one would be so unreasonable as to expect, in the first eighteen months during which this infant institution has been in existence, the full authority and efficiency which only time can bring. But even these eighteen months are sufficient, in my opinion, to show to any impartial observer how valuable the League of Nations can be, and how im-

potent any other organization would be to fill its place.

I am the last person to deride what is commonly called 'the old diplomacy.' The old diplomacy has for many generations done much in the cause of peace, and those who see in it merely a costly method of embittering international relations and snatching national advantages, completely misread the lessons of history. But there are assuredly many things which the League of Nations has even now shown that it can do, which diplomacy could scarcely attempt, and which it certainly could not attempt with success.

Let us consider them under three heads. The first of these is common international effort for objects which all admit to be good, but which are the special business of no nation in particular. For example, there are abuses which have to be stopped — the traffic in opium, the illegitimate traffic in arms, the traffic in women and children. With all these objects there had been attempts to deal before the League came into existence. They have not always been satisfactory, sometimes they have been wholly ineffectual. I cannot doubt that a far greater measure of success will attend the organized effort of the nations of the world, acting through the League organism, than by any machinery which diplomacy could possibly set up.

If, again, we turn from abuses which have to be stopped to objects which it is desirable to promote, we learn the same lesson. Consider, for example, the International Court of Justice. The establishment of such a court has long been the desire of statesmen; many efforts have been made to create it; but these efforts have invariably failed, and we may surely congratulate ourselves on the fact that the International Court is now in process of creation through the efforts of the League.

Again, the great conference which met at Barcelona, under the auspices of the League, to consider the question of international transit by railways, rivers, and other waterways, obviously dealt with an international problem of the first magnitude. It was the creation of the League, and without the League could hardly have come into being.

But consider another and yet more pressing subject — the economic condition of Europe, and of the world. We have obtained peace, but we have not yet obtained the fruits of peace. The decay of credit, and the paralysis of production imperil the whole industrial system of the civilized world. I do not suggest that for so great an evil the League of Nations could provide any sufficient remedy: but some contribution it has been able to make to the solution of these difficulties, a contribution which, however modest, could, so far as I can see, have been made by no other method.

A financial conference was summoned by the League at Brussels in the course of last year. The conference made some suggestions of great value. These we are endeavoring to apply, particularly in the case of Austria; and any measure of success which we can obtain will have beneficial effects not only in Austria itself, but throughout the whole industrial world. Every part of that world is more or less organically connected with every other part; and what is required now is that this economic organism, paralyzed and well-nigh destroyed by war, should resume once more its vigorous activities.

But there is another and wholly different set of functions thrown upon the League by the Treaty of Versailles — functions which cannot be carried out at all by any single power, nor carried out effectually so far as I can see, except by the League itself. I refer to the government of certain exceptional

areas, which are not the less important, from an international point of view, because they happen to be small. I refer to the town of Danzig and the valley of the Sarre.

The town of Danzig is economically inseparable from Poland, but in population is predominantly German. The war divided it politically from Germany, while the Treaty of Peace recognized its intimate relations with Poland. At the same time its independent existence as a separate and autonomous community under the protection of the League was fully secured. The League is responsible for maintaining its constitution, though not for framing it. But the Council felt that it could not undertake to maintain it without satisfying itself that it was just and workable. In its view the Constitution, as originally designed, was neither just nor workable. But through the efforts of the Council, fundamental changes are in process of accomplishment, which will, I trust, secure the good government of the city and promote the most amicable relations with the Polish Hinterland.

The other area in connection with which the League is specially responsible is the Sarre Valley. The Sarre Valley is an industrial area, mostly German in population, lying on the French frontier, and intimately connected with adjacent French territories. By the Treaty of Peace it is, for fifteen years, to be governed by a council appointed by the League, and reporting to it, after which, by means of a plebiscite, it is to determine its own destiny.

So far as I am able to judge, the very difficult problem which such an area presents is being dealt with in a fashion at least as satisfactory as we have any right to expect. On the whole, the valley is orderly, industrious, and contented.

Other duties touching questions of

administration are thrown upon the League, in connection with mandates. I will not argue whether the system of mandates is a good one or a bad one. On this point opinions differ; but the system is there. It is prescribed by the Treaty of Versailles, and it represents the deliberate policy of the Allied and Associated Powers in dealing with what were once German territories outside Europe. An essential part of that system is that the procedure of the Mandatory Powers in connection with mandated territories shall be subject to some kind of international survey. This work has been entrusted to the League of Nations, and I believe that only the League of Nations can perform it. But at present no forecast can be made as to the way in which this system will work.

The last heading under which I will consider our activities is, perhaps, the most important of all. It deals more immediately than any of the others with those international differences which it is the main business of the League to heal. We are sometimes asked what the League has done to promote good-will among the nations. I am anxious not to overstate the case, but it seems to me that during the eighteen months of its existence our record is far from being barren.

I begin with a case which, if the League of Nations had not been in existence, could hardly have ended satisfactorily, though it involved no questions of territory. It seems that during the war large numbers of Jews from the northern portions of what was then the Empire of Austria took refuge in Vienna. After the peace the Austrian Government desired to compel their return to their original homes, now no longer in Austrian territory. The Poles objected. A bitter controversy ensued, and the subject came before the Council of the League of Nations. After a

good deal of discussion, an arrangement was come to, acceptable to both parties, and not unfavorable to the Jewish population concerned.

There is a much larger question which the Council of the League are endeavoring to settle, and unfortunately final success has not yet crowned their efforts. I refer to the group of problems arising out of the relations between Poland and Lithuania. The subject is far too complicated to be dealt with here, but it may be proper to say that, in consequence of an appeal to the League, hostilities between these two countries were stopped, and a scheme determining their future relations is now being discussed in Brussels by the parties principally concerned, under the able guidance of Hymans, the Belgian representative on the Council, who is acting on behalf of the League. Whether these efforts will end in an arrangement both amicable and permanent, it would be premature to say; but I am confident that even a modest measure of success, already attained, would have been beyond the powers of anybody possessing less authority than the League of Nations.

About the dispute between Sweden on the one side and Finland on the other, concerning the Aaland Islands, I can speak with more confidence; and in this case a controversy involving the most complicated questions of international law and ethics has been finally settled. The Aaland Islands are Swedish by population; historically and juridically they form part of Finland. The whole subject was investigated on the spot by an International Commission appointed by the League, which, like some other of its commissions, enjoyed the advantage of having on it an American representative. Their elaborate report was unanimous. They decided that the Aaland Islands belonged to Finland; but they used their good offices to

secure the largest possible measure of autonomy for the Swedish population affected by their decision. We have evidence that this concession, voluntarily granted by the Government of Finland, would never have been obtained at the instance of any external power other than a League of which Finland, in common with most civilized powers, was itself a member. It would be difficult to find a clearer instance of the manner in which, under favorable circumstances, the League may contribute to the cause of international peace.

Two further observations I will permit myself before concluding. The first is that, if the League were to dissolve, a new Peace Treaty would have to be framed, and new machinery would have to be devised for carrying out the duties with which the League has been entrusted. The second observation is especially addressed to the British critics of the League. They must be well aware that for many generations the main anxiety of British statesmen in their Continental policy has been to preserve the peace, and to prevent the domination of any particular power over its weaker neighbors. Those two aims have not always been compatible, and the first has had more than once to be abandoned in order to obtain the second. They were not compatible, for example, in 1914; but if the League of Nations reaches its full strength and stature, if it be supported by the great moral forces of the world, peace and national independence will be secured without resort to arms.

If in the future there should again arise a power greedy of domination, it will find itself confronted, not merely by defensive alliances between a few interested states, but by the organized forces of the civilized world. If that hope is to be accomplished, it can be only by a League of Nations; and when

I consider the services already rendered, or in course of being rendered, to the cause of international coöperation by the League, mutilated though it be by the absence from its membership of some who might have been among its most powerful supporters, I cannot doubt that few calamities would be greater than the abandonment of the

great experiment to which we have set our hand.

Should that calamity occur, it is not in the lifetime of this generation that a serious effort will again be made to substitute the rule of justice in international affairs for that of force; and the horrors of five years of war will have been endured in vain.

## LUDENDORFF AND CLEMENCEAU

BY M. A. ALDAVOV.

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### I

SOMETHING sombre, ominous, and heavy settles over you as you open General Ludendorff's two-volume work, which bears the simple title, *Memoirs of the War*. You feel yourself in the immediate presence of German militarism incarnated in one man.

In August, 1914, an unknown colonel drives in an automobile to one of the forts of Liège and orders the garrison to surrender. The defenders of the fort yield without a shot. The courageous colonel is given a responsible post. Two years later he becomes the dictator of four empires, exercising limitless power and enjoying unbounded popularity. And two years after that, he is forced to flee from Germany, to which he has brought crushing defeat and revolution. There is something Shakespearean in the fate of this man. And it is natural that a book written by a Shakespearean hero arouses a certain interest, even if the hero happens to be a man who has had his day. But grave doubts are en-

tertained in some quarters as to this last assumption. Many of his fellow countrymen still believe that Ludendorff is a hero, not only of the past, but also of the future.

The memoirs of the famous German general are not the defense of a man who has suffered defeat. They are an indictment of those Germans — Ludendorff scarcely blames his enemies for anything — whose weakness, or stupidity, prevented Germany from being victorious, and a profession of scorn for everything resembling democracy.

It is not so easy to say definitely in what Ludendorff believes and what he loves. Of course, the official formula of his faith is the classical *Gott, Koenig und Vaterland*. But if you inquire closely, it is difficult to establish the exact connection between Ludendorff and each of the three elements of this creed.

As to his relation with *Gott*, the former dictator appears indifferent. Even Bismarck, in his old age, mumbled something about his complicated ac-