

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AS A LEAGUE OF CULTURE

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[This article is a translation of a pamphlet which has recently been widely circulated in Germany and Switzerland. Its author is a well-known professor of pedagogy at the University of Munich, whose outspoken opposition to militarism during the war exposed him to persecution in his own country. He is now residing in Switzerland.]

To him, who in the modern life of nations has observed the powerful tendency toward separateness, the driving force of self-assertion and aggrandizement; who has noted the passionate desire for the development of national individuality and its cultural and political forms of life; who has recognized the plastic strength behind this, and the elemental biological force which here asserts itself — to him it will no doubt seem as if, opposed to these forces, the idea of a league of nations must be an impotent abstraction, having no vital force behind it, and therefore incapable of developing into a living and concrete reality.

But although the principle of national differentiation and individualization has for some time exclusively occupied the stage of the world's history, in order that it might develop richer varieties of types and break away from old and oppressive ideas of unity, nevertheless this principle, even from a purely biological standpoint, is neither the only nor the most vital principle. At least equally as forceful is the impulse toward mutual fulfillment and equalization. In fact it is in this urge toward fulfillment that the desire for growth of the living organism finds its proper realization.

Plato terms this impulse, which drives us to round out our individuality through association with opposite types, the spiritual Eros. He defines this spiritual Eros as the desire of poverty

for riches, the longing of the part for the whole, the urge of the incomplete toward completeness. Undoubtedly there also exists, in this sense, a political Eros, which fills a nation with love for talents and endowments differing from its own, because with the help of such gifts it hopes to outgrow its own one-sidedness. History has many examples to prove the working of this political Eros. It is certain that the Romans, at the zenith of their power, were thus influenced by a love for Hellenic culture. The expedient and practical Roman statesman recognized that here was something far above the calculating, practical will — namely, the uncalculating, freely outpouring stream of the humanities. He opened his whole soul to this spiritual influence; in fact, he made himself, as Mommsen clearly perceived and stated, the conscious bearer of this Hellenic culture. He ennobled his architectonic powers by the assimilation of the poetical and humanitarian elements of the Greek soul. And it was precisely this emerging from its national one-sidedness, this self-development toward universality, that made of Rome the world-conquering and world-organizing force it became, and gave to it a power of synthesis such as it could never have won by the mere force of arms.

The formative element of Roman life, deepened through this blending of ideals, awakened in the Germanic people through many centuries a desire for

intimate cultural relations, for developing their own unformed and unclarified life by the adoption and selection of those things which come from a highly developed but formal civilization. Whoever wishes to visualize the impression which the Roman discipline of expression made upon the German soul need but recall the odes of Klopstock, in which rich Germanic dreams are clothed in clearest rhythm. Thanks to the standards of the Latin spirit, the profuseness of pictures and words is held in check, and there is a wondrous blending of restrained utterance with profound feeling. On the other hand, the Germanic individualism, with its unswerving search for truth, was an indispensable counterbalance for the architectonic man and his institutionalizing tendency. Pope Innocent dreamed that the Lateran might crumble if the 'Poverello' of Assisi did not brace it. This may in its broadest sense be construed as an allegory of the truth that the upholders of form constantly need the opposing balance of a strong personal, inner life, in order not to lose themselves in formalism.

There undoubtedly exists between France and Germany, in spite of all 'inherited animosity,' a latent political Eros, which springs from the same difference of endowments from which their enmity arises. This difference of talents or gifts, and the necessity of co-operation arising because of the differentiation, was illustrated by the French chemist, Duhem, in the February, 1915, issue of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, when he wrote: 'One of these nations has in excess what is lacking in the other. French science finds its completion in the solid German testing of the hypotheses which French intuition offers.' When Renan, going still further, once said: 'At the moment when France and Germany become reconciled, the two halves of the human soul will again

have found each other,' he was expressing platonically the thought that the elementary need of opposite individualities for mutual complementation must some day overcome the tension arising from the historic conflicts of these two nations, so greatly dependent upon each other.

From time immemorial thoughtful Frenchmen have openly acknowledged that the Germanic nature is an indispensable counterbalance to *l'esprit gaulois*. The Alsatian, H. Lichtenberger, has even assigned this blending of France with the Germanic gifts of the Alsations as the prime reason why France took the loss of Alsace so seriously. When Renan, in his letter to David Strauss, points out that 'France is necessary to the world as a counter-influence against pedantry, rigorism and dogmatism,' this should remind us Germans of the liberal schooling which our German ponderosity once found in French grace and social customs. It was French influence which delivered us from the humanistic pedantry of the seventeenth century and ripened us for the culture of the Greeks, just as the Hellenic element once ennobled the Roman *gravitas* into *humanitas*.

In a lecture at the University of Berlin in May, 1914, the philosopher Boutroux remarked that the German and the French spirit were not contrary, but complementary. The French spirit took cognizance of the single man and the rights of man, the German spirit directed itself toward finding for the individual his due place within the whole. The two tendencies were destined to complete each other. This necessity for the mutual supplementation of the two spiritual directions cannot be over-emphasized. For the real reason of German isolation, and of the failure of the German principle of organization, even in its military application, lay in the one-sidedness with

which we insisted on the subordination of the individual to the whole, without considering the rights and the distinctive gifts of the individual. We sacrificed the Rights of Man to the Rights of the State. Our State was Kreon without Antigone. Yet Antigone represents not only the just claims of personality, but also the deeper interests of the State itself. The whole can never count upon the complete devotion of the parts if the whole shows no love and respect for the rights and the idiosyncrasies of the parts.

In a military way also we perished because the principle of respect for the dignity of man had not been made a part of our military organization. And in particular we came to grief because that which the French nation had newly reconquered for itself in the Dreyfus case — viz., the subordination of the military to the moral requirements of civilized society — was not allowed to come to the surface in Germany, but on the contrary was obliged to recede before the ever-growing dictation of the sword. With much justification Mr. P. Seippel said in the *Journal de Genève*: 'The triumph of truth and justice in the Dreyfus case was the overture to the victory of the Marne; the triumph of the military in the Zabern case was the overture to the German breakdown.'

The French make a distinction between *esprit de finesse* and *esprit de géométrie*. In this life both are as necessary as man and wife, and where they disagree individuals and societies also disagree. Organization without respect for the *droits de l'homme* fails to carry through any difficult task that requires the assembling and cohesion of forces. Culture of the individual without high discipline and precision of coöperation brings on a disorder in which at last the dignity of man is itself destroyed. So that, with reference to the requirements

of true organization, it may be seen how intimately each of these nations is dependent upon the other for its completion, and how without such complementation neither can, in fact, solve its own problems.

The same may be said in favor of cultural coöperation between the Slavonic and the Germanic spirit. The Slav can undoubtedly learn great things from the disciplined force and the methodical spirit of the Germans, and tremendous tasks of organization await us in the East. But we shall be competent to undertake these tasks only when we have allowed not only the West, but the East as well, to help us in the spiritual deepening of our powers of organization. The Slav is particularly sensitive in his antipathy to the hard and mechanical forces of order; in fact, Slavophiles accuse the State of being death to the brotherhood of man. We may be assured, at any rate, that we can again learn from the Slav what the Greeks brought home to the practical men of Rome, namely, the spirit of intimate, unselfish humanity. Only by humanizing our own principles of orderliness can we help the Slav toward an orderly life.

During the war an English colleague said to me: 'You Germans do not know how much we have lost because you have imitated us. We were dependent altogether upon your spirituality. We are a practical people; but we feel nevertheless that without a spiritual foundation we shall be shipwrecked even in practical matters.' Many thoughtful Englishmen perceive this; and, on the other hand, impartial Germans will not deny that we have many and extraordinary lessons to learn from the hereditary political wisdom and other endowments of the English. We are a strongly subjective people, a musical and lyrical folk, and we are in constant danger of succumb-

ing to our own emotions. This disposition is indeed an asset, but in the sphere of practical politics it is the real cause of our incapacity. It prevents us from thinking dramatically, like the English, — that is, from being able to see and to acknowledge the reality of the *other-than-I*. In spite, therefore, of all our talk of 'Realpolitik,' we have remained altogether incapable of assessing the surrounding world objectively, or of emerging from our own drunken egoism; and this especially because, in addition, a fundamentally false political philosophy has taught us to look upon egoism as the only true world policy; which in turn has made a laughing stock of our best and choicest German contributions.

Our ancient German love for that which is foreign was a political asset. It supplied us with a counterbalance against subjectivity. But since these traditions have been lost sight of, we have completely lost the genuine political faculty for building a bridge from our own to foreign conceptions of life. The Englishman too has a hard and tough ego, but he has also a lively sense that there are others, and that they must be reckoned with. Possibly a genuine study of his political ways and methods may cure us of our hallucinations of 'Realpolitik.'

The process of which I have indicated a few samples is not one of mere imitation. We have imitated altogether too much; we have adopted everything that fitted in with our own bad requirements, and have also adopted altogether too rigidly the political forms of other western peoples. What in reality is important is the love for that which is different, the joy in the abundance of types, the appreciation of that which is contrary to our own mode of life, the consciousness of our own limitations and one-sidedness, instead of the conceited assumption that we are fun-

damentally superior to all others because in the matter of conquering external things we have made such great strides.

The League of Nations which should adjust the disintegrating conflicts of interest among the nations by means of higher methods will thereby create an atmosphere in which this spiritual-moral exchange among the nations — immeasurably superior to the exchange of commodities — may again come to life, with a new and profounder meaning.

What obstacles now stand in the path of the consummation of such a league of culture among the nations? At this moment, while we are discussing the question of forming a league, it seems as if this new hope of the world were a mere *Fata Morgana*, ever receding as we approach; a dream for which the world is not prepared. Many people among those nations whose spokesmen had made the League of Nations the central structure in their scheme of world regeneration after the war, have abandoned the project altogether. The existing fragment of the League of Nations has the unfortunate appearance of being merely the executive organ of the ruling minority. Throughout the world the leading forces are falling back hopelessly and aimlessly into the old methods of individualistic security.

Our nationalists point to this tendency, and claim that what they predicted has come to pass; that the whole scheme of western pacifism has proved itself nothing more than a sham; that Germany, in order to find its bearings, must take notice of this bankruptcy of western ideas and act accordingly; and that the world belongs, as heretofore, to the old order.

To this we may reply as follows: It is no doubt true that western pacifism has not displayed a genius equal to the world problem; that it lacked the moral

greatness and strength, independently of the spiritual condition of Germany, to cling with genuine courage and unflinching steadfastness to the ideal, and thus to bring about the new methods and the new order. However, the conclusion which we Germans should draw from the situation is not that we should be content with this general backsliding, or perhaps take the lead in it; on the contrary, we must now by example and precept once more become in the centre of Europe what we once were — the temporal foundation of the European system of peace. We have passed through the false method experimentally. We were crushed because of our delusion that the Central Powers of Europe could best oppose the force of the world by raising to their highest potentiality the means for applying force, and by reliance upon their own power. We overlooked the fact that he who sits in the centre must ask for justice, not for power. If he provokes the competition of might he will be encircled; the dynamic laws of his situation will bring this about as an unavoidable doom. Because we overlooked this, laughed at justice and exalted might as the only law of the world, we ourselves willed the present condition of the world from which we now suffer. We called upon the earth-god. He came and subjected us to his laws.

We cannot now do otherwise than adopt the opposite course. Even though all the rest of the world should fall back into imperialism, we cannot do better than to make ourselves, even to our dying breath, a spiritual and moral counterbalance to all these tendencies. By any other method we are certain to fall short. In a game of hazard with force we must inevitably lose, for we are situated at the most vulnerable spot in Europe. Besides, our entire economic restoration now depends upon

European concord, upon our regaining the confidence of the world, upon the strengthening of the moral forces throughout the nations. We can secure these preliminaries to our restoration only if we turn back on the course we have pursued and become the prime movers among the genuine up-builders. We must draw out the consequences of the ideas which others have proclaimed, but which they have feared to apply because of their want of confidence in us. It is for us to develop and bring to fruition the idealistic foundations of a world confederation.

Those who point to the breakdown of western pacifism forget, however, that this pacifism has always proceeded on the assumption that Germany would take part honestly and as a result of inner regeneration; for only so could a guarantee be given to the civilized world which would render unnecessary a policy of self-defense on the part of each single nation. But as Germany in this matter constantly disappointed the world by withholding its support, it was to blame for keeping the world moving in its ancient course, instead of becoming what Germany used to be, the keystone of European tranquillity and federation. If, on the other hand, it is pointed out that none of the other nations opposed to Germany had allowed the Hague idea to prevent them from going to war (the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War), it must be remembered that the Hague idea was an attempt to synchronize the drift toward the new order, and that if this simultaneity could have been secured it would have been possible for the nations to risk surrendering their individual defenses and to rely upon the moral force of a world league for the justice necessary to secure their rights.

It must not be forgotten how at that time (1907) the American ambassador, White, the English premier, Campbell-

Bannerman, and the Italian delegate, Count Nigra, fairly implored Germany to withdraw her opposition. It was felt that the realization of the project would stand or fall with Germany's attitude. All their efforts failed. Not only our attitude toward the essential propositions of the Hague Conference, but still more our moral isolation from the ardent desire of the entire civilized world of that time, made impossible the attempt to substitute an orderly peace by understanding for the competition of force. No wonder, then, that the old methods continued to function.

The same is true of 1917-20. If at the zenith of our power we had accepted the proposals of Woodrow Wilson, the world would have believed in our honest change of heart, and a united and simultaneous progress of the entire civilized world might have been possible. It was our fate, and it determined the fate of the course of Wilson's ideals, that we submitted to his proposals only after we were crushed to earth, defeated, and after we had by our methods of warfare excited to the highest pitch the animosity and hatred of all the people opposed to us. This phase of the situation must not be overlooked when the reasons for the miscarriage of the western pacific ideals after the war are to be judged.

The world was waiting for Germany, and it is waiting for Germany to-day. Not for a protesting, hating, revenge-breeding Germany, but for a Germany that has returned to its own better self; a Germany which by the spirit in which it looks after its own interests, in which it determines its conflicts with foreign interests, its attitude toward the accusations and demands of its former enemies, will make an effort to use genuine world-politics in place of mere ego-politics. The spiritual attitude of the centre, not that of the periphery, decides the fate of the world. Whoever

recognizes this geographic foundation, so to speak, for the responsibility of Germany will form a grave opinion of Germany's own guilt; but he will also recognize altogether new potentialities for the German nation — how it may serve the world and thereby atone for its misdeeds. And he will not understand those who wish, in the interests of Germany, that the Entente had had power to build up a new world order without the regeneration and help of Germany, so that Germany at the end might be invited in, like a child to a Christmas feast.

No doubt, if the masses of people who foamed with rage after Germany's collapse, and in spite of all they saw in Belgium and Northern France, had possessed the superhuman capacity to present Germany with a Wilsonian peace, they would have become the absolute moral leaders of Europe, and we should have been obliged to enter their world structure as thankful pupils. Perhaps it was good for us that things were not made so easy; that, in fact, it seems more and more as if the gigantic problem will not be solved unless the ancient German soul again comes to life and begins to speak, and out of the fullness of its bitter experience and its deeply conscious conversion finds the way to conjure up the moral forces which alone can overcome the present spirit of disintegration.

Western pacifism still has too much of the juridical — too much architecture, too little living soul. The world is not yet conscious of the terrible gap between nations, to the bridging of which something far deeper and greater than mere international ideas is necessary. In his essay on nationalism Rabindranath Tagore drastically pictures the giant organizations of collective self-seeking which to-day are working against each other, and calls a league of nations which would superficially calm

these heated forces of selfishness and greedy might a league of steam-boilers. Truly, in this world of unscrupulous competition and collectively increasing passions a mere political association would be up in the air if the spiritual condition of the nations were to remain the same, — a condition which Meister Eckhard designated as 'being moon-struck on your own greatness'; if, for instance, France were to talk of nothing but its restoration, Germany only of its need and suffering, England to have its eyes set on its own world-empire — each single nation merely calling upon the League of Nations as upon a physician to cure its ills and as an executor of its demands.

Only the root-forces of morality, of devotion, of love, can overcome the curse of our civilization. We need a living force, coming out of the depths of the nations themselves, which shall stretch far out beyond mere national boundaries, and make justice to others; the needs of strangers, foreign difficulties and foreign possibilities of life, its own. We need, to speak with Bertrand Russell, instead of the possessive mood, which looks only after its own safety by any means possible, the creative mood, by which we devote ourselves far-sightedly to the general well-being; only by such methods may each people confidently expect reliable guarantees for its own existence.

Right here lie the great possibilities of Germany's new position in the world. All other European nations have centuries of national exclusiveness behind them. The German people have a tradition, several centuries old, as the bearers of European unity. The old German Empire was itself an association of nations, and was organized with reference to popular rule rather than to the rule of the State; and it thus became the starting-point for the teaching of popular rights. Because of its capabil-

ity and its history the German soul became the mediating soul of Europe, incessantly absorbing cultural elements from all sides in order to transmute them into something of value for all mankind. The German developed a special love for that which is foreign, without which love no genuine international coöperation is possible. Therefore the realization of a league of nations depends altogether upon this — whether the old Germanic spirit may again awaken or not. This hope is not German arrogance. It is not a claim of superiority. It is because of our location and of our historic development that we are destined to play the part of mediators; and without this contribution of ours even the most brilliant gifts of other nations cannot prevent the disruption of the nations of the earth.

As a matter of course, the German cannot begin his nation-uniting mission by merely offering himself to the world as mediator, as if nothing had happened. Too many German adherents and workers for the world league fail to appreciate the full depth of the abyss which still separates us from the rest of the world, in spite of the superficial resumption of coöperation. The German people still believe that this gap will gradually heal of itself through economic necessity. They will be sadly disappointed. We are hardly conscious of the fixity of purpose to apply the boycott which exists among the majority of the people of our former enemies. In-eradicably, and justly, there exists in the allied nations a firm belief that it was the ruling classes of Germany that made the world-holocaust inevitable, by their glorification of war, by their derision and sabotage of all efforts for the peace and understanding of nations, and by their repeated anarchistic and anti-European manipulation of conflicts in which other nations were vitally

interested. With undoubted justice other people smile at our attempts to question the plain fact that Germany was the leader in sanctioning and upholding the principle of might in international relations, and by foolish explanations and constant reference to the secret archives of enemy nations, to shift the responsibility for the war. And just as ineradicably, and with the same undeniable justice, they cling to the belief that the misdeeds of the German conduct of the war can find their counterpart only in the far-off days of the migrations of nations, and represent crimes against humanity and civilization the magnitude and extent of which cannot be even partially offset by counter-charges.

Thus the great majority of the allied nations feel that a rehabilitation of the German nation will not be possible until the German people, instead of constantly and loudly demanding its former leadership and holding to its military traditions, shall thoroughly and searchingly renounce that spirit which isolated Germany from the rest of the world and which precipitated it into the present catastrophe. Instead of grasping this fundamental necessity for the moral reconciliation of nations, and acknowledging this as the preliminary hypothesis for the completion of any league of nations, the German people have allowed themselves to be led into the mortal delusion, through malevolent as well as well-meaning counsel, that the question of guilt was disposed of and that any admission of guilt now would only retard the revision of the treaty of peace. May the German people awaken, before it is too late, to the fact that they have been ill advised; that Germany cannot again take up its best and oldest mission until it has overcome the moral isolation into which it was plunged, not only because of what happened, but even more be-

cause of the lack of any frank and truthful attitude toward what happened. Have the persons responsible for the Belgian deportations and the deportations of French women and children, or have the persons responsible for the senseless destruction of French coal mines and fruit trees been called to an accounting before the German people?

Through such blind and stubborn solidarity Germany may bleed to death and the League of Nations be broken. Only if this people, who within recent years and with greatest cynicism opposed an understanding between nations, will pay its debt by setting a high example of a complete change of heart — only then can the ban be lifted which has fallen upon the world. Such a desire to take the opposite course, such an emergence from national egoism, can at present and under existing circumstances be achieved only if we at last begin to feel more keenly and to regret more deeply the sins we committed against others than the fate which has befallen our own people. Only so can a new sense of justice reach the light of day — not by constant talk about justice to ourselves.

Our simple Landsturm soldiers wept when they were compelled to carry out the work of destruction in France. Such tears for the harm done to others are the very fundamentals for a league of nations. Only through such emotions can we and the rest of the world be healed. Is it not the height of bad taste when the very same people who most scorned the idea of establishing international justice now use the speech of outraged morality when speaking of the harshness of the victors, and cannot say enough of the rights of Germany? Have they totally forgotten that German rights can exist only in the framework of a moral conception of the life of nations, and that without it only the *vox victis* is possible? Those

who, like ourselves, did practise, and wish still further to practise this same *væ victis*, had better not make our plea in the name of those moral requirements whose value we ourselves had forced to the zero-point.

No! The German people can prepare themselves for a society of nations only by directing their sense of justice for once against themselves; by passing judgment from a moral standpoint on the machinations of their philosophers of force and propagandists of power during the past decades; by subjecting the horrible and short-sighted selfishness of their method of warfare to the judgment of an awakened conscience. Only then will their appeal be heard and their conversion find belief. What good can come from a constant appeal to the conscience of the world when we have shown no genuine sense of responsibility for the condition in which the world finds itself, and to this day speak only in terms of nationalism?

'Leave your country and your friends and go ye into a land which I will show thee' — this Biblical saying applies to the German of to-day. He needs to give to the world an example of self-abnegation, instead of hardening the already general disfavor of the whole world into chronic opposition, by continuous blind propaganda in behalf of his own interests. He must learn to judge German things from the viewpoint of Europe. He must do justice to the sentiment of those who have suffered from the brutality of his former methods. He must emerge from the provincialism of his nationalistic emotions, in order that he may become once again truly German and capable of bringing honor to the German name. Only in this way — not by shouting, scolding and nagging a world unfavorably disposed toward us — can we again create a place in the world for our right to life, and so prepare ourselves for adoption into a society of nations.

LATIN AMERICA AFTER THE WAR

BY MANUEL UGARTE

[The author of this article is one of the most gifted and influential writers of South America. Several of his works have been translated into French. He is a strong advocate of an anti-Imperialist South American union.]

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THE differences of opinion exhibited at the League of Nations Assembly in Geneva, and the unexpected withdrawal of the Argentine delegation, have called attention to the conflict of sentiment which existed in Latin America during the war, and to the new position in which its governments have been left by the regrouping of the Great Powers.

Men ask why the young democracies

across the ocean, moral children as they are of France, and bound to her by strong spiritual ties, did not rally unanimously and enthusiastically to her support in her hour of trial. Looking to the future, they ask what the dominant sentiment in those countries is to-day and in what orbit they will revolve during the new period we are entering. These are the questions which we pro-