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## U.S. NOTE TO THE LEAGUE

### THE NON-POLITICAL SERVICES

#### WIDER COLLABORATION

FROM OUR LEAGUE CORRESPONDENT

GENEVA, FEB. 22

The United States Government have sent a Note to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations expressing their appreciation of the work undertaken by the technical and non-political services of the League, and announcing their intention to continue and increase their collaboration in the health, social, economic, and financial fields of the League's activities.

The Note is in reply to a resolution passed by the Assembly at its last session in which non-member States were invited to make any comment or suggestion for the wider development of such collaboration. It states, *inter alia*:—

The League has been responsible for the development of ideas and methods to a greater extent, and in more fields of humanitarian and scientific endeavour, than any other organization in history. The United States Government are keenly aware of the value of this type of general interchange, and desire to see it extended.

Encouraging as has been the progress already made, much remains to be done for the promotion of human welfare in health, social, economic, and financial fields. This Government regard each sound step forward in these fields as a step towards the establishment of that national and international order which, they believe, is essential to real peace.

The United States Government look forward to the development and expansion of the League's machinery for dealing with the problems in these fields, and to the participation by all nations in active efforts to solve them. It would not be appropriate for them to make specific suggestions for the development of the League's activities, but they will follow with interest the League's efforts to meet more adequately problems relating to the health, humanitarian, and economic phases of human activities. They will continue to collaborate in those activities and will consider, in a sympathetic spirit, means of making their collaboration more effective.

The warm and appreciative tone of the Note, together with the promise of further collaboration, have been greatly appreciated here.

#### Neutrality and the League

M. MOTTA, the head of the Political Department of the Swiss Confederation, formally presented to the League of Nations yesterday the case for absolute neutrality which Switzerland wishes to preserve in all circumstances, but without resigning her place in the League and without constraining the League to make its headquarters elsewhere. The policy of neutrality is traditional in Switzerland, as our League Correspondent points out in his article this morning, and was only diluted after the War as a concession to the new system of collective security which it was then hoped to establish. But even in 1920 Switzerland stipulated that her position in the League should be exceptional and should not involve her in military sanctions. The desired exemption was embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, Switzerland at the same time undertaking to defend her own territory, which is as fundamental a part of Swiss policy as her neutrality. But recent events have made the Government of the Confederation repent even of the slight departure from absolute neutrality which was involved in 1920 by the implied readiness to undertake economic sanctions. They now believe that in another war it might be impossible to distinguish between military and economic measures. If Switzerland were to resort to economic pressure against a country committing an aggression she would be in grave danger of being treated exactly as if she had taken military action. She is determined therefore that her neutral status shall not be compromised by any action that members of the League may undertake. On that condition she is most anxious, as M. MOTTA made clear, to play a part within the League. In practice it must mean that Switzerland can only be really active in the non-political work of the Geneva institution.

The British and some other Governments, while appreciating the attitude of Switzerland, are understood to insist that her special status should not be taken as a precedent. Nature has given Switzerland a peculiar geographical situation. Apart from the fact that her neutrality has been internationally recognized ever since 1815, she forms a territorial bastion between three Great Powers. Her intangibility has become part of the natural order of things, in spite of the racial affinities of her population with the three powerful neighbours. The present boundaries enclose an ideal buffer-State between countries which would have nothing to gain by becoming more closely neighboured to one another than they are. Moreover the common struggles for freedom of the Swiss through many centuries have welded them into an intensely patriotic centripetal people. "The independence and neutrality of Switzerland," said PRESIDENT BAUMANN in a recent statement, "are more than ever indispensable for ensuring the balance in Europe." The mission of the Swiss people, he said in a notable phrase, is to keep a watch in the interests of all over the passes of the Alps; and he added that they were ready to "defend their country" and their independence to the last drop of "their blood."

It may be granted that Switzerland is in a special position, but it has also to be admitted that her desire to assume a strictly neutral status in future international disputes is shared, and has been openly expressed, by several other of the smaller countries in Western Europe. Complete neutrality is of course a conception contrary to that of the collective system for which the League still stands. If many other countries were to follow all the way in the steps of Switzerland it would bring the League's political system to an end. This country, as MR. CHAMBERLAIN has plainly stated, does not wish to see Article XVI (Sanctions) disappear from the Covenant. However unlikely it is to be put into effect automatically by the remaining members of the League, its existence and legal validity must still be a deterrent to any nation that might

contemplate an act of aggression; for, even if it be no longer regarded as obligatory, it still explicitly authorizes every member to take action against the contravening State, and makes the League the proper centre for deciding upon the measures which the nations mindful of the principles of the Covenant may find it most appropriate to concert.

The method of approach however may perhaps with advantage be made rather different. The experiences of the last eighteen years must be turned to account. They show that national sovereignty has survived much more stubbornly than the founders of the League seem to have expected. The individual nation is emphatically still the unit of international affairs. The countries which still adhere *in toto* to Article XVI adhere to it partly as to a new form of alliance; and, when the Polish representative at Geneva said last week that "the effective and useful application of Articles of the Covenant must be left to the judgment of members in each particular case," he was clearly striking at the root of the pure theory of collective action; but he was without the slightest doubt expressing the feelings of most members of the League. They do not now, as the Swedish representative said, consider themselves bound to take coercive action against an aggressor State. Some way has got to be found of reconciling independence of judgment and action with recognition of the essential and guiding principles of the League as embodied in its preamble. That this combination of more or less contradictory theses was in the minds of the framers of the Covenant themselves is shown by their insistence on the rule of unanimity, which is of course intended as the safeguard of each individual member-State.

But the rule has not worked altogether satisfactorily. It has often led to anaemic resolutions that were all upon which the thirteen or sixteen States of the Council could agree; and it is indeed self-evident that for diplomatic purposes the collaboration of a set number of preordained countries upon a problem which may not directly concern most of them is a clumsy and undesirable expedient. The present tendency for Governments is plain enough; they are preferring to conduct their purely diplomatic negotiations away from the headquarters of the League; and the only successful cases of revision of treaties have not been conducted at Geneva. For arbitral purposes the presence in the Council of member-States who are disinterested is a positive advantage. While their participation in diplomatic negotiations which do not concern their own Governments may be considered an intrusion, their participation in a case which has been submitted to the Council for arbitration is a guarantee of impartiality. And the successes of the League during the last

The United Kingdom Professional Billiards Championship was continued at Thurston's Hall yesterday. (p. 6)

Scotland beat England by 265 shots to 241 in a curling match at Manchester yesterday. (p. 5)

Queen's Club beat the Bath Club in the Squash Rackets competition for the Bath Club Cup yesterday by two ties to one. (p. 5)

#### FINANCE AND COMMERCE

Last month's steel output was a record for any January; a £250,000 Three-and-a-Half per Cent. loan for Ilkeston is being privately placed; an increase in the supply of native labour to the Rand goldmines took place last month; an average rate of £24 0s. 4d. per cent. was tendered for the redemption of Hungarian Treasury Bills; good dividends were declared yesterday by Minerals Separation and the Delta Metal Company. (p. 20)

In the foreign exchange market francs recovered further to 152 15-32f. Dollars were weaker, the New York exchange rising to \$5.01½. Loan and discount rates were unaltered. Gold remained at 139s. 8d. per oz., £627,000 being sold. (p. 21)

In the Stock Exchange yesterday a further rise occurred in British Government and other Gilt-edged securities. Markets as a whole were heavy in tone, leading industrial shares remaining rather depressed. There was buying of Chinese bonds. A further rise took place in Cable and Wireless. (p. 20)

#### REFORM OF THE LEAGUE

The letters printed in these columns from LORD ALLEN and others since the recent adjournment of the Special Committee at Geneva testify to the immense interest which is rightly felt in the question of the possible reform of the League of Nations. Even those people who were never great believers in its methods cannot but be dismayed at the growth of anarchy in international affairs; and there is hardly an Englishman who does not in his heart echo the words used by the British representative at the first session of the Council—who happened to be that staunch Conservative, LORD CURZON—"The League of Nations is the expression of a universal desire for a saner method of regulating the affairs of mankind." Deep in the conscience of the British people—and certainly in other peoples' also—there exists a profound conviction that the principles of the Covenant and of the Kellogg Pact must somehow be made to prevail unless we are all going back, as MR. EDEN said the other day in the House of Commons, to the ways of cave-dwellers, living in the perpetual shadow of fear—fear, not now of wild beasts, but of barbarities the more terrible for being humanly devised. Yet, vital as the problem is, it was an act of wisdom on the part of the Geneva Committee to relegate it for the time being. When a patient is suffering from extreme debility a period of quiescence is the necessary preliminary to recovery. For one thing it may be hoped that in one form or another the re-fashioning of this indispensable body for the transaction of international business in the narrowed world of to-day may ultimately be assisted by States outside the present organization. And in any case to try to remove Articles out of the Covenant at this moment would almost certainly kill it stone dead.

Perhaps no actual "reform" of the League, in the strict sense of the word, will ever be possible. The experience of some years ago, when the attempt was made to bring its Articles into exact conformity with the Kellogg Pact, is not encouraging. The unanimity of fifty nations is almost unattainable upon any single substantial textual alteration of the Covenant; and it may be noted that the title of the special body which has been sitting at Geneva was "Committee on the Application of the Principles of the Covenant." But much can be done by interpretation, and by modification in practice—while still conforming strictly to the spirit of the preamble of the Covenant, the importance of which was emphasized by the BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY in his speech celebrating the hundredth meeting of the Council. The preamble describes the objective of the League as being the promotion of international cooperation, and the achievement of international peace and security, by the establishment of rules of conduct based on respect for international law. To that principle, MR. EDEN added, HIS MAJESTY'S Government hold fast. The British purpose remains unaltered.

two decades, so far as its political activities are concerned, have been won mainly within the domain of arbitration. It has in fact a long record of settled disputes to its credit—some of which might easily have grown to formidable dimensions had they not been promptly submitted to Geneva. Here there is a most useful service which the League has rendered, and can continue to render, to all States that voluntarily submit their differences to its jurisdiction.

But it is just as useless to talk about compulsory arbitration as it is about compulsory sanctions. It is the natural right of every State—whether a member or not—to submit its dispute to the Permanent Court of Justice or to the Council; similarly it must continue to be the right and the duty of every League State at least to do nothing whatever to help a country which has been formally proclaimed to have committed an act of unprovoked aggression by the League. Such country should in fact be regarded as an outlaw; and member-States should, in entire accordance with the terms of Article XVI, be free to regard themselves as liberated from their legal compacts with it, and free to take an active part against it should they so desire. But that decision would rest with individual Governments. The removal of any supposed compulsion upon them might actually heighten the force of the deterrent to a country contemplating aggression. It is perfectly conceivable that Governments freed from the arksome obligation of having to take action in unknown circumstances might, when the particular case arises, act with the greater energy.

In any case this seems to be the direction in which the minds of many of Europe's leading statesmen are working; and the League will probably have the better chance of proving itself if it conforms to this trend of political and public opinion. As the late LORD SALISBURY said: "Institutions which are due to legislation are infinitely weaker compared with those that have grown up under the impulse of the aspirations and of the instincts of the people whom they concern"; and in the meantime diplomacy provides the best method of creating the conditions in which the League can grow up naturally. Already, by its non-political activities, the League has become more intimately associated with international life than most people realize. If every reasonable opportunity is taken by nations of good will to resort to the organs of the League that have proved their worth—the Council, the Labour Office, the Permanent Court of Justice, and the Secretariat—it will, in spite of all present difficulties, play an increasingly useful part as an instrument of inter-State collaboration.