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Tunis, 20.12.19.

## PREDECESSORS OF THE LEAGUE

### FAILURES FOLLOWED BY WAR

#### NO NEED FOR DESPAIR TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—If Sir Arthur Page will look at the Phillimore Committee's Report, dated March 20, 1918, he will find that it deals with all his precedents and all his quotations. It proceeds to point out that "all these schemes were, in fact, the work of political philosophers," and to review "the historical causes which have in the past condemned them to sterility." Their relevance to a League of Nations, largely based on that Report, is not therefore quite obvious; and it might be more pertinent to point out that every one of these failures was followed by European wars increasing in extent, cost, and scientific barbarity. Against Canning's "every nation for itself and God for us all"—with its practical corollaries of "the devil take the hindmost" and gas-masks for babies—might be set Pitt's treaty of April 11, 1805, providing for "the establishment in Europe of a federative system to ensure the independence of the weaker States by erecting a formidable barrier against the ambitions of the more powerful."

The fault lies, Sir, not in the existence or even the constitution of the League, but in the conduct of some of its members; and there is no reason to suppose that they would have behaved any better without its restraint. Comparative failure has been the prelude to every success in history, and the moral is not to abandon the attempt.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
December 17. A. F. POLLARD.

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—Now that the armed alliance of the League has provoked the long-expected counter-alliance, it is interesting to note that the advocates of force within the Covenant are beginning, though as yet subconsciously, to realize their responsibility for the near approach of calamity.

In his letter in *The Times* to-day Dr. Gilbert Murray says that "every course of action which can induce them (the nations) to cooperate for lawful and beneficial ends has a value far greater than the immediate concrete results that may be attained." This is the very argument that has long been adduced by those supporters of the League who are opposed to sanctions.

"Nine-tenths of the League's work," he continues, "is really of this character."

For the sake of the remaining tenth, in which the threat of force is embodied and which has brought the world to the present sad pass, it is to be hoped that Dr. Murray and his supporters will no longer deny the nations the enjoyment of those wide and friendly associations in "art, science, education, social studies . . ." which he regards as so desirable and which might long ago have been attained had the militant Leaguers been prepared to sheathe the sabre.

Yours faithfully,  
H. ROWAN-ROBINSON,  
Hammer Court, Liphook, Dec. 17.

## POLAND AND LEAGUE

Tunis, 11.1.1938  
AN "ILLUSORY"  
SYSTEM

From Our Own Correspondent

WARSAW, JAN. 10

The great importance which the leaders of Poland now attach to the worsening of the international situation was emphasized in a statement on foreign policy which Colonel Beck, the Foreign Minister, made before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Sejm to-day. That his statement, which listeners could have been excused for interpreting as a virtual denunciation of the League of Nations Covenant, was intended for a much wider audience than a Parliamentary Committee was indicated first by the broadcasting of the speech and its subsequent transmission in several foreign languages.

For a long time (Colonel Beck said) I have been unable to escape the feeling that at Geneva we are faced with two conflicting trends. Experience has proved that the League was not strong enough to enforce the principles of the Covenant. Yet there could also be observed not only a growth in political passions, which aim at imposing ever more difficult tasks on this unfortunate League, but there even appeared a tendency to make good the League's failings by theoretical means.

Colonel Beck explained that he did not mean that the search for more equitable solutions of international conflicts is a waste of time. He did, however, regard as illusory the possibility of maintaining a state of affairs in which the statute and regulations of an institution set up to act as a system embracing all the nations of the world would, in the long run, be applied only by some of them to themselves and to others. The source of this crisis was to be found in the fact that the League from the beginning did not include some of the strongest nations, and it became evident that the League had even lost its character as a European organization. The situation had now become so acute that the hope that several countries of first-rate importance which had left the League would return to it had dwindled to vanishing point.

### THE LEAGUE "CRISIS"

It was both an indication of Polish concern over "the final state of the Geneva institution" and of the fear that Geneva sessions will now "degenerate into a doctrinal confederation" that Colonel Beck to-day felt obliged to deal openly with the League crisis.

We have no intention [he added] of undertaking any initiative which could deepen the crisis, but we must know what we are responsible for, by what obligations we are bound, and according to what principles the decisions of the international institution are taken.

Earlier in the speech he had prepared his hearers for this warning about "our responsibility and obligations" by reminding them that Poland's pacts of non-aggression with Germany and the Soviet Union, which "are not dependent on any international institution or procedure," were concluded at a time when both these powers were outside the League.

These pacts, he pointed out, "are based on profoundly conceived political reasons and interests and they preserve their value intact." Poland's military alliances with France and Rumania, he added, were concluded as far back as 1921 and 1922 respectively "when the organization of the League was still loosely knit," so that these alliances were neither supplementary nor complementary to the Covenant.

### CENTRAL EUROPE

Colonel Beck then referred to relations with the Danubian countries.

In the Danube basin (Colonel Beck said) we are carefully maintaining our traditional friendships, and I hope that our contacts will continue to develop in that region. Of all the political plans of recent years the one which Poland favoured most was the idea of moulding relations in accordance with the principles laid down by the French and Italian Governments during the visit to Rome in January, 1935, of M. Laval.

This, it will be recalled, was a project for closer collaboration between Austria and all her neighbours (except Switzerland), towards which France, Rumania, and Poland, although not direct neighbours of Austria, were also prepared to take a positive attitude.

Colonel Beck also attached much importance to the future of Palestine and to "the general problem of Jewish emigration," as well as to the plans now under discussion for the international reconstruction of financial and economic relations. He felt, however, that these plans "stand little chance of realization if we close our eyes to the current importance of the questions of raw materials and emigration."

Colonel Beck will again meet the Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday, when, it is understood, he will make a more detailed statement about Danzig, which he intimated to-day was one of the problems which the League had proved incapable of solving.