GERMANY AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

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GERMANY'S attitude towards the League of Nations is a riddle for most Englishmen. It seems obvious that Germany ought to be glad to put an end to her political and moral isolation by joining a body of 54 nations, and that she, in her present prostrate condition, has the greatest interest in advocating an institution intended to place Right above Might. Nevertheless you nearly always hear unfavourable judgments of the League in Germany, and a vote on the question of our entrance would give an overwhelming majority against it. You would not receive much enlightenment if you asked an average German newspaper-reader to explain the riddle. He would tell you with a curious logic that he, of course, is an enthusiastic supporter of a real League of Nations, but a real League ought to embrace all nations; the present League does not embrace Germany, and so Germany cannot join the League because she has not joined it.

Happily—or unhappily—there are more serious reasons for our policy, and I am glad to have an opportunity of speaking about this question before people whose political views on this and many other questions I believe that I share, and who sincerely and frankly desire the welfare of the League as well as of Germany and England.

Allow me to express my gratitude by speaking, on my part, with perfect sincerity and absolute frankness. I am convinced you will allow me, nay expect me, to tell the whole truth as I see it, even if it forces me to say things far from flattering to the League, to Germany and to England. Diplomatic language would be out of place here, and I feel sure that you won't expect me to make propaganda.

Germany is no propitious soil for the ideas of pacifism. This fact has little to do with the national character, because national character is itself moulded by Nature and History. Now Nature has made Germany's history just the contrary of England's. We can say with little exaggeration, that England is the one European
great Power which had no hostile neighbours, because she had no
neighbours at all; that Germany was the one European great Power
which was surrounded on all sides by other great Powers, each of
them nearly as strong as or stronger than herself—France, Russia,
Austria and, in former times, Sweden. Let me recall some dates.
The heart of Northern Germany, Brandenburg, has been invaded
and occupied wholly or partially during the last three centuries—
by Swedes and Austrians during the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48); by
Swedes, then Allies of the French, in 1675; by Russians and
Austrians from 1757-60; by the French from 1806-13; and now,
since 1918, commissions of the Allied Powers sit in Berlin, con-
trolling what has been left of our army. Now all this happened in
the heart of Germany. Other parts of the country were still oftener
the battlefield of all her neighbours. Compare with this the history
of your happy island and you will understand why not this country,
but ours, has become the home of militarism. Certainly, he who is
surrounded by enemies more powerful than himself has the highest
interest in their being combatted not by his own insufficient power,
but by the power of Law; but, if the time is not ripe for these
conceptions, if there is not the slightest prospect of founding the
reign of Law, then it is psychologically inevitable that people will
rely rather on their own forces, as do the others. Germany has
been for centuries a besieged fortress, partly no doubt through her
own fault, but that does not alter the fact. Now a besieged fortress
is apt to develop other virtues than those of a pacific mind.

Another equally deeply laid foundation of all politics is Religion.
The Germans are Lutherans or Catholics. Both these denominations
agree in placing the Christian virtues more in the heart of a man and
in his private life, and less in his outward and social actions. A good
Lutheran or Catholic must have a pacific mind, but it is not an
essential tenet of his creed that he should embody this spirit in
objective, political institutions; Justice will be realised, so he
earnestly hopes, in the other world, or in the Church; the State is
a secular institution. It was only the Calvinistic branch of Pro-
testantism, and especially Puritanism, that from the beginning
directed its energies towards public and social life, that alone tried
earnestly to give the commonwealth and politics a Christian and
religious foundation, and at the same time a democratic form.
This explains why the genuine Christian and democratic idea of a
reign of peace, as it is embodied in the League of Nations, has
become an element of public opinion only in those countries which
have been deeply influenced by Calvinism—in Switzerland, in
Holland, in America, and in England. It is not by chance that the
League of Nations has its seat in the town of Calvin and Rousseau,
in Geneva. In all Lutheran or Catholic countries the League is a
political instrument for some or many politicians, a hope or an ideal
for some or many idealists; but public opinion, as a body, is in-
different or hostile. The League has been, so far, a Puritan ideal; it will become perhaps a Hindu ideal; but it will be difficult, though by no means impossible, to make it the basis of European politics.

But this religious view does not represent the whole truth. The fact I allude to is only one factor of a far wider phenomenon, of tendencies which I am far from approving, which, on the contrary, I deplore; but this does not absolve me from the duty of describing these tendencies as faithfully and loyally as I can. In all Catholic and Lutheran countries politics have been secularised to a degree that Englishmen scarcely realise. In all these countries there are parties which pretend to engage in Christian politics, but in reality politics are conducted everywhere without any regard to Christian principles. But a people cannot live without a religious creed. If it loses its faith, it must create a new one. The present faith of continental Europe, including Germany, is not Christianity, but Nationalism. It is a superficial view to consider Nationalism a political rather than a religious creed. If you want to know somebody's religion you must ask him for what ideals he considers it his duty to lay down his life. Well, very few Germans, and perhaps still fewer Frenchmen or Poles or Italians, would be ready to die for God, excepting some missionaries, and they would be considered fools by the great majority of their countrymen. But nearly everybody would be ready to die for his country, nay more, would be considered a coward and a scoundrel if he were not.

Now, this means that the State is considered holy, absolute, above all other values, and therefore the State must be sovereign; it cannot recognise any superior, and if this sovereignty is lost national honour goes with it. This worship of the State is certainly "made in Germany"; it is a creation of Prussian Kings, Prussian historians and Prussian philosophers, although our greatest thinker, Kant, was the first man to discover the juridical principles of a true League of Nations, a "Völkerbund," a word which he was the first to use. But he had no success, and the opposite creed spread all over Germany, and then all over the world, finding many followers in this country also, just as another originally German creed, Protestantism, has spread all over the world. Pacifism is of course incompatible with this creed, because Pacifism means the partial abdication of the sovereignty of the State; it means renouncing its most cherished right, that of defending its honour by waging war against anyone who attacks it. This explains Mussolini's attitude in the last Graeco-Italian conflict; it explains Poincaré's attitude in all reparation questions, which, according to English views, ought to have been committed to arbitration or mediation, and also explains Germany's behaviour in the Ruhr question for instance. Of course it has often been proposed, by myself among others, to let the International Court decide about the legality of the occupation of the Ruhr, but this proposal has always been rejected with
indignation by our public opinion, although we were fully convinced of the illegality of this act. The reasons adduced were always of a political, diplomatic or legal nature, but the real and strongest reason, strongest because unconscious, was the reason just mentioned. To bow before violence, as we had to do in the Ruhr question, was a disaster for us, and one can always hope to redress such a disaster by inflicting an equal disaster on those who victimized us. Bowing to Right is the duty of a private person, because it means bowing to the State, but that the State should bow to Right is, according to this modern creed, a disgrace, for it means the loss of its honour, and such a loss never can be repaired. This then is the deepest source of Germany's aversion from all international jurisdiction; and the same applies to France and Italy, as their attitude in the conflicts with Switzerland and Greece fully proved. But other countries were not so clumsy as to boast of their nationalistic creed and to turn it into a complete system of philosophy. Now, however, the whole continent is on the same road; for instance, a Liberal leader like Signor Salandra praises Fascism as the exaltation of the Fatherland above everything—above freedom itself if need be.

Germany has another reason special to herself. The different German States have never been absolutely Sovereign States in the fullest meaning of the word. They have always more or less been dependent elements of a greater political body—first of the Holy Roman Empire, then of the German Confederation, then of the German Empire, and now of the German Republic. But they have always remained regular States with their own political institutions, their own monarchs, parliaments and laws, and their own patriotism. A Prussian, and still more a Bavarian, has nearly always felt himself to be primarily a Prussian or a Bavarian, and only secondarily a German. Nevertheless, he had to renounce the most important sovereign rights of his beloved country. Prussia, for instance, had never a constitutional right to wage war against Bavaria; and if it did so, as it very often did (the last time in 1866) it was always, in a legal sense, a criminal violation of the laws of the Empire. The States often have—and always ought to have—submitted their controversies to the Courts of the Empire or the mediation of the Federal Councils, and so the German States have for centuries been practically a real League of Nations with compulsory jurisdiction, with a council and an assembly, and with the right of legislation. Therefore these institutions had absorbed that spirit of internationalism, which other States are now directing into the League of Nations. It is thus easy to understand why a Prussian and a Bavarian cling to the residue of sovereignty which the German constitution has left them, and abhor the idea of a further diminution of that sovereignty which would result from Germany's membership of the League. The proof that my diagnosis is right, is the feeling
in the United States. You know that they don't want a "Super-State." But they are themselves a Super-State, and proud of being so. Thus in reality by joining the League, the State of New York or California would have become a member of a "Super-super-State." And this is one of the many reasons why an average American, although a convinced pacifist, will not endorse the idea of the sole practical scheme for realising pacifism—the League of Nations.

The reasons I have now given are never put forward in Germany, and if you ask German politicians about them they would probably be astonished at such an interpretation of their actions and omissions. If you told them that a German professor had given this explanation, most of them would probably smile and say, "Now we understand." But many would be indignant, because nearly all parties—in fact all except the extreme right and left—profess to be absolutely in favour of a true League of Nations, and if they hate the present League it is only because they are the true pacifists and the League is the contrary. This line of argument is not absolutely hypocritical. There is a good deal of truth in it. It is not sufficiently known all over the world that in spite of all the nationalistic and militaristic tendencies of our past and present, there was for a short time (after the evident failure of these tendencies as demonstrated by the loss of the war) "a Germany more republican, democratic, and pacifist than any other European country. In those days"—I quote from an article which I contributed to the Contemporary Review of last November—"between October, 1918, and the Spring of 1919—the whole nation was thoroughly impressed with a sense of the large share that the German foreign policy had in the responsibility of the war. Even the Conservatives (who had by this time become the National Popular Party) demanded in their manifesto 'the radical reform of the German foreign service.' The Catholic Centre demanded, among other things, 'the unqualified recognition of the democratic popular Government; the regularising of the mutual relations of peoples and States on principles of eternal justice, not of physical force; the creation of a League of Nations; the introduction of courts of arbitration for all disputes; and reciprocal simultaneous disarmament on the largest possible scale.' Similarly the National Liberals (Popular Party): 'We also welcome the idea of a League of Nations conditional on the full equality of all States. We adhere to an universal, democratic, equal and secret electoral franchise. We desire a complete reorganisation of the Foreign Office.' The Democrats asserted that 'our unfortunate external and internal policy has only brought hunger and misery. The prevalence of the militaristic policy of brute force has led us into this war. Right must reign among the nations. We desire a foreign policy based on the principles of a lasting peace. We stand for a league of equal nations, for international courts of arbitration..."
and for proportional reduction of armaments." From these utter-
ances it can readily be conceived what the appeals of the Social
Democrats were.

"And the whole nation shared these views. At the elections of
January 19th, 1919, the voting was as follows:—Socialists, 44 per
cent.; Centre, 22 per cent.; Democrats, 18 per cent.; giving a
total of 84 per cent. of definitely Republican and Pacifist votes."

But this democratic Germany was nipped in the bud by the
policy of the Entente, of France in particular, but the British
Government also had its share of the responsibility. I refer more
specially to our discouraging experiences during the period of the
Armistice, the prolongation of the hunger blockade, the retention
of the prisoners of war, the arbitrary peace treaty of Versailles,
the refusal to admit Germany to the League of Nations. It seemed
plain to everyone that those who had been liberal in promises of
democratic institutions, justice and peace, had only given servitude,
deception and militarism, though Germany had disarmed, and had
become a Republic. It seemed evident that reactionary influences
in the Entente were uppermost, and so the German people began to
despair of anything in the nature of justice, liberty, or humanity,
and turned to those who had consistently maintained that the whole
business was an elaborate "swindle"—an opinion which now
appeared to be justified by events. The one fact that clearly
emerged was that the Republicans and Pacifists were blockheads
and dupes. Is it to be wondered at that the idea of physical force,
from within and without, appeared to offer the only means of
salvation?

All these arguments seemed to receive an enormous support
from the League of Nations, through its Covenant as well as its
activities, and it was easy enough to criticise them on every occasion.
These criticisms are the conscious reasons always alleged as obstacles
to our joining the League. They are of two classes. Firstly, that
no truly democratic and pacific State ought to join a League which
they regard as a "humbug," as making but a masquerade artfully
contrived to conceal the political and selfish aims of French militar-
ism and English imperialism. You can read this assertion day by
day in our Press, hear it from men who would never have dreamt
of instituting the most modest League, had Germany been victorious,
and who now reject the present League because it does not come
up to their most extravagant hopes and wishes. Of course there is
always a little truth in the arguments, but they are immense
exaggerations. The League is said to be not a League of Nations,
but of Governments represented by diplomats of the old school,
the Assembly playing only a decorative rôle and the whole power
lying in the Council. The Council is said to be absolutely dominated
by the Entente Powers, or by France, or by England. On this point the critics differ, not as a result of a study of the question (which has not been attempted) but as a result of their political dislikes. The mediating activity of this body is regarded as not being inspired by any sentiment of justice and peace, but by the intention of the great Powers to enrich the political orchestra by the addition of a new and fascinating instrument. Nay more, the whole machinery for preserving peace is considered an artful scheme to guarantee the possessions of the two greatest Powers with the assistance of all the minor Powers, so that those, who in the course of the centuries have been robbed of their colonies and territories, are now called upon in the name of justice and international solidarity and peace to protect the properties of the present robbers against the aspirations of future robbers or against the legitimate claims of the robbed themselves.

It is acknowledged that on certain occasions the League has stood for peace, but (say the critics) on these occasions the issues were so unimportant that even without the League war would not have been probable, while on the other hand the League has carefully avoided interfering with really grave questions, for instance the Polish-Russian war, at least as long as the Poles were victorious; the conflict between Russia and Persia, Costa Rica and Panama, and all the questions arising from the treaty, especially the conflicts between France and Germany. The only serious conflicts which were brought before the League were the Vilna and the Corfu questions, and on both occasions the League bowed to force and certainly did not vindicate the law. The International Court at the Hague is recognised as a modest advance, but the fact that no great Power has accepted the clause of compulsory jurisdiction is always pointed out as a proof that none of them is really in earnest when it demands the reign of Law, and the minor Powers bow to the Law only because they have not the power to break it.

It is not my office to deal with all these arguments which, I am afraid, are in a great part perfectly familiar to you. Indeed, I never feel so thoroughly at home as when I am reading an article of the Morning Post or a speech of Lord Birkenhead. They seem to be made in Potsdam and prove that nothing is more international than nationalism. It will be far more interesting for you to know what arguments are used against the League from a special German standpoint. It is said that our entry is legally, morally, and politically impossible.

Legally impossible, because we should not obtain the two-thirds majority necessary for our admission. France, as everybody knows, has declared over and over again that she is opposed to it, and all her vassals would vote with her, as also some other nations,
who are still under the spell of the war feeling. But even if we
succeeded in becoming a member, France would be so furious,
that she would revenge herself by creating difficulties on the Rhine
or elsewhere, which would not be compensated by any advantages
arising from our membership.

Morally, our claim for admittance would be impossible, because
it is beneath our dignity to push our way into a company which
does not want us, which would discuss our demand in a humiliating
fashion, which has treated us with scorn, and which has tried its
best to complete our ruin. The examples always cited are the
allocation of Eupen and Malmédy to Belgium and of the only
valuable part of Upper Silesia to Poland, and the free hand given
to the French in their administration of the Saar Basin.

Finally, our claim is said to be politically impossible for reasons
of home and foreign policy. No Government could survive the
storm of indignation at home which would be aroused by a claim
for admission to such an unpopular institution. This argument
becomes more serious every day on account of the growing influence
of the Nationalists. And our whole foreign policy is directed
towards the revision of the Treaty; but we should certainly not be
allowed to become a member without acknowledging once more,
and this time voluntarily, our treaty obligations, including the
acknowledgment of our responsibility for the war, and the loss of
territories in the East which we hope to regain one day. Moreover,
our entrance would mean that we subscribe to the further anti-
German measures of the League which are to be anticipated. We
can now deprive them of a part of their authority by protesting
against them, but we would seem to approve of them if we were
members, as nearly all votes must be unanimous. This unanimity
on the other hand would be no protection because, in our present
state of dependence on other Powers, we could not afford to isolate
ourselves, and because the Treaty has foreseen even this possibility
of injuring us by abolishing the necessity of an unanimous vote in
some of the most important affairs regarding Germany. For
instance, the Council of the League has to decide unanimously on
most questions; but on questions concerning the administration
of the Saar Basin it can decide by a mere majority. Thus, even if
we were a permanent member of the Council, we could not efficiently
protect our unhappy countrymen in this part of Germany. Never-
theless, a permanent seat in the Council would be of a certain
political value, and ought therefore to be claimed, as the conditio
sine qua non of our entrance, but this would necessitate an unanimous
vote of the Council which the voice of France alone could prevent,
and therefore the demand would be hopeless.

These, Ladies and Gentlemen, are the principal arguments
against our claim. I do not share them, and you certainly do not
share them; but you will recognise that there is generally at least a semblance of truth in them, and that it is not easy to combat them. Their effect is enormous. They have been repeated by the Press, in pamphlets, by politicians of all parties, and by all our foreign ministers so often that nearly the whole German people believes in them. The great majority of the influential newspapers are absolutely hostile, and the only great paper friendly to the League is the Vossische Zeitung. Especially after the decision in the Upper Silesia question, fighting for the League has become useless. Even a true democrat and pacifist like Herr Wirth, the best Chancellor we ever had, declared to Mr. Lloyd George at their meeting at the Genoa Conference—“If one wants to serve the League in Germany one should, after this decision, be silent about it”; and a great German newspaper allowed me to continue my propaganda for the League in its columns, only on the condition that I ceased to refer to this point. The principal complaint was that according to the Treaty the whole country ought to have been given to that State for which the majority of the population had voted. Now 60 per cent. had voted for Germany, and nevertheless a great part of the country containing really all its natural and industrial treasures was given to Poland, and so the League had brutally broken the Treaty. Now you have only to glance at the Treaty and you will see it expressly stated that the country ought to be divided along the lines of the votes of the different communes, and the League has drawn the line as best it could according to the votes. This division was a crime and a folly, but it was a consequence of the Treaty, and not the fault of the League. This is a specimen of the “Hetze” conducted in Germany against the League with the same means with which a “Hetze” is conducted everywhere, and not only in Germany.

Another affair which made a most unfavourable impression was the administration of the Saar Basin, and, unfortunately, this time the grievance was only too well-founded. Let me point out one fact. The five members of the commission to whom the Government is entrusted are chosen by the Council. One must be a Frenchman, another a native inhabitant of the Saar Basin, and the three others must belong to other countries than France and Germany. The Frenchman chosen by the Council was M. Roult, a man who could not understand a word of German and did not care to learn it. The second member chosen was the Belgian military attaché in Paris, Major Lambert. The third was a Parisian sportsman and bon vivant, who happened to have been born in Denmark, and therefore counted as a neutral, Count Moltke Huitfeldt. The fourth was one of the most notorious persons in the Saar Basin, Doktor Hector, known everywhere as an unconditional follower of France, who in 1919, with the aid of false documents, had tried to juggle the town of Saarlouis into the hands of France. All these four
candidates had been proposed by France, and the Council not only chose them but confided the presidency, not to the neutral, not to the representative of the Saar Basin, but to the French member, thereby proving that it did not consider itself the "trustee" of the Saar Basin, as the Treaty had expressly constituted it, but rather an instrument of the Power which by every kind of trickery tries to annex this important part of Germany and exploit it for her own selfish purposes. The only person in the Commission who had the confidence of the population was the fifth member, a Canadian, Mr. Waugh, who unfortunately did not understand German. This is the government chosen by the League of Nations, and held responsible only to its Council, not to the country. The population which had not even been consulted as to the one member who was its sole representative was especially indignant with this traitor, Doktor Hector, and in 1922 a petition signed by twenty-six constituencies out of thirty begged the Council not to re-elect this man. Nevertheless the Council, which pretends to stand for democracy, with the consent of the British Government, confirmed his appointment. Some months afterwards this man was in a Court of Law convicted of perjury, and then resigned of his own account! But the Council even then remained stubborn and instead of Doktor Hector, again contrary to the will of the population, chose another French tool, Herr Land, as his successor. Last March the election of the Saar representative again became due. Everybody in the Saar Basin and throughout Germany was convinced that this time, as a Labour Government held power in England, a person who really enjoyed the confidence of the inhabitants would be chosen. A deputation from all political parties of the Saar recommended as their candidate, Herr Levacher, a lawyer of Saarlouis. Nevertheless Lord Parmoor gave his assent to the candidate of his predecessor, Lord Cecil, namely Herr Kossmann, because he felt himself bound by a previous agreement on this point between France and Lord Cecil. This agreement, however, had been concluded on the presumption that the population was in favour of Herr Kossmann, but the population having subsequently withdrawn its confidence in this candidate, no democrat would consider Lord Parmoor as being bound by his predecessor's word. This decision of the League was a terrible blow to its prestige in Germany. It was, I fear, the last straw that broke the camel's back.

I agree that this administration of the Saar Basin is the only really black spot on the League in its treatment of Germany, but you can easily imagine how all its other decisions appeared against such a background. The true friends of the League in Germany had a hard struggle in such circumstances. There had been millions of such friends in the months after the revolution, as I said before, but their number melted down to a little group after the peace conditions and Germany's exclusion from the League became
known. Still, we have not despaired. We have kept on working, writing, and speaking. Our arguments are generally not of a moral or a religious nature, but taking into account the state of public opinion, are purely political. They are the following:—

(1) Germany’s political and moral isolation must cease.

(2) We want a platform on which to state our complaints and our standpoint before the whole world.

(3) We are weak, so we want the protection of the united forces of humanity.

(4) The League is our only safeguard against further spoliation.

(5) Our quarrels with France are now decided by force alone: we must try to submit them to impartial jurisdiction, or at least to the compromise which a decision of the Council of the League would mean, and which, bad as it might be, would be better than sheer violence.

(6) We must use the little influence we gain by membership of the League as a protector of minorities to help our unfortunate brethren in Upper Silesia, in Poland, the Memel district, Rumania, Tschechoslovakia, &c.—six millions of men—to say nothing of the Austrians.

(7) We must avoid the unfortunate impression it would be bound to produce everywhere, if we kept aloof, because this would not be understood, would be interpreted as a new proof that the old militarist spirit is still alive, and that we try to treat the League as we treated the Hague Conference.

My favourite argument was the following, which you will allow me to translate from one of my articles in the German Press.

(1) The nation which has been most experienced and most successful in foreign politics, the English nation, sees the last hope of Europe in the League. The nation which has been the most ignorant and most clumsy in foreign politics, the German nation, calls the League a humbug. Draw your conclusions.

(2) Our deadly enemy, the country which wants to dismember, humiliate and, if possible, destroy Germany, namely France, moves heaven and earth to prevent our entry. All our friends in the whole world advise, implore us, to claim admission. Draw your conclusions.

Among the friends I, together with most pacifists, numbered in the first line England, being convinced that English and German interests coincide in this question. Indeed from the beginning of
that such an invitation would be received with a certain measure of caution after what happened last summer. I do not presume to offer advice. But I am convinced that if the English Government really intends to make us enter the League, they will find a way, perhaps not to alter our Government's political taste, but certainly to alter its attitude. And this is absolutely necessary. It is my firm conviction that the future of Europe depends upon the League, the future of the League upon the admission of Germany, and Germany's future upon her becoming at last a free nation among free sister-nations. Ladies and Gentlemen, let us work together towards the achievement of such noble aims.

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