

# Premature Discussion of League of Nations Imperils Peace

By André Chéradame

I propose to demonstrate:  
1.—The success of the peace conference—hence real and definitive victory—depends in a very large measure on the order in which the different problems to be considered are taken up.  
2.—The discussion of the league of nations and of the "freedom of the seas" can have most unfortunate consequences if it does not come in its logical order; that is, if it is premature.

THE establishment of a specific programme of discussion for the conference is necessary for two principal reasons.

In the first place, it is evident that all questions cannot be treated at the same time. Second, there are certain problems that can be resolved only after others apparently unconnected with them have been dealt with.

At an epoch when time is so precious, in order to end sufferings so long endured, it is obviously dangerous to engage in the discussion of unsolvable problems because it has not been foreseen that their solution depends on other and more urgent problems. As that perilous road seems to have been already entered upon, it is time for public opinion to realize the danger in order that its influence may prevent a catastrophe.

## Theories and Their Application

To understand the subtle but very real peril before which we stand it is necessary first to grasp a very simple truth, which has, nevertheless, not been made sufficiently plain to the public: A theory, however good, is not necessarily practical.

There are theories whose justice cannot be contested, but the mere attempt to put them in practice leads to a veritable catastrophe. For example, the theories that ruled the Hague conference, put forward by the Czar Nicholas II, were just, but, in fact, those theories contributed powerfully to making the war possible; that is, they killed millions of men.

This was so because the Hague conference led the British, the French and other people to think the peace of Europe assured just at the time when Germany was preparing intensively for a war of aggression. Thus, the Hague conference without question put into circulation ideas not in conformity with the times, that were premature, hence unrealizable and by consequence infinitely dangerous.

In fact, completely reassured regarding the intentions of Germany, the powers that now compose the Entente neglected the armaments that would have made the Germans renounce their ideas of aggression on account of the risks a fully armed enemy would have entailed.

One sees clearly that by its psychological consequences the Hague conference contributed largely to provoke the war and make possible the aggression that surprised the nations now allies.

This example, drawn from the Hague conference, makes it plain that an idea may be theoretically good, but that its application would not be practical until there has been a further considerable advance in social evolution.

Absolutely the same result can be looked for from certain questions in the Allied peace programme, notably the league of nations and the "freedom of the seas."

The league of nations cannot be organized until after the solution of certain other problems. Incontestably the league of nations is based on an idea theoretically of the highest justice, but it will end in an immense catastrophe if it is attempted to put it in practice in advance of the solution of other problems infinitely more urgent and the solution of which, moreover, is indispensable to the creation of a state of things in which a league of nations can be developed.

What is the state of things which, according to all evidence, will be most favorable for the development of a league of nations? It is without question the situation that will result from the liquidation, as completely as possible, of the essential problems arising

from the European war, notably the complete destruction of German militarism, realized not by treaties on paper, but by accomplished facts (the destruction in Germany of the machinery specially designed for the manufacture of munitions of war; the imposing on Germany of the payment of annuities, moderate, but spread over a sufficiently long period to assure reparation and amounting to enough so that Germany will not be able to re-arm; the creation of anti-pan-German states in Central Europe).

Once these things have been done a state of things will have been created favorable to beginning the organization of the society of nations. On the contrary, it is clear that an effort to organize a society of nations has no chance of success if an attempt is made to regulate the affairs of Europe on paper, and if, in consequence, the

## Questions of Immediate Practical Importance Must Be Settled Before the Problem of Confederation Is Taken Up

knowing full well that such a programme would be of the utmost benefit to the Germans during the armistice period.

We will now examine the reasons why to begin by studying the league of nations and the "freedom of the seas" would be at the same time absurd and playing into the hands of the Boches.

The situation created by the war that must be liquidated with the utmost speed is the most difficult ever known. To begin by discussing the league of nations and the "freedom of the seas,"

one group three-fourths of the people of the world, a proportion never before reached in history?

Does not common sense tell us to wait to see the results of this league of nations that already exists before creating another without knowing how the one we have will function? No engineer would think of building a new type of engine of 1,000 horsepower without knowing how an engine of the same type but of 500 horsepower worked.

Is it not evident that if—for the sake

who can do the least cannot do the most. This is elementary common sense; but, alas! the partisans of the league of nations seem to care little for common sense.

Finally, and this is much more important, to discuss these immense and ill-defined problems, such as the league of nations and the "freedom of the seas" before the urgent, concrete problems are solved would be to do exactly what the Germans want.

The Germans count on the following sequence of events:

lieve in positive results from the negotiations, will demand demobilization.

The question of reparation will be decided only in principle and on paper.

No police force capable of compelling the Germans to pay their indemnities will be created.

The German people will pay only a very small part of the damage they have caused and will keep the greater part of the loot of all kinds they have stolen everywhere during the war.

Under these conditions the financial situation of the European Allies, and especially of France, would carry self-evident consequences. The cost of living in France and England reaching intolerable proportions, industries could not be reorganized, and Bolshevism would be easily spread among the populations by Boche agents.

life was saved by her navy and that the military spirit is far from being destroyed in Germany.

On the other hand, Americans, seeing the turn of events, are saying, "Let us get back to the Monroe Doctrine and keep out of European affairs, unless we want to see Europe, as soon as her hands are free, mix in our affairs."

But the continuation of American intervention in European affairs on a cordial basis is absolutely necessary. American intervention, by its noble, generous and ideal character and its comprehension of the future dangers, is a tremendous page in the history of humanity. Anything that could weaken the extent of American intervention or change its character would be a veritable disaster. Hence, it is only necessary to know what is already being published in certain journals of the Entente to be convinced that the discussion of the league of nations and the "freedom of the seas," because the discussion of these questions is premature, can only tend to weaken instead of strengthen the ties that now exist between America and Europe.

## The Spectre at the Green Table



league of nations rests on written conventions, like those of The Hague, and not on realities.

It is therefore plain that it is indispensable to follow a well thought out programme in the discussion of the diverse problems to come before the peace conference, and not to follow this programme will lead to certain failure.

## Utopians, Bolsheviks and the League of Nations

Unfortunately, in each of the Allied nations there are some Utopians who do not understand the situation and say, "Organize the league of nations first and we will negotiate the peace afterward."

This is a party of which some of the most notable members are the French and British Socialists, who both before and during the war showed their inability to comprehend realities. It is the same lack of understanding that characterizes all the Bolsheviks of the Entente—Germanophile, in truth, and

which one can talk to infinity, would result only in voluntarily complicating practical affairs and would be manifestly absurd.

Further, to discuss the league of nations as something still to be created is to forget that which already exists—the Entente. Is not it, such as it is, a league of nations, since it brings into

of argument—the league of nations we already have should not be able, with its infinite resources, to solve the problems arising from the war (reparations, reorganization of Europe territorially), a fortiori a league of nations still greater would be utterly incapable of doing better. Those who can do the most can do the least, but those

The discussion of great questions such as the league of nations and the "freedom of the seas" will divide the Allies.

The time taken for those discussions will be lost for the settlement of concrete problems that Germany fears especially, such as reparation. The Allied armies, ceasing to be

Finally, since the war expenses of Germany have been considerably less than those of the Allies, and since, according to our hypothesis, Germany would retain her loot, there would be so great a difference of economic power in favor of Germany that within a short time she would have attained her victory, not on the field of battle, but none the less in reality, as a consequence of the economic situation without precedent created in Europe by four years of war.

The danger I have described is not chimerical. Already the discussion of the "freedom of the seas," because it is premature, has caused divergencies among the Allies. As soon as it was intimated recently that England would be willing to give up her command of the seas Mr. Winston Churchill, as spokesman for England, declared that she would never think of such a thing. It was a very natural reply, if one remembers that the suggestion was made to England on the morrow of an experience that has demonstrated that her

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