

THE NEW WORLD AND EUROPE

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THE post-war world has hitherto, to its great embarrassment, been largely occupied in an endeavour to sweep up the mess of battle on the Continent, but it is now gradually beginning to realize that it has subtler "messes" to tackle elsewhere. And they are subtler, because methods of approach are less direct. We talk of the need of "atmosphere" in recreating a "Concert" in Europe, yet we have experimented with few varieties and with but little success in our many discussions with America in recent years. It may be noted, however, that in every case we have taken the suppliant as our model, and we seem incurably rooted in the idea that here is the infallible road both to the solution of our problems and to goodwill in general. Is this a tenable theory?

Take, for instance, the misnamed "Navy Pact" with France of 1928. Here, after endless discussions, we eventually, not without sacrifices, came to an arrangement which eliminated past differences and, above all, had the merit of involving enormous monetary savings to the British taxpayer, to a much greater extent indeed than, as far as is at present discernible, can be involved by the most optimistic calculation of the results to be derived from present American negotiations. But this policy was denounced, mainly with execration—on both sides of the water, in that, in spite of a genuine effort to do so, and a belief that it had been successful, it failed to meet the objections of the United States. That was sufficient. When new proposals are formulated which, designed exclusively to meet western views, fail to satisfy France, then no one cares; France is, of course, always "impossible;" we have met the view of the only country that matters. France, whose fears and actual needs for protection are very real, must swallow her difficulties: she must come and negotiate; her objections cannot be allowed to wreck Anglo-American accord. It would have been heresy in 1928 to argue as above, with the United States and France transposed. No one dreamed of suggesting that the Americans, whose fleet is little but the luxury of Imperialism, should negotiate; of course, discussion was outside the pale for consideration. Sauce for the goose is not sauce for this gander!

It would be interesting if students of politics would tell us by what code we can assess inferiority of France and of other nations to the United States. No doubt it is equally heresy to suggest that it is more vital for us to have a final settlement which Europe and France in particular can willingly accept, provided the financial aspects are as attractive, than to come to terms with a country militarily, by its distance from our shores, of so little interest to us offensively or defensively in comparison with the nations of Europe.

That such an attitude should be considered—which, outside the smoking-room and the “pub” it certainly is—as *lèse majesté*—makes one wonder sometimes what it is in our mighty “neighbour” that commands such an attachment so markedly not accorded to other nations. Is it that Bishops, Free Church Presidents and others of that ilk are inspired by the knowledge that 50% of the citizens of the United States are officially recorded as having no religious creed (let alone Christianity) of any kind or sort? Is it that social workers envy the colossal figures of divorces, or that our Judiciary sigh for their record of crime, the statistics of which can hardly be envisaged in a country such as ours, or for their system of popular election of judges? Or is it the fruits of Prohibition whereby direct flouting of the law has become common form among people of all types and classes? Is it even Parliament’s admiration for chairmen in Congress who, it is alleged, promote the cause of their own side? Or, finally, is it admiration for an altruism in public policy of a type that all Europe has learnt to know so well in these post-war years, and that will forswear war while satisfying an unprecedented naval appetite, which requires an ocean-going fleet to protect practically no overseas possessions, and to safeguard vital communications that are almost entirely internal? Are these the causes of the present day “itch” for the adulation of United States policy? Certainly it would seem so.

If we turn to these armament discussions, what in fact do we find? Mr. Hoover himself has called attention to the vast increases of military expenditure in post-war years by his country, where a close race is being run with Soviet Russia for the highest marks in the efficient preparation for war, the use of gas playing a prominent part. Who are we to criticize this? We don’t. But when England at break-neck speed and France, more cautiously, are sheathing their swords, the incessant trumpeting of American altruism and idealism seem to demonstrate the lack of a sense of humour which comes oddly from the land of Mark Twain. When we turn back to abortive discussions of the last three years on naval policy, the

same characteristics are evident. Although the open imperialism of Mr. Shearer may be a little crude even for the least shy "nationalist", yet it would be a mistake to assume that "the love of bigness for its own sake," is not a characteristic gospel in the western hemisphere. Indeed, the apparent reluctance to deal **drastically** with the battleship problem, which is after all the real test, arises from the same cause. Further they tell us, there is to be no account taken of war, yet the United States must have a vast naval building programme, not for any need, but for the sake of "parity." We may definitely say "not for any need," for it was never possible to extract any hint of what the need was to be, whether against the 3,000 mile distant Europe or the 5,000 mile distant Japan that has always been to the fore in these discussions in endeavoring to effect a fair compromise. This blessed word "parity", the corner stone of disarmament discussion, has proved nothing but a mandate for an invigorated policy of arming; in fact, as the *Times* then stated, for prestige and not for defence. Such is mentality in political circles in that country, that we are told by the *Times* correspondent, discussing the prospects of the Kellogg Pact in the Senate, that "there is not much inclination to remove war, unless accompanied by considerable addition to naval strength"; or may I paraphrase it—"no desire to build churches, unless accompanied by a declaration against God?"

There is, of course, one other factor to account for this general attitude, namely, that nothing is acceptable to America that does not emanate from her. To this we can attribute whatever value may attach to the Peace Pact. Professor Madariaga, lately an expert on the League of Nations Secretariat, does not assess this very highly, in that, so he says, here, as indeed wherever the U. S. A. signature is found such as in the case of the World Courts protocol, her right to decide every issue for herself must be firmly and unequivocally safeguarded; and, in a more general way, we may, backed by historical experience, assert that whatever systems may be evolved, ultimately the machinations of machinery succumb to the machinations of man.

It is perhaps no business of ours to criticize U. S. A. foreign policy. But here again when we read presidential addresses on Armistice Day, and "Messages to Congress" and other such utterances, we are compelled to note that the shouldering by this great republic of the mantle of the Kaiser, as to the association of "*Gott mitt uns*" with what has been described as the "traditional path of unostentatious domination," demands a degree of verbal restraint on the part of other Powers which the circumstances

of American-European negotiations make it very difficult for some states to observe. She may always be on God's side, except perhaps in her Pharisaism. Latin America is well accustomed to the iron hand in the velvet glove; but let us observe a concise example of the working of the formula of self-determination, a cause so sacred to Americans. General Wood addressing the Filipinos on the policy of Washington towards their country, states:—"When the task is done, the United States will say so. Until she says so, the task is not done." Imagine the head lines if this were ever said by an English statesman in Egypt or elsewhere!

It is universally accepted that, to the vast mass of the American rank and file, the attitude towards Great Britain is such that the electoral prospects of a candidate are enhanced or ruined by the relative degree of his scorn of everything English, as compared with that of his opponent. This, in turn, is inevitably translated to the higher forum of Congress. We are told that the "best people" are our friends. This may be undoubted, but it is numbers that tell, and numbers that control policy.

Surely we may with advantage turn aside away from all this "Eyewash", with a view to encouraging all the speechifying spokesmen of various sections of the community to undertake some really honest self-examination as to what they are aiming at. At present they allow this atmosphere of laudation to engulf them, and it would be interesting really to ascertain what it is that makes them consider this foreign government on such an enormously higher ethical plane than that of any other nation in the world. It is undeniable that this discrimination has in fact been made almost universally in this country. If it is that liaison between the two peoples is lagging and needs bolstering, that is indeed true; but can we be sure that this is the right or indeed a possible method of securing success? Are friendships ever made that way? Might we not achieve more, if we were a little less politicians and a little more students of human nature? Such, indeed, is the view of many far-seeing and prominent Americans: Mr. Simmons, President of the New York Stock Exchange, Mr. George Johnson, and many others have spoken with much truth and wisdom of the dangers of the attitude adopted by the multitudinous bodies so ungainfully engaged in improving Anglo-American relations, and we should do well, in the interests of that most important purpose, to harken to their common sense.

The orgy of organization devoted to this cause is at present more orgy than ever!—and, like the weathercock, it indicates rain. The creed that under no circumstances may we quarrel and under

all circumstances we must fawn on the United States, is not a basis for understanding. In these days whatever emanates from across the Atlantic we find some immediate reason for voting wise, and the exasperation that is created by this indiscriminating excess turns love ditties of the public speech into the dangerous whisperings in Club and railway carriage.

In relations with the United States and with the Empire, we are terribly hampered by all this loose "sob-stuff", usually preceded by being told that there has been an "absolutely frank talk", which means in fact that, strictly, frankness has been entirely absent. Why there is not frankness is that "conversations" are always started off with immutable premises. There should be no premises. These should arise in the course of discussion, as the result of investigation. As it is, we start off with the premise of love; and in the case of the Dominions with that of maintenance of the Empire. These have no place as premises. Argument should and can lead on to these conclusions, but it is not mathematically certain that it must. Take the United Kingdom. The only premises are the fundamentals. What are these? Two: (1) 24 miles from the Continent, and the consequent need to make ourselves physically safe from death, by defence or by understanding or both; (2) Supplies necessary for us to live: this means preservation of trade in vitals (only) and the need to safeguard it lest we physically die. There are masses of other "desiderata," but these alone are fundamental; Empire is not; U. S. A. is not; but they both may emerge as such as a result of discussion and reasoning as to the best policy for securing (1) and (2). They must, in fact, take their chance of proving that they are the best methods, in face of any other methods that may be suggested. To start from the bottomest bottom like this is what I should call "a frank talk"; a purely arbitrary collection of premises is not. What do we get as things are? Statesmen from the Dominions saying in speeches that their whole policy is simply a matter of love for Britain, when they know it is not so, and by their actions (as per immigration—one instance only) they go entirely in a different direction. Again, U. S. A. speakers and ours in champagne-white waistcoat dinners talk of love as the only issue in Anglo-American affairs. All this is fatal. Begin from rock bottom; let "arch pundits" in their "conversations" start, in the case of Canada say, only on what is beyond all argument a *sine qua non* for her citizens; and then work out (a) if her existence in the Empire is a "desideratum", (b) if so, at what price? (c) if that price is sufficiently attractive to us or no, (d) if not, whether

copy; possibly we shall learn quicker the many lessons her citizens have to teach us, when there is less artificial harmony and unctuousness between the leaders on both sides.

For the enthusiasts—and who should be aught else?—on behalf of the creation of a mutual understanding between the English-speaking races, there is a golden field of opportunity. It does not lie, however, in the spheres where most usually it is sought, nor does it consist in emphasising what all know does not exist—complete similarity in outlook and point of view. Why should this be regarded as Utopian? How can it be regarded as conceivable? Differences of position, of origin, of requirements and, indeed, of nearly everything, all naturally and by no means wrongly create the Americans and their great country as an entirely distinct type both from ourselves and from other Europeans. They, quite rightly, have no desire to be like us, nor we like them. Even those of our own Dominions are of an entirely different pattern from the people of these islands. Is this a reflection on them or us? Does it create a barrier? What does create this barrier is the make-believe that people can live thousands of miles away and yet be replicas of ourselves. Nothing but irritation results from belabouring so false an illusion. The road to goodwill, never more necessary than to-day, lies as Mr. Wickham Steed has so wisely emphasised, in the citizen of each of our two countries recognizing that the other is a foreigner with all its implications, in abstaining from such phrases as “blood is thicker than water” and “hands across the sea,” and in creating every possible opportunity for personal and private contact between Englishmen and Americans in the homes of the citizens of both nations, and well away from the champagne dinners of organized and unreal mutual admiration. Such an outcome can so easily be achieved by the natural method of homely intercourse, and so often results in genuine affection, that it is little short of a crying shame that institutions and politicians should ruin it.

Let us then allow politics to settle their issues independently, and we shall surely find that not only will no evil result follow, but in the course of years we must in reality approach a degree of brotherhood and mutual co-operation which to-day we only strive for, but which, resting on the solid foundation of the hearts of men, will in future prove irresistible.