

The League and Its Mandates

DUTIES and tasks crowd upon the League of Nations while it is still a project; but there is one function which nearly all its architects are agreed to deny it. It will not attempt to create any direct international administration of territory. It is true that Powers which have tried to set up a *condominium* over unsettled or disputed territory have usually left a record of failure behind them. Combined administrations are usually weak, and unenterprising, and are regarded by diplomacy chiefly as a transitional stage that prepares the way for partition. Any attempt to mix British, French, Belgian and Portuguese officials, not to mention Germans, in a single civil service for the administration of Tropical Africa would certainly fail, for the simple reason that no common tradition would unite them. No one parliament or colonial office at home would control them, and the result might well be a repetition on a vast scale of the abominations of the Congo State. If ever the League of Nations should attempt to create an international civil service, it will have to begin by training its officials from youth upwards in a common school under a common discipline. One can imagine an International College for African Administrators devoted to anthropology, languages and practical studies, which would create this common tradition.

What the Catholic Church could do in the Society of Jesus, the League could do if it had the will and the faith; but this international service would have to be based on an ideal of service as selfless as that of a missionary order. Such experiments lie in the future. For the present, the League will certainly solve its problem, as General Smuts and others have proposed, by naming some single Power as its mandatory, "to administer or protect each of those territories, incapable of immediate self-government," which the war has brought to the Peace Conference for disposal. These territories are numerous, and stand on many diverse levels of culture. Some, like Georgia, need only a little help to make a start; others, like Armenia, Syria, Albania and Palestine, after some years of foreign guardianship, will be well able to govern themselves; Mesopotamia is a half-empty desert which must be peopled; the German African colonies, again, may never be able to stand alone. The mandate must vary with the circumstances.

To those of us who confess a rooted distrust of imperialism and all its habits of thought, this new doctrine of the disinterested mandatory "protector" seems painfully familiar. Every fresh

essay in the exploitation of helpless races and their territories has been justified and disguised by a similar ideology. Slavery itself was defended as a means of educating and converting the black man. The *corvée*, forced labor, the labor tax, and the worst forms of indentured labor were, all of them, devised to teach the native "the dignity of work." Every capitalist who had to comfort the easy consciences of his shareholders in London or Brussels was capable of declaring that he regarded himself as a "trustee" for the black man. That kind of insincerity has made this whole affection of altruism nauseous to minds which would think clearly. A candid historian would admit that no imperial Power ever has taken territory from any motive save the pursuit of economic gain or strategical security. None the less, it would be folly to deny that a sense of duty towards the native race does, when the conquest is completed, distinguish the British civil servant in Africa or India, and sometimes rises in him to heights of devotion and courage. It is precisely this curious dualism of acquisitiveness and duty which makes it desirable that the conception of the mandatory Power should be examined, with candor but not with despairing cynicism.

Let us begin by looking at the cynic's case. "The victors in this war," the cynic might say, "have been engaged in a deadly struggle with a great rival for the balance of power. It has been understood from the first that the stakes were the exploitable regions of the earth. From the early days of the war, when German businesses were broken up all round the African coast, down to the last phase, when German residents were named for expulsion from China, the object of excluding this rival from the world's future trade was frankly confessed. The demand for heavy indemnities made assurance doubly sure. For decades to come, the enemy will have no capital to export, and will be fain to sell his share in such key enterprises as the Bagdad railway. Early in the war, the chief Allies staked out their claims in the secret treaties. Great Britain, as the text ran, was to "obtain" Mesopotamia, and France, Syria. Those who were behind the scenes know that long before the hour of victory, the financial syndicates had made their plans for railway building and the like, in the spheres which had yet to be conquered. In the last phase, it became necessary to camouflage these arrangements, in order to satisfy Mr. Wilson and to quiet the conscience of British Labor and French Socialism. The victors no longer "obtained" any-

Bolshevist propaganda. In these troubled times, melodrama is very poor ballast for the ship of state.

Whatever the truth about conditions in Russia may be, whether or not the Bolsheviki have fulfilled their large promises to the Russian workers and peasants, it should be obvious that the piling up of indictments against Lenine and Trotsky will not alter the fact that our own steel industry is facing an extremely difficult situation, that our copper industry is at a loss to dispose of the billion pound surplus that it heaped up during the war, that western lumber manufacturers, in their patriotic attempt to live up to the agreement into which they entered with their employees months ago under the inspiration of General Disque, are piling up stacks of cut lumber for which they are unable to find a market. Condemnation of the inefficiencies of the Soviet regime will not help us to straighten out our tangled railroad problem, or to decide upon a permanent policy with respect to telegraphs and telephones, or to make a wise disposition of our shipyards and our new merchant fleet. Certainly it will not solve our own menacing problem of unemployment or feed the hundreds of thousands of discharged soldiers who are being sent out of the camps at random to drift back into communities where there are already more men than jobs. By its failure to face the facts of our own threatening labor situation, Congress is doing more to prepare the ground for the varieties of radical propaganda which it loosely lumps under the melodramatic title of Bolshevism than an army of agitators could accomplish even if they possessed the fabulous sums of money which the Bolshevists are alleged to be scattering broadcast out of the late Tsar's hidden treasure chests.

During recent weeks, a committee of the Senate over which Senators Kenyon and Hollis have presided has been holding public hearings with a view to the preparation of bills for the amelioration of our industrial disorders. These hearings and the tentative proposals of the committee have not been of a character to attract much attention either in Congress or in the press. They have not reached the ears of the unemployed workers, neither have they been effective in convincing the organized men who are keeping a precarious hold on their jobs that Congress is deeply in earnest in seeking remedial legislation. Their scepticism has not been helped by the shelving of Senator Kenyon's bill, calling for a commission on emergency employment with an appropriation of \$100,000,000. The apparent willingness of Congress to let matters drift from bad to worse is breeding a sullen and rebellious temper among the wage-earners. The general strike in Seattle may be partially set down to the

peculiarly American and self-assertive temperament of the skilled workmen of the Pacific Coast; the labor of the coast towns from Seattle to Los Angeles has always been radical, not in the European, but in the old American revolutionary sense. But this does not account for the tone of the resolutions adopted by the Chicago Federation of Labor last Sunday, which call for a general strike of union labor on April first, the date of the next municipal election, for the purpose of aiding the new Labor Party ticket by giving the workers "a day off on making profits for the bosses." That phrase sounds a new note in the slogans of the conservative unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The leaders of the Chicago unions are not of the Pacific coast type. For years, they have kept the safe balance between the extremes of conservatism and radicalism in the conventions of the A. F. of L. They have not been accustomed to argue their case in terms of the "class war." They have been advocates of collective bargaining, of cooperation between employers and workers; not opponents of the wage system. When they begin to talk about taking "a day off on making profits for the bosses," it is reasonable to infer that discontent with existing industrial conditions is crystallizing into a militant class consciousness even among conservative American workmen.

In the face of the mounting volume of unemployment and the critical situation confronting our basic industries, Congress can hardly be said to be giving the country its best service by attempting to divert public attention from real evils at home to alleged evils in Russia which at worst have remote interest to jobless and hungry men and women and children. It would seem to be time for Congress to take its responsibilities for the welfare of American industry and American labor seriously.

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