

# Let the League Live



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**T**WENTY YEARS after the close of the World War, how does the question of world peace stand, and what are its prospects for the future? In view of our terrible experiences during the last few months there is no greater or more urgent question before the world today.

At the end of the last war it was universally felt that civilization might not stand another such shock and that the prevention of another world war should be the main aim and issue before the nations in future. To that end the League of Nations was founded as the best means that could then be devised, and the Covenant of the League of Nations was accepted and placed at the head of the peace treaty.

This later appeared to have been a grave mistake, as the League suffered from its inception because of its close association with the peace settlement. Some at least of the Allied powers were not above using the League for buttressing their own interests in the peace settlement. Moreover, many of the older statesmen did not at heart believe in the new principles embodied in the Covenant and still hankered after the old prewar system of alliances as a better means to peace and security. In this spirit they proceeded to use the League to keep Germany down and by means of the Little Entente they constructed a ring fence of allies round her.

This policy has had doubly disastrous effects. First, the League was weakened and then deserted by one after another of its members, until it could not properly discharge its peace functions. And now the alliance system has itself broken down, and the cordon round Germany has gone to pieces.

For this is the real inwardness of what has happened to Czechoslovakia. She has become the inevitable victim of the abortive alliance system established in distrust and infidelity to the League. One cannot help feeling profound

pity for this little state, the best governed of all the new states in Europe; but it was her misfortune to become the spearhead of the policy of encirclement, and for that she has received cruel and unmerited punishment.

In forming a judgment, however, over recent events, it is necessary to consider them in their historical perspective and not as isolated incidents. It was the alliance policy which ruined the League and then itself broke down and brought Europe back to the alignments of the prewar era. With the League thus weakened and rendered ineffective and the encircling alliances proved abortive, with Europe once more divided into two camps very much on the old lines and with the old forces of 1914, the entire peace effort of the postwar period seems to have miscarried, and we have to start *de novo* in our quest for world peace.

Meanwhile, events have not stood still, and the position has become one of extreme danger and urgency.

The measure of that danger was shown by what took place in the Chamberlain-Hitler conversations. Herr Hitler made it clear that unless Czechoslovakia gave way he was determined on armed intervention, which meant in effect a general war — and this, ostensibly, for the comparatively minor object of bringing Sudeten Germans into the Reich.

Owing to the intervention of Mr. Chamberlain, at the last moment this calamity was averted, but the fact, the awful and stunning fact, remains that within twenty years of the end of the Great War and in spite of Kellogg pacts and other peace efforts, what might have amounted to another world war had been determined on in furtherance of national policy. Something considered almost unthinkable was going to happen and would have happened but for God's mercy. Bear in mind also that another world war would not be like any previous war. What we have hitherto called war would

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be trifling compared to the nameless horror that would take its place in future. And to meet this threat last September there was no regular peace procedure — nothing but brute force or abject surrender. Sir Edward Grey's stirring cry of July, 1914, for some machinery whereby statesmen could meet and discuss affairs before the final plunge, was again heard across the international chaos. Such was the position into which Europe had drifted within twenty years of the Armistice.

### II

**B**UT THE POSITION is, however, not entirely hopeless. After all, Mr. Chamberlain did succeed in averting disaster last September, and this no statesman did or could do in July, 1914; and there has been special progress in one direction of very profound significance. There has been a far-reaching change in the temper of the nations and in their attitude toward war. Everywhere a pacific temper is growing beneath the surface.

This is the real advance since 1914. Then nations were keyed up to the war pitch, and the warlike temper among at least some of them probably did much to force the hands of their governments. On the other hand, in the grave crisis through which we passed last September, nothing was more remarkable, nothing in fact more significant, than the horror of war which suddenly showed itself in all directions and the intense and universal relief when the danger disappeared. The contrast with 1914 was complete, and the change is perhaps the greatest advance of all toward world peace during the postwar period.

There has also been advance in another important direction. The superior, almost contemptuous, attitude of the victorious nations toward the defeated nations in the years following the war has passed away. Nations, like individuals, value their honor and their status above all else, and peaceful relations among them as well as the rule of law can be possible only on a basis of equality and in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy among them. Besides, whatever their political systems or their national ideologies, they should behave like good neighbors to each other. Tolerance and neighborliness should not be reserved for those of the same democratic faith or the same fascist faith or the same communist faith but

should be extended in all courtesy to those who hold to an opposite faith. Difference of political outlook should not be allowed to interfere with decent and honorable relations.

The passing of the war spirit and the recognition once more of equality among the nations are great advances. Unfortunately there has been loss of ground in other directions.

In the chaos of recent years the resurgent nations have developed the habit of lawless action, of springing surprises on their opponents, of advancing by shock tactics, which cannot continue without grave peril to peace. Suspense and fear among other nations of what is going to be the next step, where the next blow is to fall, or who will be the next victim are producing dangerous reactions.

These lawless tactics are the tradition of the jungle and symptoms of the profound international disorder of the day. They must be stopped, or they will end in another explosion.

Then there is rearmament.

Rearmament in the first instance was justified as being necessary to secure equality among the nations and for that purpose was in a sense defensible. But, after this process had been completed and equality in status and armaments obtained, there should have been no reason for going further.

The new shock tactics, however, have started a universal arms race, as no nation feels safe in a world of incalculable surprises where danger lurks round every corner and self-defense takes the place of the rule of law. Everyone feels menaced, everyone arms in self-defense, and, especially among the great powers, a new race starts which can end only in bankruptcy or war — or, more likely, both.

The armed race is the price which Europe pays for her disorder. That price will continue to be paid with the toil and the welfare of her peoples until a stable European order has been achieved. The only way of escape from this universal bondage is a stable international order: not domination or hegemony by one nation or group but an ordered society of free and equal nations.

### III

**L**ET ME CONFESS that I am and remain a League of Nations man. Some say the League is dead, but I say this helpless infant was born to lead the world to peace. The machinery of

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the League is experimental and may fail, but its principles are rooted in what is best in human nature and experience; and in the end it must prevail.

What other alternatives are there before us? The alliance system has once more broken down. Will the axis system, already working so unequally between its partners, prove more lasting?

In the great crisis, the old diplomatic methods and even another experiment of personal mediation through Lord Runciman proved equally unavailing. In spite of all these methods and expedients, Europe was rapidly and surely drifting onto the rocks. What proved successful in the end in saving the peace was the personal intervention of the British Prime Minister, his personal contact with the German Chancellor, and finally the meeting of the four supreme European leaders at Munich.

But what an odd procedure had to be followed! As League machinery could not be used for the purpose of this contact between the leaders, the British Prime Minister had to invite himself to Herr Hitler's company, had to expose himself to severe and unnecessary public criticism and even to the possibility of humiliation. Besides, the extraordinary procedure produced world-wide excitement and almost hysteria.

If the League Covenant could have functioned in this case and the four leaders had met at Geneva or Munich in the ordinary League way, there would have been none of all this extraordinary accompaniment of public excitement. Mr. Chamberlain would have run no risk of criticism or worse, and peace would have been achieved through regularly recognized procedure without recourse to dangerous, unconventional methods.

Back to the League, to a reformed League, must therefore be our policy. The reform of the League is at present under consideration. A number of valuable suggestions were made at the last September meeting of the Assembly, especially in reference to Articles 11, 16, and 21 of the Covenant.

I doubt whether the League can ever function properly unless it secures the return of all, or most, of the great Powers to its membership. This membership was originally taken for granted, and subsequent experience has but enforced the importance of the point.

Some of the great powers have, however, left the League for reasons of aggression and have found aggression to pay. Will they voluntarily limit their freedom of action in future by return to the League unless membership in the League is also seen to pay?

The United States, again, whose absence from the League has been its most fatal source of weakness, is kept away by her tradition of isolation. I do not see why her special scruples and difficulties should not be met by a provision which would give her a special basis of membership or association. I consider her presence in the councils of the world so essential that every effort should be made to secure her effective co-operation.

With regard to the other great powers, League reform should be so conceived as to meet their objections to membership as far as possible consistently with the main objects and principles of the Covenant.

The Council of the League has grown too large and unwieldy for the efficient discharge of its duties. It was originally a small and select body, but gate crashing by ambitious minor powers has unduly extended its membership. In the interest of European peace its membership should be restricted and specially guarded.

I should also suggest that a standing committee of the great powers who are members should be a permanent part of League machinery. I see no reason for four-power pacts if the League constitution makes provision whereby those who bear the main responsibility for peace shall have a special voice in regard thereto. The great powers' committee might, among other functions, have an initiative in advising on alterations in existing conditions whose continuance may endanger the peace of the world. Developments during the last decade point to the advisability of clothing the great powers acting in concert with the League with special functions in League matters. Their joint advice might make all the difference between war and peace in the changing conditions of the modern world.

No alternative to the League as a mechanism for peace has yet been found. To scrap this existing machinery would be a most dreadful waste of human effort. Let us try no new experiments but improve on the old, which is perhaps the only permanent gain we have from the World War.

# The Artist's Point of View

## *The New Bauhaus American School of Design*

**T**HE OLD BAUHAUS of Dessau, Germany, "liquidated" by Hitler, welcomed to a fresh start in the U. S. A. by Chicago, now presents its philosophy of art and life in a revised edition of its early book (*The New Vision*, by L. Moholy-Nagy\*) and in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

The Bauhaus (German: *to build house*) was probably the first art school in Europe in our time to draw in modern artists as teachers and leaders in applying a new understanding of design to life and things of use and to express and guide such applications with a new philosophy of art. This philosophy challenges our art habits by its call, in the words of Jerome Klein, for "a broad, unified social-artistic engineering which would transform man's environment for the benefit of man." Because of the wide publicity it has received, this school is now a definite influence here and abroad in deciding the aesthetic bent of a growing number of art students and in establishing a style for American manufacturers to adopt (or pirate).

The Bauhaus philosophy can be inadequately summarized in such fragmentary phrases as these: "Not the product but man and his organic function should be the end in view." "Organic design." "Basic identity of all arts and life." "Everyone is talented." "To keep alive in grown-ups the child's sincerity of emotion, his truth of observation, his fantasy, his creativeness." "To create objects which will satisfy human needs, spiritual as well as utilitarian." "Closest connection between art, science, and technology." "Total self-experience the core of the educational problem."

These goals command respect, are obviously healthy. How does the Bauhaus program achieve them?

It achieves them adequately and authentically within the somewhat narrow channel, stemming from cubism, which the Bauhaus has followed in practice; it achieves them inadequately in the vastly broader vista revealed by the modern movement as a whole and implied in the Bauhaus objectives.

In practice the Bauhaus teaches a design

which projects logically out of cubist painting but which stays within the limits of that projection. It does not teach design in the full range of its vast keyboard as an organization of line, space, color, light-dark texture, and form in all their manifestations in a work of art in any medium for any purpose.

It starts with texture and the sensory experience of feeling different qualities of surface — smooth, rough, hard, soft, etc. It then turns to the character of materials — wood, stone, metal — and begins working these with hand and machine tools to learn their properties and unguessed possibilities. It deals with surface and surface treatment and actually brings the art of painting into the picture under this heading. Picasso is the first painter to be considered, because he dealt with geometric forms; the other cubists are considered for the variations of their treatment of surface. Line, space, and volume have their place in the study, but surface treatment is the key.

From this start with actual materials and paintings the study projects into the unbroken ground of experiment with the dynamics of light, volume, and volume movement — kinetics. A bewildering array of illustrations, from photos of elevator shafts, dirigible moorings, movie studios, auto races, factories, cat's fur, etc., etc., to all manner of constructions, abstract sculptures, stage sets, geometric forms, moving toys, etc., are shown as examples of space, form, and movement. So truly bewildering is this immense array that its only practical effect would seem to be a stretching of the mind to awareness of new horizons. There can be no objection to new horizons, but students are human and need a broad base of trained sensitiveness to all possible simple relationships before they can bring order into chaos.

The Bauhaus, a constructive, stimulating force, is blazing one path through the forest of design and popularizing that one way. The danger is that too many students will take the easy course of following that path instead of exploring other equally important ones or hewing their own.

\* Norton, \$3.75.

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