1st draft

THE BIRTH OF THE UNITED NATIONS OF THE WORLD

The Peace Conference has emerged from the mists and clouds which rolled about it during the first of its existence as the world's first Great School in International Relations.

This was probably the last thing that anybody expected of it and yet all things considered it is probably the most important thing that we couldhave. True, it is a school in which the faculty of Eighty-five must learn as it goes along and for which we, the pupils, have so little preparation that we must begin with a spelling book and geography, but that is the way in which all great things begin. The result all depends on how seriously faculty and pupils rate the new school.

It, of course, goes without saying that the Peace Conference meant at the start something very different to the world in general. To the soldier in the line it meant a speedy return to wife and children or sweetheart, a bed and white sheets, a fire and a lamp to read by. To those at home it meant unlimited bread and sugar, cheaper rents, their peace-time tasks and pa pleasures. To the Governments it meant how to get their armies home and to work again. But the Conference did

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not begin by trying to satisfy these longings of the mass of the world for the speedy return to normal times. It was not the present at which it looked - it was the future.

On January 18th when the delegates of the twenty-six allied nations first met in the great clock hall of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Paris, Clemenceau in the speech in which he thanked the gathering for making him its permanent president, said, "There are no sacrifices to which you must not be ready to consent". The first sacrifice to which those who had suffered most had to consent was this transfer of the thought and the work of the gathering from the present to the future. What this meant in the terms of men was that the President of the United States had dominated his fellows and brought them to consent to the idea that their first business was to form a league or a society of nations so organized, so officered and so endowed with powers, economic, and

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possibly military, that no nation hereafter would ever be able to force upon the world the immeasurable wrong and misery which the central empires have just caused.

It was his decision to invent or construct a machine which would keep the world in order, less by force than by justice, that turned the Peace Conference into a school. No such machine had ever been constructed. To be sure there were plans galore. These had to be studied. The ideas of the people in the world who have been committed to some scheme of this kind had to be considered. All that anybody had to offer must be put on to the table and worked over. The full conference of eighty-five could not do this to advantage and at once a group of a selected few had to be formed to work out this particular problem and get it in such shape that it could be put to us, the pupils, so that we might study it and make up our minds about it.

Beside the collected thinking and planning of the world on a league of nations, the group hadd two things of great importance to hhap them. They had their

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decalogue already adopted by the conference - the - not ten, but fourteen - commandments of President Wilson - points on which they had agreed, including such things as the self-determination of nations, no indemnities, no annexations, the rectification of old brigandages like the rape of Alsace and Lorraine. All these things had been accepted as what may be called the spirit in which the league was to be framed. They had, too, as they went along problem after problem thrown upon the table for settlement. There could not have been a better experience for them. For while they worked at their machine, there was consistently being poured in materials by which the machine could be tested. Unless it could be so constructed as to handle these problems, there was little hope for the future. For instance, two of the new-born nations already under the protection and patronage of the allied nations threatened war and they threatened it for a reason that has been one of the chief reasons of war from the beginning of time. Between them lay disputed territory, rich in mines and ores.

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Both want/ed it - both claim/ed it. How could you make a plan which would dispose of this trouble by other means than force? Could you make one that would settle the case of the Banat of Temesvar and satisfy the King of Hedjaz and bring order to Russia and dispose justly of Dalmatia? It was something more than constitution that was presented on February 16, 1919 to the plenary session of the Peace Conference. It was a plan which had been framed under the buffeting of practical problems and which the commission knew would demand their first attention, and which, unless the new league could handle it, would fail. Now this meant much, -the hardest, most concentrated work. It meant that the men to whom the problem had been put must shut themselves up with it, refuse to see and talk to the world - thrash it out - and it meant the world must wait on them.

The waiting was hard, and out of it grew much dissatisfaction with the men to whom we had entrusted the problems - their methods and their aims. One group of people who grew especially impatient with the Peace Conference in

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its first weeks was those who have believed that it was easy to end war on earth. Their simple view of the situation was that their business of the Conference was to abolish war, and therefore, why wait - why talk? Abolish it. And they asked repeatedly why has not war been abolished? Why does the Conference take time to discuss the proper boundary between the Czecho-Slavs and Poles, for example. There seems to be a naive notion that if Congress had hastened to declare war at an end, the Czecho-Slavs and Poles would not have anything to go to war over.

Beside the people who think it easy and are impatient because it is going hard, are the people who thought it impossible and are disgusted because it was being tried. They thought it impossible because they did not believe that human beings can change their ways. They thought it undesirable because it would disturb their world of diplomacy and politics if it went through. They are quite right.

What place will there be for much that has gone

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on in France and England and Germany and Russia and the United States in the last hundred years if the Society of Nations really operate?

It was these two groups - one who expected everything, and the other who wanted nothing, that counted for much of the impatience and dissatisfaction that attended the efforts of the Conference in the first months.

Another irritating feature of the Conference from the start was the extraordinary way in which it demonstrated the ignorance of most of us who interested ourselves in it - so many things which we hadnot suspected could come before a Peace Conference, confronted us. To be ignorant when you are expected to be wise is more or less humiliating and disconcerting. Hedjaz comes to the front - you never heard of Hedjaz? Of course, there are few people who will admit that, but take them back to the first days of the Conference and how many of us could talk very glibly about that kingdom?

The Peace Conference showed itself then al-

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most at once to be a school where you had to work - work hard.and long, - fourteen weeks in making peace that we had before us.

People talked glibly at the opening of 1919 about a settlement by spring. Dimly it is dawning on those who watch the Conference that this is no simple compact to which the countries can put their names and then go back home to their old game of running their things to suit themselves. A Society of Nations they are beginning to see means something vastly more complicated and serious, and something permanent. It was these serious possibilities in the "Society of Nations" as it emerged that staggered even many of its oldest and wisest friends.

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