

# CURRENT MAGAZINES

## "FEDERAL UNION"\*

**Federation of the Allies—Now?**—"F. U.", in *World Review*.

**Federation**—Prof. D. Saurat, in the *Times*.

**The Federation of the Free**—Mr. M. Channing-Pearce, in the *Hibbert*.

IN certain very sanguine quarters, during the summer of 1919, it was proclaimed that the first "World War" had been worth all the suffering it caused, for the sake of its marvellous ultimate achievement, the *Covenant of the League*. The cynic has in these days an opportunity, such as seldom comes his way, to exercise on that record his ungracious gift. Now that *Federal Union* has begun to occupy some minds with a dream of the future not unlike that inspired by the *Covenant of the League*, there is a further chance for those wits that revel in contempt for human hope. A chance for what Anatole France has called "the deliciousness of despair".

But dismissing for the moment such persons of pathological taste, whom not even the world tragedy can shock into seriousness, what shall we make of this proposed "Federalization" that has aroused such interest?

### I

Warnings (numerous and timely) that the first thing to do is to win the war cannot stop us from at least occasional reverie about the sort of world-order we want to build when the war has been won. An impatient voice already breaks in upon our practical deliberations to ask—"What is the use of winning, unless we have some new order in mind that will secure us against a *Third World War*?"

Mr. Clarence Streit, of the *New York Times*, who watched at Geneva, year after year, the suffering of the unfortunate League under a complication of diseases, is the author of that increasingly popular alternative now known as "Federalism". The débâcle of the Covenant, much as it annoyed him, did not drive him back (like so many others) to acquiescence in the wretched old disorder of the pre-League past. He would try "collective security" again, so shaping the new effort as to

\*The first part of this article was necessarily in type before the "Armistice" was signed by Marshal Fétain. Hence the apparent untimeliness of an occasional reflection in it. — EDITOR.

guard against the fatal weaknesses which experiment revealed in the old. His book called *Union Now*, which appeared about eighteen months ago, then interested many readers and was honored with some enthusiastic reviews. But that was when a great-scale European war was still at the stage of mere fearsome possibility. Within the last few months Mr. Streit's proposal has stirred the waters of public opinion far beyond the area of its first appeal. The fight which he so sadly foresaw at hand, while the populace cherished its pleasant illusion of "peace in our time", has driven multitudes to consider what he had to propose as a safeguard. To borrow a medical metaphor, one whose diagnosis was so much better than that of others has a right to special hearing on the remedy.

The "federalization" that Mr. Streit advocates means, essentially, a combining of the world's democracies, not in a "League", where the independent sovereignty of each would be preserved, but in a "Union", for which the example of the United States supplies the clearest pattern. It would involve a sweeping disavowal of many old sanctities—much national exclusiveness, much sensitive pride about the heritage of a national past. What a plan, to unite the great democracies (sternly excluding all that are not democracies) in a system to which such countries as Great Britain, France, the United States and a dozen others, which Mr. Streit is bold enough to name, would belong, very much as the separate states belong to the American Union. A common legislature, a common constitution, common action involving common force! The League attempted the impossible: associating those whose essential ideals were different. The new scheme would be selective, and no mere association; definitely and avowedly a union.

Is this the dream of an idealistic, arm-chair journalist? Lately the organization to translate it into practice has advanced by leaps and bounds. And the reason is surely plain. The alternative to it, with which some disparaging reviewers a year ago were apparently content, has proved intolerable. Not a few national leaders in Great Britain and France have lately been preparing the public mind for just such transformation as at once recalls Mr. Streit's book. What, for instance, did M. Daladier mean when he talked of a Franco-British union for national defence which, after this war has been won, would keep the British and French forces "pooled and coordinated", resting upon a common defence budget, with abolition of tariffs

and establishment of a common currency between the two countries? What did Mr. Chamberlain mean when he told his London audience on Lord Mayor's Day about a plan of Franco-British cooperation which might well outlive those war necessities in which it had originated, and might include genuinely democratic countries all over Europe?

## II

The proposed democratic "Union" would differ conspicuously from the League of Nations.

(i) In the first place, it would make no attempt to be universal, to include all countries, or even all leading countries. It would definitely acknowledge and act upon the contrast which men like Mr. Neville Chamberlain so long (and with good intentions) strove to avoid—the contrast of "ideological groups". No doubt it was an attractive assumption, that all nations fundamentally desire to live at peace with one another, in the exercise of mutual considerateness, and have in the past broken out in quarrelling because of the lack of adequate international machinery by which they could confer when they had "misunderstood" one another. Bentham once said "Let men but understand one another, and it will not be long until they agree"—a very sanguine estimate of the power of illuminating conference. A like hopeful psychology of nations lay at the basis of the League. What the alternative scheme of *Union* urges is a frank acknowledgment that, however one may hope for it in the future, the present, in which we must act, shows no such national coincidence. It shows at least two national groups in Europe whose policies are, not merely in detail, but in essence, conflicting. For Mr. Streit, to bring these together in a pretended interchange on "ways and means" is to invite large-scale disaster. The Round Table method is for those, whether individuals or groups, whose ultimate design is the same, that their differences of procedure may, in American idiom, be "ironed out". As a method for those that not merely disapprove each other's ways but detest each other's ultimate purpose, it will but facilitate deception. The sensible thing to do, then, is to shape our programme in the light of a contrast we cannot alter. Let us consolidate our own group. Herr Hitler describes this, mockingly, as a separation of nations into "virtuous and vicious". He apparently believes them to be all alike; not, with the framers of the League Covenant, that they are, or may soon become, alike

fundamentally virtuous, but that they have always been, and must remain, fundamentally vicious. The Federal Union promoters dissent from that unification too.

(ii) A second contrast with the League project is the adoption by Federalists of the principle of Union *armament*: land and sea and air forces adequate to establish in the cause of the democracies such world control as no despotism, and no combination of despotisms, could challenge. Such a pooling of armed forces would, of course, imply a like establishment of a federal legislature and executive. A dozen or fifteen countries, whose zeal for the democratic tradition had been demonstrated, would thus set up an organization in which each of them would be related to the rest as a single state in the American Union to other states. Writing two years ago, Mr. Streit ventured on an actual list of the free democracies which would enter into such a scheme. Great Britain was in it, of course, and the United States: also, one now reads with a mournful raising of the eyebrows, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway. But the plan is not to be dismissed as now altogether out of date and visionary just because of what has happened on the battlefields of western Europe. What is yet going to happen may transform the scene once more. We are concerned, for the moment, with the nature of those differences which make Federal Union a scheme not to be confused with the League of Nations.

It would indeed so profit by the sad experiences of the League that it would from the first have armed forces equal to carrying out its will. Assuming victory for the democracies in this struggle, we may surely suppose that in the reconstruction the fault of the League—in having no military and naval and air forces at its command—would not be repeated. Why was there ever such a flaw in the Geneva structure? Because at that stage of European development there was an insuperable objection in every state, small as well as large, to such restriction of "sovereignty" as partnership in a common legislature would involve. Separate nationality was too precious to be compromised for anything else! To the victorious Powers, in the winter months of 1918-19, who would have been audacious enough to propound a scheme for making France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States each a member of a Federal Union, in which—for example—policies for Great Britain would have to come up for vote by a motley legislature of British, French, Italian and American representatives?

Have we yet got past that stage? Have we discovered, by further terrific experience, that too high a price may be paid for such untouchable "sovereignty"? It was the assumption of the League framers that, under the grim lesson of 1914-1918, mankind had become prepared for a method of preventing further wars by such measures of self-restraint as the pugnacious spirit of an earlier time would have refused. This was an assumption which did too much credit to the teachability of mankind. Will the Second World War turn out to have taught us more effectively? If we are to avoid a *Third*, a great deal which we cannot sacrifice without pain, many a prejudice which we have accustomed ourselves to think a principle, many a feature of national vanity which we have dignified with the name of "proper self-respect", will have to go.

### III

But as one looks back upon that chapter, so inspiring at its outset, so tragic at its close, which narrates the activities of the League, one is forced to recognize that there were sources of failure at Geneva beyond any so far noted. The League failed, not simply because it included within it Powers of such diverse spirit towards world peace as Great Britain and France on the one side, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany on the other. Nor was it, as so often alleged, an insuperable obstacle to its success that the United States refused membership. These were indeed very serious drawbacks. But in spite of them there was much that it could have done and failed to do, if the Powers of the indisputably "democratic" bloc had not themselves failed to fulfil their duty.

One's mind goes back to the occasions when, very early in its record, Italy bombarded Corfu, the Poles seized Vilna, and the great League Powers, which beyond a shadow of doubt could then have compelled humble restitution, decided to let these outrages pass. Then, on a larger scale, one thinks of the sequence—Japan in Manchuria, Italy in Abyssinia, Italy and Germany in Spain. Quite gradually was the point reached at which the strength of the so-called "anti-Comintern Bloc" was such as to make that most humiliating, most degrading of policies known as "Non-Intervention" appear, at least in parliamentary debate, "the best thing under the circumstances". Let us give up the pretence, so pleasing in some quarters, that it was just the United States which failed the democracies. If the lead of the United States had been followed, if there had even been

reasonable cooperation with the United States when President Roosevelt sounded his clarion call on the Japanese affair as late as 1937, we might have a very different world scene now. Don't we remember the warning before the Brussels Conference—"Let no one mention 'embargo' ", with the reminder to "idealists" that sometimes a mere cough will loosen an avalanche in the Alps? Shameful, but salutary, memories!

It is time for plain speaking on some matters about which in the past it has been well to be reticent. Now that the same forces which in France, five years ago, worked with frantic energy to render the League abortive have succeeded in effecting a shameful "separate peace" that leaves Great Britain to sustain the democratic cause alone, we have reason to wonder about entrance upon a *Federal Union* with the same precarious partner. The reason why the League of Nations failed to halt Mussolini in Abyssinia was, in plain words, that France under Pierre Laval, while nominally a member of the League and nominally cooperating in "Sanctions", was really acting on Mussolini's side. Does anyone doubt for a moment that "the oil sanction", for example, would have been effective if France had supported the imposition of it? But France acted in the opposite interest. It is no longer any secret that those ridiculous delays imposed upon the Sanctions Committee, by a French Foreign Office which was pretending to serve the cause it was really betraying, were the outcome of the Pact concluded at Rome in January, 1935, between Mussolini and Pierre Laval. The consideration for which this service was to be rendered by France is also clear: nothing less than the continued defence of Austria by Italian troops from seizure by Germany. With what sardonic glee must that be remembered now in Berlin! For the France of Pierre Laval's statesmanship, the lesson is the old one about a disgraceful bond—that he who sups with the devil has need of a long spoon. The ghastly Hoare-Laval proposals regarding Abyssinia belong to the same tragic tale.

What we have to know for certain, then, about another experiment in Collective Security, if it is to fare any better than the one we tried, is not merely that only the genuinely democratic Powers will be combined in it, but that those which are themselves—like France—genuinely democratic have learned a lesson about care in their leadership. Union, if it is to succeed better than the League, will have to be entered with very different precaution about the character and purpose of premiers and their cabinets.

## IV

Did the leaders of British and French democracy, in these last twenty-five years, act as men who believed in the League as the real guarantee of peace? Or did they act only like men who took the *Covenant* as the edifying expression of an ideal, and who for effective guarantee of peace still trusted to nothing else than the pre-League method of national armament? It is perhaps not too much to say that they adopted neither of these attitudes with the singleness of purpose which gave a chance of success, but rather adopted them alternately—even simultaneously—so that each nullified the chances of the other. There was much eloquence about the promise of the League, and this discouraged rearming: but when a crisis came, calling upon the League to show its power (as in the application of effective Sanctions against Japan or Italy) there was manifest desire to escape any such decisiveness; we learned to expect an immediate search for pretexts—even if these should be no more than legal ambiguities—which might excuse the policy of leaving things alone. While a shuffling in the face of resolute autocracies rendered it less and less likely that war could be avoided, the democratic reduction of preparations for national defence made it more and more likely that war, when it did come, would bring a democratic defeat. If Federal Union, or any other scheme of international reform, is adopted only to be “put in force” (a quaint phrase!) as the League was, it will have a like disastrous issue.

The point is illustrated by a multitude of details which the present war has brought to light. There seems to be little doubt (except in the mind of Sir Nevile Henderson, who as critic on such matters is an interested party) that Hitler's chief adviser, Ribbentrop, thought there would be no war with Great Britain or with France over Poland. He believed that the Poles, like the Czechs, would be left to their fate, despite the guarantees which various commitments, including that of the *Covenant of the League*, might verbally indicate. In a recent White Paper, the German Foreign Minister has told us how M. Georges Bonnet gave him assurance through the German ambassador in Paris that no attention need be paid to those rhetorical outbursts about the fidelity of France to her pledge regarding Poland which must from time to time appear in an official speech to the Chamber of Deputies. During his residence in England, Ribbentrop must have been made familiar, through the speeches of certain influential party leaders and influential

journalists, with the cynical distrust of "Geneva" which had spread far in an upper circle, and the outburst of mockery directed by the British "Appeasers" of 1938 against the simple souls that were either astonished or shocked by the new method of international realism would deepen the impression. Wishful thinking would, of course, lead the Nazi representative to interpret these speeches and articles in a sense far more favorable to the projects of Berlin than the English writers and speakers ever intended. But they intended much more than they should have intended, with a public to which the League stood for a great enterprize of world transformation.

The public at least was taking the *Covenant* very seriously indeed. If there was an irresistible demand for such disarmament as we can now see to have been dangerous, if the so-called "Peace Ballot" elicited such a flood of votes that even the boldest advocate of "preparedness" put off what he wanted to say until a more convenient season, this was because the thrill of the *Covenant* was not yet weaker, but rather stronger in the British people. If in France there was such intensified concern for domestic policy as kept the external peril strangely out of sight, this too was because the notion of a new era inaugurated by the *Covenant* was still more or less in people's minds: the danger of a war was passed over as "academic", "alarmist", if not "propaganda for the munition firms". That from the assumption of security from risks abroad there came a monopolising of French interest in the improvement of social conditions at home may indicate a certain lack of discernment, or a naively unsuspecting mood, especially towards a certain near neighbor. But one cannot altogether blame a too eager readiness to assume that at length there might be a real pause in the ghastly race of competitive arming. What some of their own leaders had in mind to do, and were actually doing, with the League, on whose collective security such confidence must rest, the general run of Frenchmen did not suspect.

In truth, it was being steadily undermined, by representatives of the country which had most reason for alarm if it should break down. The undermining, as is now all too plain, was the work of those, so unfortunately trusted by the French people with direction of their affairs, for whom the destruction of the republican order, even at the sacrifice of the independence of France, was a master purpose. This was a purpose which had so far proved impossible to attain, though in the past from time to time plotted, by like sinister forces repeatedly: one's mind goes back to the Boulanger affair of fifty years ago; to the Drey-



fus affair of ten years later; the Stavisky riots of 1934 belong to the same sequence. But not until there was a chance to cooperate with a formidable foreign enemy was the subversive scheme practicable. That use was being made of that chance six weeks ago was the startling revelation of Premier Reynaud's broadcast, in which we were told of the "utterly unintelligible" neglect of orders to blow up bridges over the Meuse, and of the fatal consequence from such facilities granted to the invader. When we read of the dismissal of a dozen French generals in the middle of a campaign, for such "incompetence", most of us reflected that "incompetence" was not the word for it. Same old story: the chance was long in coming, but once it came, they took it. As these lines are being written, the evidence long ago clear that France had an element of traitorous leadership has reached its tragic climax. No stain rests upon the French people, to whom new leaders are already appealing with success for reassertion of the spirit of liberty which has been silenced and of the good faith between allies which has been betrayed. But the rapid succession of events, displacing Premier Reynaud, installing Premier Petain, and producing immediately the shame of the "Armistice", supplies just the last chapter of a story altogether consistent and convincing.

The *Federal Union* of which even now, in these anxious days, we dream, must be with a country more reliable in its leadership. There must be a "Purge" in France. But that warning is by no means deterrent. No country has shown itself in the past more resolute and capable, once it is aroused, against those who have misled it.

## V

It was part of Mr. Clarence Streit's project that the Scandinavian countries, in which one was accustomed to say that the flame of democracy was clearer and purer than elsewhere, should be conspicuous in the federation. On this matter too, the experience of the following two years was destined to supply important comment for next issue of *Union Now*. What happened at Oslo, for example, and added the new word "Quisling" to our vocabulary!

But, so far from weakening the case for Federal Union, the fate of all those countries of western Europe which Nazi hordes have overrun should serve to strengthen it. For them at least it is plain that there can be no safety in even the most dexterous use of their geographic advantage, to hold the balance between stronger Powers around them and play off these Powers against

one another. Such strategy had a certain value in days gone by, when—although there was not yet a formal League of Nations—there was an informal understanding, which made the more flagrant outrages upon a third country's neutrality impracticable even for a belligerent to whose success it seemed essential. But those days are gone. The assumption on which small states thus practised the artifices of a "neutral" ought to have disappeared, at least from all forecasts of what Germany would do, after the lesson of 1914. No doubt it would have thus disappeared, in the thought of cabinets at Brussels, at Oslo, at The Hague, at Copenhagen, but for the new atmosphere of the League and the fond illusions which thrived there. Unwilling, too, for the perils which seemed to beset the idea of "dividing Europe into two hostile ideological groups," the leaders of small countries made yet another experiment with dexterous neutrality. They would avoid provoking either of their powerful neighbors by indicating a preferential trust in the other. What has happened, recalling the homely proverb about two stools, should prevent the like again—when that "again", giving an opportunity for choice, shall appear.

There was, no doubt, another reason for the experiment in small-state neutrality. It must be borne in mind that when, in 1937, Belgium denounced her pact with Great Britain and France, determining instead to stake her safety upon the sanctities of a neutral, there was already much ground to be apprehensive of both the reliability of French leadership and the equipment of France for the sort of war which Germany was sure to wage. King Leopold may, quite conceivably, have had a disturbing premonition of what might happen under a Marshal Petain: he was at least well fitted for picturing it, as he was destined himself to set the example by a proceeding very similar. The King of the Belgians was known to be a prime mover in the Belgian policy of dropping "Locarno" for the alternative of security by a gesture of friendliness to Berlin. Perhaps he had, among other and certainly less creditable motives, that of a shrewd dislike to the risk of facing German armies with an ally such as France under a premier like Pierre Laval, and a Foreign Minister like Georges Bonnet.

But whatever the reason, or the mixture of reasons sensible and foolish, creditable and infamous, which dictated the plan of non-aggression pacts with despotism in preference to that of close alliance among the democracies, the trial which has now been given it, should be more than enough. Illusion and imposture are indeed long-lived. In a world in which a premier

of France can gravely announce that he has accepted Germany's promise not to use captured French ships in the war against Great Britain, and that relying upon this he has agreed to hand over the whole French navy, there cannot even yet be a limit placed to the effrontery with which men will *pretend* a belief. But that there is anywhere a trace of genuine belief in any commitment which Nazi Germany may make, is quite impossible. For this reason, the alternative must be accepted.

That alternative is plain to anyone who analyzes simply from other experience the conditions of making one's self safe against attack. The whole scheme of police for a city rests upon the resolve of those who genuinely desire to maintain certain personal rights and liberties that they will combine to enforce these rights, and provide armed strength to deal with outrage. Either that or the carrying of arms by each individual to protect himself—what other possibility is there? The forces of law and order must unite against the forces of crime, and must provide themselves with adequate instruments to be successful, unless we are to revert to the days of "private war". A scheme of dexterous neutrality, by which peaceful citizens would negotiate with rival gangsters in turn, to ensure their own safety by "appeasement" of each, is not now favored in civic life anywhere. Nor is the municipal organization anywhere modified, "so as to include all elements", by facilities to the gangster for influencing its policy "from his own point of view".

The comparison breaks down, of course, in many details. As Burke said, the similitude which adorns is often no analogy from which to reason. But I suggest that in what is vital to the argument this parallel between city and national life is not misleading. In both there is the same necessity, to escape from the intolerable hardship of everyone fighting for himself, by the remedy of an associated protection. In both there is the inconvenience, at times the irritation, of having others interfere with personal or individual concerns. In both the spirit of independence from time to time asserts itself violently, declaring that the cooperation of others may be bought too dear, but in both it should quickly be apparent that herein is an exclamation of mere passing petulance. In both, too, after long trial of the alternative (the trial by states having waited long after the trial by individuals had reached a wholesome outcome), we have surely no need to try further. Federal Union, if and when the opportunity to introduce it comes, ought, on the analogy of civic life, to be a change for the better. At least it can hardly be a change for the worse. H. L. S.