

THEODORE ROOSEVELT WRITES ON HELPING THE CAUSE OF WORLD PEACE

Civilized Nations Should Combine in a Great World League for the Peace of Righteousness, He Says, and Invite Their Military Forces to Enforce the Decrees of a Common Tribunal in Questions at Issue.

IN the three articles that I have already written I have endeavored to set forth, in a spirit of absolute fairness and calmness, the lessons as I see them that this war teaches all the world, and especially the United States. I believe I have shown that while, at least in the case of Belgium, there has been actual wrong-doing, yet that, on the whole and looking back at the real and ultimate causes rather than at the temporary occasions of the war, what has occurred is due primarily to the intense fear felt by each nation for other nations and to the anger born of that fear. Doubtless in certain elements, notably certain militaristic elements, of the population other motives have been at work, but I believe that the people of each country in backing the Government of that country in the present war have been influenced mainly by a genuine patriotism and a genuine fear of what might happen to their beloved land in the event of aggression by other nations.

Our Strength as Our Reliance

Under such conditions, as I have shown, our duty is twofold. In the first place, events have clearly demonstrated that treaties unbacked by force are not worth the paper upon which they are written. Events have clearly shown that it is the idlest of folly to assert, and little short of treason against the nation for statesmen who should know better to pretend, that the salvation of any nation under existing world conditions can be trusted to treaties, to little bits of paper with names signed on them, but without any efficient force behind them. The United States will be guilty of criminal misconduct, we of this generation will show ourselves traitors to our children and our children's children, if, as conditions are now, we do not keep ourselves ready to defend our hearths, trusting in great crises not to treaties, not to the ineffective good will of outsiders, but to our own stout hearts and strong hands.

Must Seek to Mend Conditions

So much for the first and most vital lesson. But we are not to be excused if we stop here. We must endeavor earnestly, but with sanity, to try to bring around better world conditions and try to shape our policy in conjunction with other nations so as to bring nearer the day when the peace of righteousness, the peace of justice and fair dealing, will be established among the nations of the earth. With this object in view it is our duty carefully to weigh the influences which are at work or may be put to work in order to bring about this result, and in every effective way to do our best to further the growth of these influences. When this has been done our Government will not be reduced to humiliating impotence even to protest

against such wrong as that committed on Belgium, because our "neutrality" can only be preserved by failure to help right what is wrong—and we shall then as a people have too much self-respect to enter into absurd all-inclusive arbitration treaties, unbacked by force, at the very moment when we fail to do what is clearly demanded by the Hague treaties by which we are already bound, by protesting against violation of these treaties.

Lesson of United States

Doubtless in the long run most is to be hoped from the slow growth of a better feeling, a more real feeling of brotherhood among the nations, among the peoples. The experience of the United States shows that there is no real foundation in race for the bitter antagonism felt among Slavs and Germans, French and English.

There are in this country hundreds of thousands, millions, of men who by birth and parentage are of German descent, of French descent or Slavonic descent, or descended from each of the peoples within the British Islands. These different races not only get along well together here, but become knit into one people, and after a few generations their blood is mingled. In my own veins runs not only the blood of ancestors from the various peoples of the British Islands, English, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish, but also the blood of Frenchman and of German. It is idle to tell us that the Frenchman and the German, the Slav and the Englishman are irreconcilably hostile one to the other because of difference of race. From our own daily experiences we know the contrary. We know that good men and bad men are to be found in each race. We know that the differences between the races above named and many others are infinitesimal compared with the vital points of likeness. Moreover, our experience with the British Empire during the last century shows that it is not an idle dream to believe that with the growth of wisdom will come a growth of kindness and peace. There is not a fort and hardly an armed man on the long frontier between Canada and the United States, and armed hostilities between Canada and the United States are literally unthinkable.

But this growth is too slow by itself adequately to meet present needs. At present we are confronted with the fact that each nation must keep armed and must be ready to go to war, because there is a real and desperate need to do so and because the penalty for failure may be to suffer a fall like that of China. At present in every great crisis treaties have shown themselves not

worth the paper they are written on, and the multitude of peace congresses that have been held have failed to secure even the slightest tangible result, as regards any contest in which the passions of great nations were fully aroused, and their vital interests really concerned. In other words, each nation at present in any crisis of fundamental importance has to rely purely on its own power, its own strength, its own individual force. The futility of international agreements in great crises has come from the fact that force was not back of them.

What is needed in international matters is to create a judge and then to put police power back of the judge.

So far, the time has not been ripe to attempt this. Surely now, in view of the awful cataclysm of the present war, such a plan could at least be considered, and it may be that the combatants at the end will be willing to try it in order to secure at least a chance for the only kind of peace that is worth having—the peace that is compatible with self-respect. Merely to bring about a peace at the present moment without providing for the elimination of the causes of war would accomplish nothing of any permanent value, and the attempt to make it would probably represent nothing else than the adroit use of some more or less foolish or more or less self-interested outsider by some astute power who wished to see if it could not put its opponents in the wrong.

Remove the Causes of Fear

If the powers were justified in going into this war by their vital interests, then they are required to continue the war until these vital interests are no longer in jeopardy. A peace which would leave without redress wrongs like those which Belgium has suffered or which would represent merely the partial or entire destruction of one or more nations and the survival in aggravated form of militarism and autocracy, and of international hatred in its most intense and virulent form, would really be only a worthless truce and would not represent the slightest advance in the cause of righteousness and of international morality.

The essential thing to do is to free each nation from the besetting fear of its neighbor. This can only be done by removing the causes of such fear. The neighbor must no longer be a danger.

Mere disarmament will not accomplish this result, and the disarmament of the free and enlightened peoples, so long as a single despotism or barbarism were left armed, would be a hideous calamity. If armaments were reduced while causes of trouble were in no

way removed wars would probably become somewhat more frequent, just because they would be less expensive and less decisive. It is greatly to be desired that the growth of armaments should be arrested, but they cannot be arrested while present conditions continue. Mere treaties, mere bits of papers with names signed to them and with no force back of them, have proved utterly worthless for the protection of nations, and where they are the only alternatives it is not only right, but necessary, that each nation should arm itself so as to be able to cope with any possible foe.

Tribunal of the Great Powers

The one permanent move for obtaining peace, which has yet been suggested, with any reasonable chance of attaining its object, is by an agreement among the great powers, in which each should pledge itself not only to abide by the decisions of a common tribunal but to back with force the decision of that common tribunal. The great civilized nations of the world which do possess force, actual or immediately potential, should combine by solemn agreement in a great World League for the Peace of Righteousness. A court should be created—a changed and amplified Hague Court would meet the requirements—composed of representatives from each nation; these representatives being sworn to act in each case as judges, pure and simple, and not in a representative capacity. The nations should agree on certain rights that should not be questioned, such as their territorial integrity, their rights to deal with their own domestic affairs, and with such matters as whom they should or should not admit to residence and citizenship within their own borders. All should guarantee each of their number in the possession of these rights. All should agree that other matters at issue between any of them, or between any of them and any one of a number of specified outside civilized nations, should be submitted to the court as above constituted. They should furthermore agree not only to abide, each of them, by the decision of the court, but all of them to unite with their military forces to enforce the decree of the court as against any recalcitrant member. Under these circumstances, it would be possible to agree on a limitation of armaments that would be real and effective.

If any nation were unwilling to go into such a general agreement with other nations, it would of necessity have to depend upon its own armed strength for its own protection. This is the only alternative. Treaties, unbacked by force, cannot be considered as

an alternative by any sober persons of sound judgment.

Of course, if there were not reasonable good faith among the nations making such an agreement, it would fail. But it would not fail merely because one nation did not observe good faith. It would be impossible to say that such an agreement would at once and permanently bring universal peace, but it would certainly mark an immense advance. It would certainly mean that the chances of war were minimized and the prospects of limiting and confining and regulating war immensely increased. At present force, as represented by the armed strength of each nation, is wholly divorced from such instrumentalities for securing peace as international agreements and treaties. In consequence, the latter are practically impotent in great crises.

There is no connection between force on the one hand and any scheme for securing international peace or justice on the other. Under these conditions every wise and upright nation must continue to rely for its own peace and well-being on its own force, its own strength. As all students of the law know, a right without a remedy is in no real sense of the word a right at all. In international matters the declaration of a right, or the announcement of a worthy purpose, is not only aimless, but is a just cause for derision, and may even be mischievous, if force is not put behind the right or the purpose. Our business is to make force the agent of justice, the instrument of right in international matters, as it has been made in municipal matters, in matters within each nation.

Such a scheme as the one briefly outlined will not bring perfect justice any more than under municipal law we obtain perfect justice, but it will mark an immeasurable advance on anything now existing, for it will mean that at last a long stride has been taken in the effort to put the collective strength of civilized mankind behind the collective purpose of mankind to secure the peace of righteousness, the peace of justice among the nations of the earth.

Armies Are the Alternative

It may be, though I sincerely hope to the contrary, that such a scheme is for the immediate future Utopian—it certainly will not be Utopian for the remote future. If it be impossible in the immediate future to devise some working scheme by which force shall be put behind righteousness in disinterested and effective fashion where international wrongs are concerned, then the only alternative will be for each free people to keep itself in

shape with its own strength to defend its own rights and interests, and meanwhile to do all that can be done to help forward the slow growth of sentiment which is assuredly, although very gradually, telling against international wrong-doing and violence.

Man, in recognizedly human shape, has been for ages on this planet, and the extraordinary discoveries in Egypt and Mesopotamia now enable us to see in dim fashion the beginning of historic times, 6,000 or 7,000 years ago. In the earlier ages of which history speaks, there was practically no such thing as an international conscience. The armies of Babylon and Assyria, Egypt and Persia, felt no sense of obligation to outsiders and conquered merely because they wished to conquer.

Growth of Ideas of Right

In Greece a very imperfect recognition of international right grew up so far as Greek communities were concerned, but it never extended to barbarians. In the Roman Empire this feeling grew slightly, if only for the reason that so many nations were included within its bounds and were forced to live peaceably together. In the Middle Ages the common Christianity of Europe created a real bond. There was at least a great deal of talk about the duties of Christian nations to one another; and although the action along the lines of the talk was lamentably insufficient, still the talk itself represented the dawning recognition of the fact that each nation might owe something to other nations and that it was not right to base action purely on self-interest.

There has undoubtedly been a wide expansion of this feeling during the last few centuries, and particularly during the last century. It now extends so as to include not only Christian nations but also those non-Christian nations who themselves treat with justice and fairness their fellow-men of different creed. We are still a lamentably long distance away from the goal toward which we are striving; but we have taken a few steps toward that goal. A hundred years ago the English-speaking peoples of Great Britain and America regarded one another as inveterate and predestined enemies, just as three centuries previously had been the case in Great Britain itself between those who dwelt in the northern half and those who dwelt in the southern half of the island. Now war is unthinkable between us. Moreover, there is a real advance in good will, respect, and understanding between the United States and all the other nations of the earth. The advance is not steady and it is interrupted at times by acts of unwisdom,

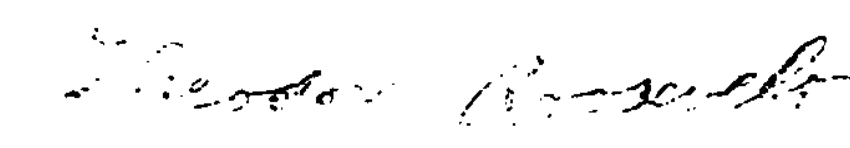
which are quite as apt to be committed by ourselves as by other peoples, but the advance has gone on. There is far greater sentiment than ever before against unwarranted aggressions by stronger powers against weak powers; there is far greater feeling against misconduct, whether in small or big powers, and far greater feeling against brutality in war.

Real Advance in Last 300 Years

This does not mean that the wrongdoing as regards any one of these matters has as yet been even approximately stopped or that the indignation against such wrongdoing is as yet anything like as effective as it should be. But we must not let our horror at the wrong that is still done blind us to the fact that there has been improvement. As late as the eighteenth century there were continual instances where small nations or provinces were overrun just as Belgium has been overrun, without any feeling worth taking into account being thereby excited in the rest of mankind. In the seventeenth century affairs were worse. What has been done in Belgian cities has been very dreadful, and the Belgian countryside has suffered in a way to wring our hearts, but our sympathy and indignation must not blind us to the fact that even in this case there has been a real advance during the last three hundred years and that such things as were done to Magdeburg and Wexford and Drogheda and the entire Palatinate in the seventeenth century are no longer possible.

Still Have Far to Travel

There is every reason to feel dissatisfied with the slow progress that has been made in putting a stop to wrongdoing. It is our bounden duty now to act so as to secure redress for wrongdoing, but, nevertheless, we must also recognize the fact that some progress has been made and that there is now a good deal of real sentiment, and some efficient sentiment, against international wrongdoing. There has been and is a real growth toward international peace, justice, and fair dealing. We have still a long way to go before reaching the goal, but at least we have gone forward a little way toward the goal. This growth will continue. We must do everything that we can to make it continue. But we must not blind ourselves to the fact that as yet this growth is not such as in any shape or way to warrant us in relying for our ultimate safety in great national crises upon anything except the strong fibre of our national character and upon such preparation in advance as will give that character adequate instruments wherewith to make proof of its strength.


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