

Swiss Relief Centre

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ambiguous phrases, such a conviction that it was more important to compromise — to compromise on everything and in all circumstances — than to face issues.

Behind this attitude lay the belief that all difficulties were only due to misunderstandings; that there was essential good will on all sides and that if it were possible just to go on, everything would finally be for the best. This inability to face facts, to take small risks to avoid bigger ones, will long remain a puzzle for future historians who will be in a position to gauge the relative sacrifices necessary to pacify the world from 1930-35 and the sacrifices necessary to win the present war.

It is impossible not to mention in this connection certain personal responsibilities incumbent on those in charge of the Geneva International Administration. Sir Eric Drummond, whatever his shortcomings might have been, left his successor a first-class international civil service. To visit Geneva in those far-away days of 1930 and see the League machinery in action was to recognise a remarkable and efficient organisation. In this administration, composed of nationals of about forty countries, all brought together by the same ideal, the impossible seemed to have become reality. There were no quarrels between individuals because of their nationality, no difficulties in having Germans serving under a French chief, or Englishmen directed by a Greek. There was never even a suggestion of corruption. No doubt this civil service would have been equal to any task of international administration, to any executive responsibility with which it might have been entrusted in the course of progressive development of international co-operation. From the moment he took over Sir Eric's heritage M. Avenol, the new French Secretary General, succumbed to the growing nationalism in Europe and took steps which broke the *esprit de corps* of this administration; he discouraged the tendency of the Secretariat itself to be a positive factor in international co-operation and degraded it into a civil service in which bureaucratic qualities only counted. Any tendency to take responsibility was discouraged; everything was centralised in the typical French manner, in the hands of the head of the administration. M. Avenol is a man of great administrative abilities but without a vestige of inspired leadership.

Whilst this was going on a new opportunity was unexpectedly offered to the League. Parallel with the decline of the political role of Geneva, there was a tendency amongst the States to compensate the political failures of the League by their readiness to intensify their co-operation in what was commonly called the technical work of the League. A man with vision could and would have seized this opportunity. He could have built up certain non-political executive bodies in the economic, social, humanitarian and health fields for which certain patterns already existed in the League's Singapore Health office and in the Central Opium Board. Such work would have given the League a new radiation and perhaps would have even reacted favourably on the sphere of international politics. Instead of this, those responsible for the Geneva work went out of their way to restrict the range of existing technical activities, to discourage the creation of new ones, even in the face of the expressed unanimous wish of the League Assembly. Thus the last chance for the League to do practical work was neglected.

Were it only the dissolution of an administration whose work had become obsolete, there would be no justification in dwelling upon it. What happened, however, is very much more serious. The disappearance of the League Secretariat means that a body of men and women, who, for more than twenty years, had been trained in international work on a super-national basis, has been dispersed. Unique experience acquired at great cost to members of the League has thus been forfeited. Exceptional knowledge of international psychology, of the habit of working with the representatives of dozens of nations, of the faculty of understanding widely different national points of view, of the experience of International Conferences, of the drafting of documents in different languages — all this has now gone beyond repair. An international civil service cannot be improvised. Here, one had been built up with infinite pains and has been abandoned by its proper chief.

Weakened by resignations and dismissals, but potentially useful, this instrument still existed three weeks ago, ready to be called upon to undertake at a moment's notice the manifold tasks which, after the Allied victory, will undoubtedly be vested in an infinitely more powerful machinery for international co-operation. This instrument has now been disbanded through lack of foresight, vision, courage and, perhaps, a few hundred thousand pounds. The staff being dispersed it will indeed be a difficult task to reassemble it again. What remains is a luxurious *palais* in the Park Ariana at Geneva. This palace, a monument of self-complacency and megalomania, has cost the Members about a million and a quarter pounds sterling. Had this sum been invested in a reserve fund instead of being squandered on the material shell of the League, the best of the machinery could have been preserved for the future.

THE END.

SWISS RELIEF CENTRE.

In conjunction with the Swiss Benevolent Society.

The Committee appointed by the Swiss Minister has made splendid progress with the organisation of Swiss House, which is now fully equipped with 30 new beds and all other essentials.

We are now ready to receive compatriots who may be deprived of their homes or become stranded in London owing to Air Raid action.

The financial need is great, and we earnestly appeal to all firms with Swiss connections, and to all our compatriots, to send their donations at once to:—

The Treasurer,

Swiss Benevolent Society,

Swiss House,

34, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

(marked "Swiss Relief Centre.")

In addition to funds, the House Committee appeals for the following articles to supplement what has been purchased:—

Sheets for single beds — blankets — quilts — rugs — pillow cases — hand towels and bath towels — these should be sent at once to the Swiss Relief Centre, Swiss House, as above.

Every Swiss can help and should help.

The Committee.