

CHAPTER XXII

ENCOURAGE THE SMALL NATIONS AND SUBJECT PEOPLES

A democratic peace will promote the development of all peoples. It will welcome the contributions of all states to the civilization of the world. It will stimulate the smaller states, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Denmark, to the widest possible dissemination of their cultures. Like encouragement will be given to Ireland, Poland, Bohemia, Finland, Ukrania, and the Balkan states.

The world wants variety, not uniformity. Nations should be encouraged to be different. Civilization is enriched by the racial characteristics of many people. And an idealistic peace will promote the contributions of all nations, be they great or small.

Previous peace conferences have treated the smaller nations as pawns. They possessed no rights. They enjoyed no protection. Such consideration as they received was obtained

by intriguing with this group or that. The recognition secured scarcely outlasted the conference. The Congress of Vienna in 1814 was loud in its assurances of "a lasting peace," "a reconstruction of the social order"; but the only aim of the diplomats was a division of the spoils. The partition of Poland was made permanent. Venice was given to Austria. Prussia was permitted to divide Saxony. Holland was joined to Belgium against the wishes of the people of both countries. Genoa was turned over to Piedmont. It was a peace conference of wolves, and the peace was no more durable than it deserved to be.

The Congress of Berlin in 1878 followed the old tradition that the world belonged to the strong. It was secret. It represented only rulers and the great Powers. The small states had no voice in the council. They were disposed of as they had been for centuries. Little countries were swapped as though they were horses. It was a "peace with honor," as Disraeli said, but it laid the mines of future wars. The treaty of Berlin was not a peace treaty, it was a military arsenal.

For the first time in history a great Power

has spoken for small states and subject peoples. The idea of self-determination has been given the solemn sanction of the President of the United States. It remains for the peace council to apply this obviously just principle. There are wrongs to be atoned by all of the Powers. There are states to be recreated, races to be freed.

Why is it that we assume that the great state is a greater force for civilization than the small state? Does it do more for its people; does it maintain a higher standard of living and education; does it promote culture, the arts, the drama? Does it contribute more to the outside world? Or is the great state merely a product of the mediæval mind, of ambitious conquerors like Alexander the Great, like the Emperors of Rome, like Frederick the Great, Louis XIV, Bismarck, or Kaiser William II? Is not the great state idea merely another product of the military ideal?

Do the great states maintain the peace of the world? Do they make it possible for civilization to develop free from wars and conflict? Are the empires and nations of to-day greater agencies of human welfare than the

small states which they are seeking to absorb?

Is not the reverse true? Small states have been the centres of a highly organized life from the time of Athens down to date. They have promoted the arts and sciences. They have encouraged learning. They have built beautiful cities. They have vied with one another in the higher things of life. To-day it is not the greater nations that maintain the highest standard of well-being. It is rather the small states. This is true of Switzerland, of Holland, of Denmark, of the Scandinavian countries. They are experiment stations for the world. These are the countries that have the lowest illiteracy of Europe.

History is eloquent in defense of the small state. Can it be successfully contended that the *Machtkultur* of present-day Germany is a greater service to the world than the culture of the Germany of a hundred years ago, when a score of capital cities like Munich, Dresden, Frankfort, Cologne, and Weimar competed with one another in education, in art, in the refinements and amenities of civilization? Was not Germany a greater cultural force when Bavaria, Baden, Saxony, and a dozen

states and free cities produced their philosophers, poets, and artists, as they did before the Prussian reduced their artistic development to the materialistic ambitions of the Hohenzollern dynasty? Has modern Germany produced a group of men comparable to Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Wagner, Beethoven, Fichte, Heine, Kant, Humboldt, and the score of other intellectuals whose work has been an inspiration to all peoples?

Will any one familiar with the history of Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Switzerland contend that their contributions to the world would be greater if they were under the hegemony of some other Power? These states have contributed as many men, possibly more men, of distinction in proportion to their population than have any of the greater states. They have built splendid capital cities, like Brussels, Copenhagen, and the cities of southern Germany. They have contributed political ideas. They have been centres of art and learning. They point the pathway to the greater Powers in many lines of endeavor. Belgium, close packed with people, was the home of internationalism. She had developed a won-

derful transportation system. She had the highest export trade per capita of any country in Europe. Even though a free-trade country, none of the greater Powers had been able to outsell her at home or abroad. She was the keenest competitor of England and Germany in Europe.

Holland, too, has an inspiring history. She has been the cradle of political and religious liberty. Her cities have charm, and her people enjoy a standard of living higher than any of the surrounding Powers. Switzerland has given political democracy a new significance. In her mountain fastnesses she has safeguarded the right of local self-government, of individual and personal liberty, and to-day is one of the most contented and prosperous countries of Europe. Denmark is the world's agricultural experiment station. She has completely democratized her government. She has put an end to the old feudal régime. She has distributed the land among the peasants and reduced ignorance to the vanishing-point. She feeds England and exports cattle to Germany. In some respects her educational system is the most remarkable in the world. No coun-

try in Europe enjoys a higher standard of comfort or more universal education or possesses a greater sense of personal dignity than does this little country in the northwest corner of Europe.

Moreover, it is the small states that are free. It is they who have kept liberty alive. This was true in ancient and mediæval times. Liberty first issued from Greece, where it made its wonderful contributions to the world; contributions that have not been equalled by any modern state. Rome, a city state, was a republic. She lost her liberties when she became an empire. It was the cities of mediæval Italy that called civilization to life after the long submergence of Europe in the dark ages. They produced the greatest artists of the world. They developed banking. They lured learning from the East and competed for poets, philosophers, and men of distinction. The Renaissance came to Europe not through the great states but by way of the cities of Italy and central Europe. Florence, Venice, Genoa, and Padua were centres of political and intellectual liberty, which they lost when their rulers went out to the conquest of the world.

Liberty came to central Europe through the cities of the Netherlands and south Germany. The towns secured charters. They made war on the feudal barons. They created representative institutions. They developed democratic forms. The guild system, which issued from these little democracies, was the highest form of industrial democracy the world has ever known.

The free towns of Europe vied with one another in architecture. They erected great cathedrals that remain the ornaments of Europe. They built town-halls and guild palaces. Liberty in Europe issued from the small state, not from the feudal barons or the Kings, and this heritage of freedom has never died in the little countries of Belgium and Holland, in which it had its birth.

The history of the world is a plea for the small state. And if we could free our mind from the conception that bigness is greatness, we would see that there is little justification in the assumption of the superiority of the large state. The world has lost far more than it has gained from the suppression of the hundred-odd states, principalities, and free cities

that have been merged into the German Empire. Would not civilization be enriched if Bohemia, Poland, Finland, Ukrania, Ireland, and the Balkan states were given an opportunity to develop their life and make their contribution to the world? Have we not exacted a senseless tribute not only from subject peoples but from the world as well by the assumption that civilization is promoted by bigness and population and power?