

LIBERTAS

The time has come for the formation of a League of Free Men.

The twin principles of Nationality and Democracy are now in the ascendant throughout the world. Nationality makes of the People a sacred entity, its rights superior to those of the individual man. Democracy makes the acts of the state to be the Will of the People. The result is tyranny, abject and terrible.

The tyranny of the Nation is the more to be feared because it is total. It is a tyranny, not of the body only, but of the mind, making of every man his own oppressor. From birth he is subtly taught that his thoughts and actions are not his own, that his life is not his own, that he is not a man and an agent of his own will, but an organic cell of the great collective organism, the People.

Thus it comes that a man will bear any burden, however oppressive, if it is for the sake of the People. He will fulfill any order, no matter how nonsensical, given in the name of the all-wise People. He will carry out any act, however repugnant to his own moral sense, for is not the People more noble than he? Such is the story of the wars, and massacres, and terrors of the last hundred years.

All the while, if he were but aware, the man himself is a greater thing than the Totality he subserves. A People is, if it is anything, a body corporate. It is not a natural person, and cannot have a Will as a man has. Its faculty of choice is common, the consensus of the wills of its members ; its good is common, dependent upon the good of each member. It is a contingent thing, having all the reality which men choose to give it, and only so much.

Do we denounce, then, the principle of Democracy? Do we denounce the principle of Nationality? We do not. It comports with the dignity of men that they should not be ruled by ukase, without consulting them. It accords with the nature of men to gather together, like unto like. What we demand and require is *that the principle of self-determination be applied first to men, and only afterward to Nations.*

Among the nations there is much talk of the consent of the governed as the basis of the power of government, but nowhere are the governed suffered to withhold their consent. The man who objects, whether to common fashion or to government writ, is cried down or silenced ; he who resists is scorned if not imprisoned.

We self-willed men, who are by nature or upbringing unable to accept the subordination demanded among the nations of the common man, have still the natural rights of men. It is the right of any man to live in peace and seek his own happiness. If we are to live among the nations and preserve ourselves, we require an instrument adapted both to the maintenance of our several liberties and to the mutual aid by which alone we can accomplish our ends. This instrument is the League of Free Men.

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