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*Letter from Francis T. Cremins (for Joseph P. Walshe) to Count Gerald O'Kelly de Gallagh
(Paris), enclosing Irish response to French Government plan on Federal European Union (L.N.
96/254)*

Dublin, 16 July 1930

I am directed by the Minister to forward herewith, for your information, a copy of the Memorandum presented to the French Government, containing the views of the Government on the 'Memorandum sur l'organisation d'un régime d'union fédérale Européene' which was circulated by the French Government in May last to the Governments of the other States of Europe, which are Members of the League of Nations.

[signed] F.T. Cremins
for Secretary

MEMORANDUM

In accordance with the procedure agreed upon at the preliminary meeting of representatives of European States, Members of the League of Nations, held in Geneva on the 9th September, 1929, the Irish Government have the honour to submit their views regarding the Memorandum on the organisation of a system of European Federal Union, forwarded for their consideration by the Government of the French Republic.

The Irish Government desire at the outset to proclaim their admiration of the able and felicitous manner in which the subject has been presented by the French Government, and their lively sense of the service already rendered to the high ideal of European Union by the unsparing energy and boundless enthusiasm with which the Government of the French Republic have discharged the task entrusted to them by the European States.

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Before offering their observations with regard to the different points upon which they have been invited by the French Government to give their opinion, the Irish Government desire to indicate their attitude towards the general principle with reference to which the Memorandum of the French Government has been prepared, and upon which the proposals and suggestions set out therein are based.

The Irish Government frankly recognise that the geographical contiguity of the States of Europe creates between those States a natural bond which must, in the stress of European and world conditions, come to constitute a factor tending towards a closer association of those States for political and economic purposes.

But the extent to which this natural bond is accompanied in the various States by a sense of common interest must altogether depend on factors – geographical situation, racial affinities, historical traditions, &c. – which differ in the various States. Obviously, the Irish Free State has an

active interest, from the political as well as the economic and social points of view, in every circumstance which affects the peace and well-being of Europe, but it is equally obvious that her concern cannot be so proximate as that of those of her sister States of Europe, whose interests are more intimately bound up with the destiny of the European Commonwealth. It is only natural, therefore, that the sentiment of the Moral Union of Europe should not be felt so forcibly in the Irish Free State as in other nations of the Continent. There is, moreover, in this connection a further important factor which must be taken into consideration. For many decades Ireland was a country of heavy emigration, and the many millions of the Irish Race, which may be numbered today among the populations of the American and Australian continents, constitute between the Irish Free State and those regions of the world a bond of moral union in no degree less binding than that which exists between this country and the other European States.

I.

Need for an Agreement of a General Order, however Summary it may be, to Affirm the Principle of the Moral Union of Europe and to place formally on Record the Existence of the Solidarity established between the States of Europe.

Coming, therefore, to the concrete proposals of the French Government, a General Pact which, while affirming the principle of the Moral Union of Europe, took no account of the ties which link the Irish Free State with other continents would only partially express the true orientation of Irish political consciousness. Such ties are largely of a sentimental order, but they are concrete and objective factors in the examination of a proposal that the States of Europe should affirm as a principle their sense of the bond of moral union existing between them, and, starting from that principle, should aim at the establishment of a system of federal organisation.

The Irish Government do not feel called upon at this stage to indicate their attitude towards any Pact of a general character that might be drawn up in accordance with the proposals made in section I of the French Government's Memorandum. They consider, however, that an agreement of the kind indicated, would have the best chance of success if it were framed directly under the auspices of the League of Nations and were confined in principle to a simple recognition of the fact that the geographical collocation of the States of Europe gives rise to interests and problems peculiar to Europe, which it is the peculiar concern of the European States to co-ordinate and solve.

Moreover, the Irish Government consider that in its practical application, such an agreement should be based on the principle that each State party to the Agreement is the sole judge of the manner and extent to which it should co-operate in the pursuit of the objects of the association. In the view of the Irish Government, conditions in Europe are not yet such, nor is the sense of common interest yet so strong, that any agreement which went further and imposed on

the parties to it a collective responsibility in matters in which they were not individually concerned, could be expected to meet with more than a very limited measure of acceptance.

II.

Need for Machinery which will secure for the

European Union the Organs essential for the Accomplishment of its Task.

To the question of the machinery designed to secure for the European States the organs essential for the attainment of their common objects, the Irish Government have given especially earnest consideration, in view of the reactions which the establishment of the comprehensive machinery proposed in the Memorandum must have on the organisation of the League of Nations.

The Memorandum proposes, as the primary directing organ, a European Conference composed of the representatives of all the European Governments who are Members of the League and an executive organ in the form of a permanent Political Committee composed of the representatives of a certain number of the members of the Conference. A permanent Secretariat, and the formation of technical Committees are also foreshadowed.

It is proposed that the Conference should meet at Geneva at the same time as the Assembly of the League of Nations, and that the meetings of the Executive Committee should be held also at Geneva, and should coincide with those of the Council. It is also proposed that the Secretariat should have its seat at Geneva.

The Irish Government consider that the establishment of such machinery, and, more especially, the suggested juxtaposition of the organs of the European association and the machinery of the League of Nations, could not fail to have reactions which might eventually result in rendering ineffective the work of both organisations, and this possibility constitutes in their view, an aspect of the present proposals which calls for most careful examination by the Governments of all the States concerned. The pacific organisation of Europe is an ideal to which the Irish Government have already demonstrated their attachment, but in the pursuit of this ideal the Irish Government would hesitate to take any step which was, even remotely, likely to endanger the progress of the work of the League of Nations in the interests of universal peace.

This consideration suggests the query whether the effective pursuit of the objects of the proposed association necessitates the creation of new organs such as those now proposed, which would exist and function more or less independently, within the framework of the League of Nations. The answer to this query would very largely depend upon the trend of the policies to be pursued and the nature of the activities to be carried out by the new association. In this connection, the Irish government take the view that the primary object of any association of the states of Europe should be the complete realisation among its members of the various policies and programmes already adopted, or in the future to be adopted, by the League. It is common

knowledge that, even among European States, many of these policies and programmes still await full practical acceptance, or development, and in so far, and as long as, this condition of things persists, their realisation constitutes an ideal, to the pursuit of which the concerted efforts of the States of Europe would be most worthily and fruitfully directed, and in the attainment of which the fullest aspirations of the European Commonwealth would find fulfilment.

In the work of preparing the way for this consummation, the Irish Government consider that the existing resources at present at the disposal of all States Members of the League should be utilised to the full, and that, if this is done, those resources will be found fully adequate. The Irish Government are not convinced that the common objects of the States of Europe would be brought nearer to realisation by entrusting their attainment to new and untried machinery.

III.

Need for Laying Down in Advance the Essential Principles which shall Determine the General Conceptions of the European Committee and Guide it in the Enquiries which it makes for the purpose of Preparing the Programme of the European Organisation.

It is observed that the third point set out in the Memorandum is based on the assumption that the proposed association will set up a European Committee, part of the functions of which will be the preparation of the programme of the European Organisation. The views of the Irish Government on the question of the machinery of the proposed association of the States of Europe have been set out in the preceding paragraphs, and their observations on this third point must accordingly be read in conjunction with those views.

Whatever machinery is eventually adopted for the attainment of the ends of the proposed association, the essential principles which would determine its operation and should guide it in the exercise of the functions entrusted to it must clearly, in the view of the Irish Government, be fully discussed and agreed upon beforehand. The Irish Government consider that this point is one for examination at the next European meeting. They are also impressed with the special importance of ensuring, as suggested in the Memorandum, that the technical and expert elements in the work of the proposed association would be subject to constant political control and guidance.

The essential principles, which the French Government suggest should govern the concerted action of the European States, raise issues of the greatest importance, and merit the closest examination of all the States interested in the formation of the new association and in the preservation of the peace of Europe and of the world.

These principles as formulated by the French Government depend upon the thesis that the inauguration of a truly liberal tariff policy in Europe is strictly governed by the question of political security, and that the question of security itself is intimately bound up with that of the progress that can be made on the road to political union.

Such a thesis calls for more exhaustive discussion than can be accorded to it within the limits of this reply, but an opportunity of examining it in detail will, no doubt, arise during the consideration of the Third Point at the next European Meeting. The Irish Government may, however, at this stage indicate their view that the guarantees afforded by the Covenant of the League of Nations and the security enjoyed by States by virtue of their rights as Members of that organisation should, if these advantages receive their due recognition in the consciousness of the peoples of Europe, ensure the maintenance of a political environment in which practical schemes for the organisation of the material forces of Europe, which would take full and sympathetic account of existing variations in the level of economic development, could be pursued to success in an atmosphere of confidence and mutual trust.

The Irish Government are satisfied that within the four corners of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and of the programme drawn up by the League of Nations Committee on Arbitration and Security, are to be found the maximum guarantees that can be mutually accorded by sovereign States freely associated for pacific ends. No doubt the highest possible degree of security is attained when a group of States become bound together in a political union or federation; but it is difficult to conceive how an association of States could afford its members a higher degree of mutual security than that guaranteed to its members by the League of Nations, without at the same time necessitating some departure from those principles of free association and national sovereignty upon which the organisation of the League is based. In this connection, the Irish Government note with satisfaction the essential reservations provided for in the Memorandum. They do not hesitate, therefore, to declare their view that the Irish Free State could not become, nor remain, a member of any combination of States that did not take as a fundamental principle the freedom of association of its members, or which involved any derogation from the rights of this country as a sovereign State.

The third essential principle which it is suggested should be laid down in advance for the guidance of the European Committee concerns the economic organisation of Europe. The Irish Government are always prepared to co-operate to the full in any scheme which would have for its object the raising of the standard of human well-being, and are ready to give every consideration to any proposals having that end in view. It is obvious, however, that no proposal designed to bring about the better economic organisation of Europe as a whole is likely to meet with acceptance unless it takes proper account of the economic conditions prevailing in the States of Europe individually. For reasons upon which it is not necessary here to enter, the Irish Free State is still at an early stage of its industrial development. No country so situated could reasonably be expected to make economic sacrifices for the establishment of a common market in Europe, before it felt assured that it was in a position to secure its due participation in that market. The justice of this attitude has been confirmed by the Economic Consultative Committee of the League of Nations, who expressed the view that in the execution of the measures recommended

by the World Economic Conference of 1927, account should always be taken of the provisos and reservations necessary to meet the just demands of States which are still at an early stage of their industrial evolution.

IV.

Advisability of Reserving, either for the next European Conference or for the Future European Committee, the Study of all Questions of Practical Application.

The Irish Government are of opinion that it is desirable to reserve to the next meeting of European States the examination of the fields in which the States of Europe might profitably pursue a policy of co-operation, and of the methods by which that policy should be carried out. They consider that this examination might well be directed to the subjects referred to in section IV of the Memorandum, and should be conducted with the object of discovering how best the conventions established and the recommendations formulated by the League of Nations may be brought into force between the States of Europe, and how the existing resources of the League may be utilised to the fullest advantage in the interests of European co-operation.

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In conclusion, the Irish Government desire to emphasise the importance of devising means which will ensure close and active collaboration between the associated States of Europe and other States. The Irish Government feel that at every stage of the new development opportunity should be afforded to other States for a frank expression of their views on that development in so far as it affects their own interests and, in the case of States Members of the League of Nations, in so far as it affects the interests of that organisation. The Irish Government attach great importance to this procedure which, while permitting the free development of the European idea, will ensure its harmonious setting in the scheme of world-wide peace and co-operation.