

## THE ORGANIZATION OF PEACE

EVER since its foundation the League has been suffering from the circumstances of its birth. It was the offspring of a union between a utopian ideal to establish world peace and a cynical determination to enforce a military victory. This two-sided ancestry, typified in the attitude of Wilson and Clemenceau, has shown itself throughout its history. At some periods it has appeared vainly idealistic, at others hopelessly time-serving. By some the League is considered too ambitious, by others not ambitious enough. Those who believe it to be the only possible means of avoiding a general world war have not always been its best friends, while those who have been more sceptical about its possibilities of preventing war have often been the servants of peace. The reason for this is that the former base their arguments upon the idea of the League as it was designed to be, while the latter interpret the League as it is. The former have nearly wrecked their instrument, by putting it to too great a test, while the latter must content themselves with an unsatisfactory "I told you so," while the policies of the various nations seem to be leading more and more to an ultimate disaster, and the institution, designed to bring greater reason into international politics, stands helpless and discredited. What is the reason for this political *impasse*? Is there no way out? Perhaps a few reflections on its past history will be helpful in the formation of a new attitude towards the League—for a new attitude must be found.

The original idea of the League according to Wilson was "an idea of Universality and of Peace." Wilson believed that the League should be "an overwhelming, powerful group of nations which should be the trustees of peace in the world." War emotions, however, were too strong to permit the realization of Wilson's idea. The Central Powers were not to be admitted, and Russia, where Koltchak was still fighting the Bolsheviks, was only to be admitted if its government were based on democratic principles. A democratic constitution was the credential which Wilson wished

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to demand of each member of the League. He insisted that the war had been fought as a "vindication of Democracy," and desired that this principle should receive recognition in the Covenant. He believed that there was an inseparable connection between Democracy and Peace. In his speech at Mount Vernon on July 4th, 1918, he said: "What we seek is the reign of Law based on the consent of the governed, and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind." Fortunately, owing to the influence of England and the neutral States, the requirement of a democratic constitution was whittled down. But the universality of the League, already damaged by the refusal to admit the enemy States, was further undermined by the provision of Article I, par. 3, which allows the right of withdrawal—a concession to national sovereignty incompatible with a universal society. The League as originally constituted was so far from being universal that it was regarded until 1926 by Germany as nothing more than an instrument of victory in the hands of the victors. Nor did the history of the years 1918-1926 discredit their belief.

During these years several attempts were made to establish on firm foundations the second idea of the League—Peace. Wilson had warned the Allies at the Peace Conference that by keeping one foot in the Old World and one in the New it was impossible to arrive anywhere. But the refusal of America to ratify the Treaty, together with the withdrawal of England from the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, left international politics very much in the old world. The first essential of Peace, Security, was destroyed. The French were deprived of what they considered their only real security, the Rhine Frontier, and naturally felt that they had been betrayed. Their allies would not guarantee their security, and the League could not rely on the two strongest navies of the world to enforce its decision. The only possible policy for France was to see that her former enemy was as weak as possible. Between 1920 and 1924 the French and British policies became more and more estranged, ending in the rupture over the occupation of the Ruhr. These years had witnessed several proposals to organize greater security in

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Europe, through a system of treaties of guarantee under the League, but these all failed owing to English unwillingness to undertake greater commitments. It was only with the advent of the Conservative government to power in 1925 that the problem of security was effectively tackled, and then only on a partial basis. The Locarno Treaty guaranteed the French, German and Belgian frontiers against invasion. It gave the French a feeling of real security, for behind the treaty there was a real guarantee, the support of Italy and Great Britain in the event of a German aggression. This treaty gave security where others would have failed to give it, because it supplied a real and effective guarantee. Security after all is psychological. Under the Covenant the French should have been protected against invasion, but they felt that the Covenant, like the subsequent Treaty of Paris, was only guaranteed by words. How far could nations be expected to fulfil these obligations under the Covenant and the Treaty of Paris? The answer was brutally supplied by the Japanese in 1931 when they invaded Manchuria. The guarantees of the Covenant and the Treaty of Paris were shown to be ineffective. The League was helpless owing to the physical difficulties and the American attitude. If sanctions were to be imposed the British Navy alone was capable of imposing them, and Britain was by no means ready for a war with Japan.

The morals to be drawn from the League's helplessness in Manchuria were threefold. Firstly, that the real forces of international politics were not entirely under the control of the League, and how could this be otherwise seeing that the League was neither universal nor capable of enforcing its decisions? Secondly, that nations are still prepared to resort to war if they think that the risk is not too great. Thirdly, that sense of present injustice in a nation can still be a stronger force than the horror of war. All these lessons were to be doubly enforced in the Italian-Abyssinian war. In this case, chiefly owing to the organization of public opinion in England, a serious attempt was made to restrain the aggressor. Italy was indicted before the League, economic sanctions were imposed, but were soon seen to be inadequate.

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An attempt was made to recognize the underlying realities of the political situation, but public opinion was too strong; the Government was forced to revert to its original policy, the war was not stopped, and an opportunity was given to Germany to repudiate the last vestiges of inferiority in the West.

The Italian-Abyssinian war, together with the German re-militarization of the Rhineland, emphasized the divorce between the reality of international politics and what was called a League policy. Furthermore, it showed up the disadvantages of the control of foreign affairs by public opinion. The British government was pushed, probably against its better judgment, into a policy which neither saved Abyssinia nor brought credit to the League. The League policy, unable to guarantee the security of Abyssinia, was shown to be even more ineffective in face of the German repudiation of Locarno. Owing to the Abyssinian war the real guarantees behind that treaty had been rendered useless. England and Italy were at the time incapable of a common policy of coercion in Europe, and England was for many reasons not prepared to risk a war with Germany.

The security offered by the League against the violation of treaties was shown to be nothing more than paper security, the value of which, like that of any paper currency, depends ultimately upon the confidence and trust placed in it. As Sir Austin Chamberlain said in 1925, "Every sanction depends on treaties; if no treaties are valued sanctions are worthless. Do what we will, we have no choice but in the last resort to depend upon the plighted word." The value of the plighted word given to the League has been shown to be of no greater value than any other plighted word given in international politics.

The Manchurian and Abyssinian wars proved that it is impossible to call upon the nations to go to war where their real interests are not involved. Public opinion may be strong enough to force their governments to adopt economic sanctions, but when real action is called for against an aggressor the nations behave like the wedding guests in the parable. Nor can this be otherwise until the security of the nations is

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organized on a firmer basis. It is easy to reproach the French for having been too conciliatory towards the Italians in the Abyssinian war, but were the English prepared to make good the gaps in the French defences which a coercive policy towards Italy would have created? For the French, and for the English too, the fundamental reality of European politics must be the German revival and demand for *Gleichberechtigung*. This reality cannot be escaped even though the commitments of the Covenant may demand military action in other parts of the world. The more Germany rearms, the more difficult will a "League policy" become.

Is there no solution to this problem? Is the League to be scrapped or reduced to nothing more than an organization dealing with the international aspects of political and economic matters of secondary importance? Is it to renounce totally its function in *Hoch Politik*? The issues are too vital for any section of the community to neglect its responsibilities. That the League will have to be reformed is certain. But in which direction? Is it to be made stronger or weaker? Bigger or smaller? To reduce the League to a central information bureau would be disastrous. A free hand would be given to all the political adventurers in Europe. There are some who argue that a Franco-British alliance could guarantee the European situation. What they mean is an alliance between France and the British Empire. But is it certain that the Dominions would enter into a war to guarantee the eastern European situation? The bonds that hold the British Empire together are economic and spiritual. The Dominions might be prepared to support Great Britain for an ideal, where they would refuse to fight for what they considered the power policy of a European country. It would seem that the British Empire is more likely to be an effective guarantee of peace if the League exists than if it does not. Deprived of the aid of Great Britain, France would be forced to place greater reliance on Russia. The cleft between the Left and the Right would become deeper. The League of Nations could not resist the tendency to become more and more a League against Fascism. The danger of a war of ideas in Europe is only too obvious.

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Are Catholics prepared to sit back and watch while Europe is forced to choose between two militant heresies, both enemies of our real tradition? The problem of Peace is a spiritual one and as such has always been the concern of the Church. Catholics have a big contribution to make in this sphere. A merely negative attitude is hopeless. Pope Benedict XV recognized in his appeal of 1917 the need of replacing "the material forces of arms by the moral force of law." The rule of the law must be organized if peace is to be established; and the instruments which exist must be used. The machinery without the spirit is useless, but the spirit without machinery is ineffective. The spirit alone was not sufficient to deal with the American gangster. Catholics are often in danger of falling into the pacifist error of non-resistance in politics. Peace implies a certain order, and there is only one way of restraining those who are determined to betray that order, that is by force. That force must be effective and used for moral purposes. Could the force of the League be made effective? Till now the League has had no real personality—it has had no force at its disposal: it had to rely under Article XVI upon its member nations to carry out its decisions. But is it impossible that the League should be given a real personality? Article XI of the Covenant enjoins that "the League shall take any measures which may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the League of Nations," and states "that any war or threat of war is the concern of the League as a whole."

To investigate how these measures could be made really effective is the purpose for which the New Commonwealth Society was founded by Lord Davies. This Society has gathered together lawyers, politicians, military, naval and aviation experts of all nations to examine the problems of the pacific settlement of international disputes, and an international air force. It believes that aviation has rendered the working of an international force possible, but it also realizes that the reform of the League is an indispensable preliminary to the establishment of an international force. It would limit the coercive functions of the League to Europe on the principle of *qui trop embrasse mal étreint*. There are clearly many difficulties in the way of the foundation

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of an international force, but they are not necessarily insurmountable.

Perhaps the greatest problem of the international force is the ideal which shall hold it together. For it must have an ideal which is capable of resisting the more violent nationalist emotions. Is the fear of war a sufficient spiritual basis for the organization of peace? Is the secular humanitarianism, which was responsible for the bringing of the League into existence, capable of inspiring the members of an international force to a higher loyalty than that of their "nation right or wrong"?

Whatever the answer to these questions, the successful organization of an international force would tend to simplify the spiritual problems which have hitherto stood in the way of a united resistance to war. It is less likely that a force of picked men would betray their ideal and break their pledged word in a crisis than that the nations of Europe would fail to carry out their obligations under the Covenant. The international force may, moreover, prove the only possible means of escape from the modern interpretation of the idea of a nation in arms, the nightmare of totalitarian warfare.

It would be interesting to hear some constructive proposals from Catholics concerning the vital problems of peace and international organization. Modern sciences have increased the power of destruction so enormously that the forces of war cannot be left unchecked. With the return of paganism in Europe it is inevitable that martial ideas should gain strength. Must the believer in peace stand by helplessly waiting till the barbarians destroy the last vestiges of European civilization? Or can they show that their ideal is more life-giving and capable of inspiring greater enthusiasm? The *mystique* of war is powerful; could not the *mystique* of peace be made even more powerful? The forces of war are organized and conscious of their aim; must the forces of peace remain disunited and confused?

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