

## PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

IN the Preamble to the Covenant of the League of Nations it is stated that the League is brought into existence 'to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security.' The first article of the Covenant which is concerned with policy (Art. 8) deals with the reduction of armaments. The League Secretariat accepts disarmament as the touchstone of the work of organizing peace. Peace is the end and the extent to which the nations of the world approach that end is to be judged by the extent to which they approach disarmament.

Just as peace is the end of the League, so is the demand for peace its foundation. But, founded also on the Treaties of Peace, it is, like them, grounded in war, partaking of the conditions of war, its ambitions, its hatreds and fears. It has then to obey two masters who do not always agree. Itself a result of the last war, it is called upon to prevent the next.

The position is further complicated by the fact that the demand for peace is itself largely a result of the War. Nothing so widespread and at the same time so deep has been known before as a force in international affairs. Though there was a demand for peace, nothing comparable existed before 1914. In England at least it did not exist until the Somme brought disillusionment, a disillusionment made more bitter by Paschendaele, March, 1918, and the submarine campaign. Born, too, of war, the demand for peace is based rather upon disgust and horror for the one than upon love for the other. It is negative rather than positive. At times it appears to be ephemeral. Mere disgust cannot outlive the generation which conceived it.

Yet the fact remains that it is real enough. It may be ephemeral, it is most certainly a force. Even hypocrites testify to truth, and the one cry common to all parties is that they want whatever they want for the sake of peace.

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Every statesman, every politician must pay lip service at least to the demand.

But though the demand for peace is real enough and is common at least to all the peoples of Europe, it is an inconstant demand. Founded on passion, on disgust and horror and fear, it is not strong enough to meet the demands of other passions, of ambition, hatred, and, again, fear. It would be strange indeed if mere fear of war sufficed to drive out the fear that begets war.

In contrast to this perhaps ephemeral, certainly inconstant, demand for peace is the other foundation of the League, the Peace Treaties. These are like a rock, assailed now for fourteen years, and still in their essentials unshaken. Running through them is the revenge that wrecks itself because it fears revenge, the hatred that begets hatred, the fear of war that more surely than anything else begets war.

Between the Armistice and the conclusion of peace Europe was in flux. The old landmarks had gone; new were needed. High above conflicting interests and ambitions and the claims of petty statesmen and even pettier states, conscious of their power to overcome them all, the four great victorious nations had the world, and most particularly all Europe outside Russia, in their hands, to do with as they wished. Had they possessed the will, the knowledge, the wisdom, their leaders could have brought out of chaos a new Europe that might have healed its wounds and lived in peace for generations. It could have been done: it was not done.

That chance has gone, perhaps for ever. Frontiers were drawn haphazard across the face of Europe in ignorance even of geography. Reparations, staggering sums, were demanded. These will never now be paid, but the bitterness and the frontiers remain. The post-War flux has gone and Europe has hardened into its new face, like the crust of lava in the crater of a quiescent volcano. All men know what lies underneath, yet none dare disturb the surface. All hope it will last out their time, and fear to tinker lest

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it should not. It is a most ironical result of the greatest war in history that the League of Nations, founded to preserve peace, should be based upon and in all its doings forced to respect peace treaties which ended that war, only to light the fuses for a dozen more.

If peace is to be assured, the treaties must be revised. That at least is certain. But is there yet any power on earth save war that can revise them? Is there in the world any conception of international justice or any power to see that international justice is done? And without that where is man's hope of peace?

The simple-minded might answer, nowhere, since only in justice can peace between nations be found. In giving each nation its due and letting none take anything it cannot rightly claim. But that answer carries us perilously close to something like an international police force, and at least as far as the use of national forces for extra-national quarrels, for only when no state can offend against international justice with impunity will peace be secured. Up to the present as an answer it has gone too far. It cuts right across the concept of sovereignty developed in the seventeenth century to fit the new territorial state. Modern statesmen, imbued with that doctrine, cannot accept it. Another answer has been taken as correct—Disarmament.

Let all the nations of the world disarm. If they cannot fight (except, of course, in self-defence), they will not fight, no matter if injustice stalks the world.

One glance at the solution when it is put thus baldly reveals its absurdity. Fortunately, this is not the solution seen by the Secretariat of the League of Nations. In *Ten Years of World Co-operation*, published by the Secretariat in 1930, the problem is stated thus: '. . . peace cannot be stabilized unless the underlying causes of war are removed and unless the world is organized for peace by the establishment of appropriate methods and institutions, by the development of a new international law making justice the foundation of international relations, by the spread of new habits of mind and by a growing sense of the common

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interests of civilization.' In short, by the reconstruction of the Social Order in international affairs.

And of all this 'the touchstone . . . is success in disarmament.' Merely the touchstone, the indicator of progress towards the goal, not the cause but the effect.

The real question at issue between the two solutions is as to the place which disarmament should take in any plan to obtain peace. The attempt has been made to give it the foremost place, to seek peace as almost a necessary consequence of disarmament. But is disarmament the symbol of peace or the reality, the promise or the reward? Certainly there is something to be said for the theory that armaments beget war by aggravating the fears which are the most potent causes of war, but at bottom that theory is not enough to explain armaments away. much as one, by explanation merely, would dissuade a man from annoying a bull. Armaments may beget fear, but it is fear which in the first place begets the armaments. Before men can fruitfully tackle the problem of armaments they must abolish the causes of war, cut off at their sources international fear and hatred. As greater security for peace is so obtained we may look with confidence for corresponding reductions in armaments. As the League Secretariat puts it, 'The touchstone of the more general work of organizing peace is success in disarmament.'

It is not without significance in this connection that every ruler in the Europe of to-day seeks to hold his power in emergencies by turning the masses into mobs. Fear is the most inflammable passion that can be roused in a mob. It is easy to persuade a mob that all that they hold dear is attacked. The peoples of Europe without exception do not want war: the mobs of Europe may demand it. This is a fact seemingly overlooked in all considerations of Fascism or Hitlerism or our own mob-psychology elections.

There are no cycles in the history of humanity. Things do not come back to what they were before. We may compare the Europe of to-day to Europe at the break-up of the Roman Empire, but a mob of forty millions fed to a

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pattern by the Press, the screen and the loud-speaker is something new in history. It is amazingly new: it has the capacity of becoming amazingly evil.

This is merely one of the problems that have to be faced. Enough has been said to show that the question of peace or war is more than a question of arms. It takes within its scope all that goes to make civilization. In discussing it, it is important to consider the possible bearing upon it of policies of national self-sufficiency, of nationalism, or of imperialism, to consider whether a little more risk of instability at home is not preferable to a greater risk of war abroad. Fundamentally, it is a moral question, and the only remedy is a spiritual one. The mere acceptance of peace as a practical end of policy involves the complete re-orientation of a world culture, and that cannot be obtained except by some cause greater than the material.

To make this stand is not to dream Utopias of angels in the guise of men walking the earth. There is no evidence to show that men have outgrown their evil inclinations whatever evolutionists may say to the contrary. But to fly to the other extreme and say that men must fight, as if the necessity to do so came from their very nature, is to sin against human reason. And even the most sceptical must admit that men are in the end reasonable.

At the same time any spiritual cure must be a slow task, and in the end will not be entirely successful. In the practical order it must entail a diminution of the claim to sovereignty put forward by the national state, a claim, by the way, which the Disarmament Conference appealed to and not against. Relations between organized peoples cannot be allowed to continue in their present state of freedom from authority. Any genuinely spiritual remedy must seek to rescue those relations from what Hobbes declared them to be, and what, indeed, based upon a false philosophy, they are, a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It must seek to restrict the opportunities passion has to poison international relationships. That it can do only by widening the area in which reason will be allowed to play its part.

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But reason cannot work except it have authority, authority derived from an appeal to basic principles of justice which are recognized; and not only recognized but given practical expression in 'the establishment of appropriate methods and institutions.' To the extent in which this is done and to that extent only will war be eliminated.

The point to be stressed is that the choice between war and peace is not one to be made at some problematical future date when a government has to decide whether or not it will fight over a particular issue; it is a choice that has constantly to be made here and now. At every step in policy the judgment has to be made: Is this calculated to lessen resentments, fears and rivalries, or is it likely to inflame them? Is it for peace or for war?

That is the one way open in practical affairs for the advancement of the cause of peace. The work cannot be done at Geneva. The League as at present constituted is an admirable clearing-house, an advisory bureau, an international barometer; it is all these things, but it is not a world's executive. The practical work for peace has to be done elsewhere, in the sovereign parliaments and the chancelleries, by the putting into practice of 'a growing sense of the common interests of civilization.' To parliaments and cabinets, to dictators and kings it must be made clear that no state has the right to take any measure that might affect its neighbours without regard to their well-being as well as its own. When they consider measures of national self-sufficiency, of nationalism, of Imperialism, it is for them also to consider the common destiny of the world and the brotherhood of man, for that is 'the common interest of civilization.'

In all this disarmament has its place, but care is necessary to see that it is kept in its place. To be unceasing in seeking disarmament is good only so long as it is remembered that success in this sphere, albeit the most spectacular, depends always upon as unwearying efforts to obtain and secure the reign of justice in international affairs. To gain that and to secure it when it is gained may and pro-

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bably will require at least the threat of compulsion. How such compulsion is to be applied, if its application is required, is a question of practical politics, but a question more important than the permissible calibre of heavy artillery. And always it must be remembered that the apologists for disarmament have done its cause so little good not so much because their arguments are stupid or flagrantly at variance with facts (they often are) as because they have put disarmament in a position of pre-eminence that does not belong to it. They have confused sentiment with logic and their feelings with morality.

We must have peace, the assurance that so far as is humanly possible differences will be settled reasonably, before we can hope for any measure of disarmament. The Disarmament Conference has failed because disarmament was sought in the midst of a world at war. The reign of peace is a goal not so easily to be attained. To pretend that we would all be better boys if we had penny whistles instead of trombones is not calculated to keep the gallery quiet. It is only by the slow and difficult process of making 'justice the foundation of international relations,' by a reconstruction of the Social Order, that we can hope to attain it. Of progress in that direction disarmament can be no more than the touchstone. Attempts to force it prematurely arouse hatreds and suspicions that are difficult to allay. A thorough-going acceptance of both letter and spirit of the Kellogg Pact, the ousting of all nationalist and imperialist tendencies from national policies, and the acceptance without reservation of arbitration in all disputes are necessary preliminaries to any thoroughgoing scheme of disarmament.

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