

### III

#### THE NECESSARY POWERS OF THE LEAGUE

If this phrase, "the League of Free Nations," is to signify anything more than a rhetorical flourish, then certain consequences follow that have to be faced now. No man can join a partnership and remain an absolutely free man. You cannot bind yourself to do this and not to do that and to consult and act with your associates in certain eventualities without a loss of your sovereign freedom. People in this country and in France do not seem to be sitting up manfully to these necessary propositions.

If this League of Free Nations is really to be an effectual thing for the preservation of the peace of the world it must possess power and exercise power, powers must be delegated to it. Otherwise it will only help, with all other half-hearted good resolutions, to pave the road of mankind to hell. Nothing in all the world so strengthens evil as the half-hearted attempts of good to make good.

It scarcely needs repeating here--it has been so generally said--that no League of Free Nations can hope to keep the peace unless every member of it is indeed a free member, represented by duly elected persons. Nobody, of course, asks to "dictate the internal government" of any country to that country. If Germans, for instance, like to wallow in absolutism after the war they can do so. But if they or any other

peoples wish to take part in a permanent League of Free Nations it is only reasonable to insist that so far as their representatives on the council go they must be duly elected under conditions that are by the standards of the general league satisfactorily democratic. That seems to be only the common sense of the matter. Every court is a potential conspiracy against freedom, and the League cannot tolerate merely court appointments. If courts are to exist anywhere in the new world of the future, they will be wise to stand aloof from international meddling. Of course if a people, after due provision for electoral representation, choose to elect dynastic candidates, that is an altogether different matter.

And now let us consider what are the powers that must be delegated to this proposed council of a League of Free Nations, if that is really effectually to prevent war and to organize and establish and make peace permanent in the world.

Firstly, then, it must be able to adjudicate upon all international disputes whatever. Its first function must clearly be that. Before a war can break out there must be the possibility of a world decision upon its rights and wrongs. The League, therefore, will have as its primary function to maintain a Supreme Court, whose decisions will be final, before which every sovereign power may appear as plaintiff against any other sovereign power or group of powers. The plea, I take it, will always be in the form that the defendant power or powers is engaged in proceedings "calculated to lead to a breach of the peace," and calling upon the League for an injunction against such proceedings. I suppose

the proceedings that can be brought into court in this way fall under such headings as these that follow; restraint of trade by injurious tariffs or suchlike differentiations or by interference with through traffic, improper treatment of the subjects or their property (here I put a query) of the plaintiff nation in the defendant state, aggressive military or naval preparation, disorder spreading over the frontier, trespass (as, for instance, by airships), propaganda of disorder, espionage, permitting the organization of injurious activities, such as raids or piracy. Clearly all such actions must come within the purview of any world-supreme court organized to prevent war. But in addition there is a more doubtful and delicate class of case, arising out of the discontent of patches of one race or religion in the dominions of another. How far may the supreme court of the world attend to grievances between subject and sovereign?

Such cases are highly probable, and no large, vague propositions about the "self-determination" of peoples can meet all the cases. In Macedonia, for instance, there is a jumble of Albanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek and Rumanian villages always jostling one another and maintaining an intense irritation between the kindred nations close at hand. And quite a large number of areas and cities in the world, it has to be remembered, are not homogeneous at all. Will the great nations of the world have the self-abnegation to permit a scattered subject population to appeal against the treatment of its ruling power to the Supreme Court? This is a much more serious interference with sovereignty than intervention in an external quarrel. Could a Greek village in Bulgarian Macedonia plead in the Supreme Court? Could the Armenians in

Constantinople, or the Jews in Roumania, or the Poles in West Prussia, or the negroes in Georgia, or the Indians in the Transvaal make such an appeal? Could any Indian population in India appeal? Personally I should like to see the power of the Supreme Court extend as far as this. I do not see how we can possibly prevent a kindred nation pleading for the scattered people of its own race and culture, or any nation presenting a case on behalf of some otherwise unrepresented people--the United States, for example, presenting a case on behalf of the Armenians. But I doubt if many people have made up their minds yet to see the powers of the Supreme Court of the League of Nations go so far as this. I doubt if, to begin with, it will be possible to provide for these cases. I would like to see it done, but I doubt if the majority of the sovereign peoples concerned will reconcile their national pride with the idea, at least so far as their own subject populations go.

Here, you see, I do no more than ask a question. It is a difficult one, and it has to be answered before we can clear the way to the League of Free Nations.

But the Supreme Court, whether it is to have the wider or the narrower scope here suggested, would be merely the central function of the League of Free Nations. Behind the decisions of the Supreme Court must lie power. And here come fresh difficulties for patriotic digestions. The armies and navies of the world must be at the disposal of the League of Free Nations, and that opens up a new large area of delegated authority. The first impulse of any power disposed to challenge the decisions of the Supreme Court will be, of course, to arm; and it is difficult to

imagine how the League of Free Nations can exercise any practical authority unless it has power to restrain such armament. The League of Free Nations must, in fact, if it is to be a working reality, have power to define and limit the military and naval and aerial equipment of every country in the world. This means something more than a restriction of state forces. It must have power and freedom to investigate the military and naval and aerial establishments of all its constituent powers. It must also have effective control over every armament industry. And armament industries are not always easy to define. Are aeroplanes, for example, armament? Its powers, I suggest, must extend even to a restraint upon the belligerent propaganda which is the natural advertisement campaign of every armament industry. It must have the right, for example, to raise the question of the proprietorship of newspapers by armament interests. Disarmament is, in fact, a necessary factor of any League of Free Nations, and you cannot have disarmament unless you are prepared to see the powers of the council of the League extend thus far. The very existence of the League presupposes that it and it alone is to have and to exercise military force. Any other belligerency or preparation or incitement to belligerency becomes rebellion, and any other arming a threat of rebellion, in a world League of Free Nations.

But here, again, has the general mind yet thought out all that is involved in this proposition? In all the great belligerent countries the armament industries are now huge interests with enormous powers. Krupp's business alone is as powerful a thing in Germany as the Crown. In every country a heavily subsidized "patriotic" press will fight desperately

against giving powers so extensive and thorough as those here suggested to an international body. So long, of course, as the League of Free Nations remains a project in the air, without body or parts, such a press will sneer at it gently as "Utopian," and even patronize it kindly. But so soon as the League takes on the shape its general proposition makes logically necessary, the armament interest will take fright. Then it is we shall hear the drum patriotic loud in defence of the human blood trade. Are we to hand over these most intimate affairs of ours to "a lot of foreigners"? Among these "foreigners" who will be appealed to to terrify the patriotic souls of the British will be the "Americans." Are we men of English blood and tradition to see our affairs controlled by such "foreigners" as Wilson, Lincoln, Webster and Washington? Perish the thought! When they might be controlled by Disraelis, Wettins, Mount-Battens, and what not! And so on and so on. Krupp's agents and the agents of the kindred firms in Great Britain and France will also be very busy with the national pride of France. In Germany they have already created a colossal suspicion of England.

Here is a giant in the path....

But let us remember that it is only necessary to defeat the propaganda of this vile and dangerous industry in four great countries. And for the common citizen, touched on the tenderest part of his patriotic susceptibilities, there are certain irrefutable arguments. Whether the ways of the world in the years to come are to be the paths of peace or the paths of war is not going to alter this essential fact, that the great educated world communities, with a social and industrial

organization on a war-capable scale, are going to dominate human affairs. Whether they spend their power in killing or in educating and creating, France, Germany, however much we may resent it, the two great English-speaking communities, Italy, Japan China, and presently perhaps a renascent Russia, are jointly going to control the destinies of mankind. Whether that joint control comes through arms or through the law is a secondary consideration. To refuse to bring our affairs into a common council does not make us independent of foreigners. It makes us more dependent upon them, as a very little consideration will show.

I am suggesting here that the League of Free Nations shall practically control the army, navy, air forces, and armament industry of every nation in the world. What is the alternative to that? To do as we please? No, the alternative is that any malignant country will be free to force upon all the rest just the maximum amount of armament it chooses to adopt. Since 1871 France, we say, has been free in military matters. What has been the value of that freedom? The truth is, she has been the bond-slave of Germany, bound to watch Germany as a slave watches a master, bound to launch submarine for submarine and cast gun for gun, to sweep all her youth into her army, to subdue her trade, her literature, her education, her whole life to the necessity of preparations imposed upon her by her drill-master over the Rhine. And Michael, too, has been a slave to his imperial master for the self-same reason, for the reason that Germany and France were both so proudly sovereign and independent. Both countries have been slaves to Kruppism and Zabernism--because they were sovereign and free! So it will always be. So long as patriotic cant can keep the common man jealous of

international controls over his belligerent possibilities, so long will he be the helpless slave of the foreign threat, and "Peace" remain a mere name for the resting phase between wars.

But power over the military resources of the world is by no means the limit of the necessary powers of an effective League of Free Nations. There are still more indigestible implications in the idea, and, since they have got to be digested sooner or later if civilization is not to collapse, there is no reason why we should not begin to bite upon them now. I was much interested to read the British press upon the alleged proposal of the German Chancellor that we should give up (presumably to Germany) Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, and suchlike key possessions. It seemed to excite several of our politicians extremely. I read over the German Chancellor's speech very carefully, so far as it was available, and it is clear that he did not propose anything of the sort. Wilfully or blindly our press and our demagogues screamed over a false issue. The Chancellor was defending the idea of the Germans remaining in Belgium and Lorraine because of the strategic and economic importance of those regions to Germany, and he was arguing that before we English got into such a feverish state of indignation about that, we should first ask ourselves what we were doing in Gibraltar, etc., etc. That is a different thing altogether. And it is an argument that is not to be disposed of by misrepresentation. The British have to think hard over this quite legitimate German *tu quoque*. It is no good getting into a patriotic bad temper and refusing to answer that question. We British people are so persuaded of the purity and unselfishness with which we discharge our imperial responsibilities, we have been so trained in



imperial self-satisfaction, we know so certainly that all our subject nations call us blessed, that it is a little difficult for us to see just how the fact that we are, for example, so deeply rooted in Egypt looks to an outside intelligence. Of course the German imperialist idea is a wicked and aggressive idea, as Lord Robert Cecil has explained; they want to set up all over the earth coaling stations and strategic points, on the pattern of ours. Well, they argue, we are only trying to do what you British have done. If we are not to do so--because it is aggression and so on and so on--is not the time ripe for you to make some concessions to the public opinion of the world? That is the German argument. Either, they say, tolerate this idea of a Germany with advantageous posts and possessions round and about the earth, or reconsider your own position.

Well, at the risk of rousing much patriotic wrath, I must admit that I think we have to reconsider our position. Our argument is that in India, Egypt, Africa and elsewhere, we stand for order and civilization, we are the trustees of freedom, the agents of knowledge and efficiency. On the whole the record of British rule is a pretty respectable one; I am not ashamed of our record. Nevertheless the case is altering.

It is quite justifiable for us British, no doubt, if we do really play the part of honest trustees, to remain in Egypt and in India under existing conditions; it is even possible for us to glance at the helplessness of Arabia, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, as yet incapable of self-government, helpless as new-born infants. But our case, our only justifiable case, is that we are trustees because there is no better

trustee possible. And the creation of a council of a League of Free Nations would be like the creation of a Public Trustee for the world. The creation of a League of Free Nations must necessarily be the creation of an authority that may legitimately call existing empires to give an account of their stewardship. For an unchecked fragmentary control of tropical and chaotic regions, it substitutes the possibility of a general authority. And this must necessarily alter the problems not only of the politically immature nations and the control of the tropics, but also of the regulation of the sea ways, the regulation of the coming air routes, and the distribution of staple products in the world. I will not go in detail over the items of this list, because the reader can fill in the essentials of the argument from what has gone before. I want simply to suggest how widely this project of a League of Free Nations swings when once you have let it swing freely in your mind! And if you do not let it swing freely in your mind, it remains nothing--a sentimental gesture.

The plain truth is that the League of Free Nations, if it is to be a reality, if it is to effect a real pacification of the world, must do no less than supersede Empire; it must end not only this new German imperialism, which is struggling so savagely and powerfully to possess the earth, but it must also wind up British imperialism and French imperialism, which do now so largely and inaggressively possess it. And, moreover, this idea queries the adjective of Belgian, Portuguese, French, and British Central Africa alike, just as emphatically as it queries "German." Still more effectually does the League forbid those creations of the futurist imagination, the imperialism of Italy and

Greece, which make such threatening gestures at the world of our children. Are these incompatibilities understood? Until people have faced the clear antagonism that exists between imperialism and internationalism, they have not begun to suspect the real significance of this project of the League of Free Nations. They have not begun to realize that peace also has its price.