THE SANCTIONS EXPERIMENT IN RETROSPECT

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THE first attempt by the League of Nations to apply Sanctions against a Great Power is finished, and it is now so obvious that Great Britain has been, both politically and financially, the chief loser by the experiment, that the question has naturally arisen both as to why she should ever have lent herself to it, and as to why, once committed to it, she was ultimately led to abandon it.

In the United States and on the Continent of Europe, explanations have not been wanting. It has been said in some quarters that the pro-League members of the British Government believed that the Italian adventure would fail in any case, and that they invoked Sanctions in order that the failure might be counted to the credit of the League; also that the other potential aggressor, Germany, might read the signs of the times and become more amenable to the policies of Geneva. There is the kindred explanation, to be heard in Germany itself, that the whole resort to Sanctions was simply an experimental mobilization of world resources and opinion, in a trial of methods which later could be used against Germany. There is the view of certain English socialists, that the Government, aware of the dangerous temper of the Continent and of Britain's grave deficiencies in armaments, deliberately ran the risk of war in the Mediterranean in order to awaken the nation to the need to look to its defences; and there is, finally, the view, not uncommon in the United States, that the British Government cared nothing at all about the League, but had every reason to believe that Italian ambitions were a threat to Egypt, and therefore mobilized the power of the League in order to pull British chestnuts out of the Mediterranean fire.

Plausible as these explanations of British policy are, and possible as it may be that some one or other of these considerations was present to the mind of this or that individual, as explanations of the course adopted by the British Government they overreach themselves. They are too ingenious. They err in attributing to the British Government a finesse of which it is probably not capable, and they take no account of certain permanent elements in the character of the British people.

There is no mystery about the British Government's policy. Great Britain is the head of a pacifist and a vulnerable Empire; she has everything to lose and nothing to gain by war, and she is nervously preoccupied with questions of defence; under these conditions a section of her Government seems to have allowed itself to be persuaded that, through the League of Nations, it might be able to achieve collective security without imposing too great a burden of arms and taxation upon its own already severely tried people. The experiment was doomed to failure, but it was none the less genuine. That it failed was due to four factors: to the rapidity of Italy's military success, to the hesitancies of France, to Britain's own weakness in armaments, and to the equivocal position of Germany.

So far as the first of these factors is concerned, the rapidity of Italy's success, it must be remembered that economic Sanctions, if they can ever achieve their purpose, can do so only if given time. Their effect is necessarily cumulative and slow. No Government has better reason than the British to know how slow are the processes of blockade, but there is reason to believe that it was advised by its military experts that the Italians would be faced with a long campaign in Abyssinia, and that it was upon the strength of this assurance that the Government committed itself to the use of Sanctions. There is also reason to believe that the German General Staff originally gave the same advice to the German Government, and that the latter's plans to take advantage of the rift between the Powers of the League were also disconcerted by the rapidity with which Italy was able once more to turn her attention to Europe. The French General Staff, on the other hand, is believed to have advised its Government from the first that the Italians could not only win, but also win quickly. If this be so, the policies of the three Governments become more explicable when seen in the light of the advice which they received from their respective military advisers. If the British Government believed that Italy was to be involved in a long and dragging campaign, it had some excuse for believing that economic Sanctions would be given time to do their work; while if the French Government had reason to expect that Italy's victory would be rapid, it had the better reason for its reluctance to use a weapon which would irritate but could not wound.

The second factor, the hesitation of France, should have been foreseen by anyone who was not so simple-minded as to view the Abyssinian affair without any reference to the general situation in Europe. While, in the end, France gave loyal support to

Britain at Geneva, it was only natural that sections of French opinion should have felt that, cowering as she is beneath the shadow of a threatening Germany, and vitally dependent upon her connections with North Africa, it would have been stark suicide for France to be dragged into a war with Italy; and without the fullest assurance of French support, it would have been almost equally suicidal for Britain to fight a Mediterranean war against her oldest ally in that sea.

For the third factor, which led to the defeat of the Sanctionist policy, was Britain's own deficiency in naval power. Twice since 1930, the advocates of collective security have looked to Britain to play the rôle of international policeman, and twice they have ignored the fact that as a result of successive disarmament treaties in which Britain allowed her naval needs as a world Power to be measured by an American yardstick, the policeman has been deprived not only of his truncheon but even of his helmet. When Japan began her adventure in Manchuria, Britain was disabled from effective interference by the simple and sufficient fact that, under the Washington Treaties, she had accepted such a reduction of her strength in capital ships that, east of Singapore, she had ceased to count as a naval power, and that in consequence, the British possessions and interests in China had become undefended and indefensible hostages, given to Japan for Britain's good behaviour. In the same way, the London Treaties of 1930, by paring to the bone the British strength in cruisers and destroyers, while leaving Italy and France entirely free to build such warships of these classes as they might choose, had produced a situation in the Mediterranean in which Britain has been holding her position there virtually at the sufferance of the two Latin Powers. So palpably was this the case, that long before the Abyssinian question arose, a considerable school of English naval opinion had already concluded that in the event of war with Italy and for France, Britain would have to abandon the western basin of the Mediterranean altogether, and temporarily, at least, send her seaborne traffic round the Cape.

It is not suggested, of course, that had Sanctions been pushed to their conclusion in an Anglo-Italian war, the British fleet could not, though with serious difficulty and heavy losses, have brought the struggle to a successful issue; but such an issue could have been reached only had Britain been free to concentrate the whole of her reduced and largely obsolete fleets in the Mediterranean Sea, and such concentration was precisely what was forbidden by the equivocal attitude of Germany and Japan. In other words, the fact which the advocates of Sanctions seemed almost wilfully to

overlook was that the outbreak of a Sanctionist war, which should have seen Great Britain completely absorbed in a struggle in the Mediterranean, would inevitably have played straight into the hands of Germany and Japan.

That this must be the result of forcing a quarrel between England and France on the one side and Italy on the other, was so starkly obvious that it was almost inconceivable that it should not have been foreseen even by the most zealous advocates of universal collective security. When, in the course of last winter, the present writer pleaded that those advocates might think twice before they pilloried and outlawed Italy, it was not because he was indifferent to Italy's offence against current international morality, or because he wished to condone that offence. It was because it was only too apparent that the major threat to the peace of Europe came not from the dictatorship which sits at Rome, but from that which sits at Berlin, and that the chief result of allowing England and France to become involved in a quarrel with Italy in the name of the League would be to make, not the League, but Adolf Hitler the arbiter of Europe. For in pressing for the outlawry of Italy, the advocates of Sanctions lost sight of a cardinal maxim of statesmanship, the maxim namely, that in politics there are no principles of universal validity, and that circumstances are the heart of every political problem. If the Powers on whom the burden of carrying out the decisions of the League would fall (England and France) had enjoyed an overwhelming preponderance of force, it might, of course, have been possible for Geneva to indulge in the luxury of outlawing several powerful offenders at one and the same time; but since, in fact, they were inferior in power to the potential aggressors, it would seem to have been the part of the merest commonsense to have concentrated upon the one point at which an outbreak can really threaten the very existence of Western society. There is only one place in which a war would pull down the pillars of civilization, and that place is Western Europe; and in Western Europe there is only one problem, and that is the problem of the intentions of Germany. Compared with the appalling capacity for mischief of that Power, the misdeeds which Italy is either capable or desirous of committing are the merest flea bites. That being so, the present writer felt last winter that to preserve Abyssinia at the cost either of placing Europe at the mercy of Nazi Germany, or of igniting a war in the Mediterranean which assuredly would soon spread to the whole of Europe, was a curious service to the cause of peace.

Unfortunately, the Italo-Abyssinian conflict was not approached in terms of any such long-term views, but as an exercise in which

the English-speaking peoples have some proficiency, the exercise of moral indignation; and it is typical of the indignant moralist that, once fairly launched upon a crusade, he can rarely see beyond it. He tends to combine his large ideals with very short views and with still shorter memories. He is perfectly sure, for so long as each particular indignation lasts, that his principles and his indignation are both personal and eternal, and therefore, that his present choice of friends and enemies will also be eternal; and he becomes, for the time being, incapable of seeing himsel for his country in any other situation or set of circumstances save those which are responsible for his excitement at the moment. He forgets that while Truth may be unchanging, Times are not; and when, last winter, he was angry with Italy, he apparently could not imagine a time or a situation in which he and his cause might have need of Italy, or in which Italy's misdeeds in Abyssinia might pale into insignificance before an incomparably graver threat to peace. Our League of Nations zealots proceeded as though Italy were not only the chief, but also the only possible, offender against the peace, and as though the Abyssinian affair could be handled in perfect isolation from the general situation in Asia and in Europe. Their emotions were so centred upon Rome that they had no eyes for Berlin or Tokio or Moscow, and had their design been deliberately to present the hegemony of Europe to Germany and of Asia to Japan, and to thrust France in despair into the arms of Russia, the result could not have been better planned.

The truth is, then, that throughout the whole Abyssinian affair the British Government could never afford to take its eyes from Berlin. The policy of Germany since 1933 has been perfectly intelligible. It is in no sense peculiar to National Socialism; it is the policy which was pursued by the pre-war rulers of Germany, and which was described by them as the policy of the free hand. It consists in an armed and masterly inactivity, broken only by a series of theatrical coups. Germany sits in the middle of the Continent, unhurried and armed, and allows the overshadowing sense of her incomparable military power to burn itself into the minds of the Chancelleries and peoples of Europe, until by the ominous combination of her power and her silence she has produced a general "malaise", in which, if any of her neighbours are foolish enough to fall out beneath her eyes, she can exact her price, not for her positive goodwill, but merely for her abstention from mischief. It is a policy which has yielded her profitable results both before 1914 and again since 1933, and it was the policy which was clearly marked out for her last winter. The major problem

in Europe last winter, as now, was to guess the intentions of the Enigma which sits at Berlin, and so long as that riddle could not be read, it would have been perilous for Britain, and suicidal for France, to have engaged in war in the Mediterranean.

Even as it is, the Sanctionist experiment has brought grist to Germany's mill. It created the obvious opportunity for her re-occupation of the Rhineland, and it has done more than any other single factor to clear the way for her present drive for the control of Danubian and Balkan Europe. It has allowed her to recover ground in Austria, and it has helped forward her economic penetration of the Balkans.[1].

The British Government, then, was never free, as its League of Nations Societies critics were, to consider the Abyssinian question as an isolated exercise in the new technique of collective security. Indeed, quite apart from the overshadowing problem of Germany, the aftermath of Sanctions in the Mediterranean itself should serve to remind us of this fact. For when Great Britain, in the pursuit of Sanctions, went cap in hand to the smaller Mediterranean countries to beg for their support against possible Italian reprisals, her naval weakness stood confessed to the world, and the Mediterranean world, in particular, was not slow to read the signs of the times. Let the sequence of events since Christmas of 1935 speak for itself. At Montreux, in July, Russia and Turkey seized the opportune moment to close the Bosphorus permanently to British fleets. The Egyptian Nationalists extracted the treaty of last August from Britain's embarrassments; and with the leading Moslem Power in difficulties in the key position of Egypt, difficulties sprang to life in every Moslem territory in the Mediterranean; for Spain in Morocco, for France in Algeria and Tunis, and for

1. In 1931, Republican Germany attempted to prepare the ground for the incorporation of Austria by means of a Customs Union between the two countries, but the League Powers disapproved of the plan, and in face of their opposition it was dropped. In 1934, Nazi Germany tried to carry through the plan by force by procuring the murder of the Head of the Austrian State and supporting the armed invasion of Austrian territory. On that occasion, her plans went awry because Italy mobilized and made it clear that an armed attack upon Austria would not be permitted. By the Austro-German agreement of last July, however, Germany did much to regain the initiative in Austrian affairs, and this time no dog barked. The Sanctions policies had done their work in dividing Italy from England and France, and the League Powers had given Mussolini no alternative save to look on at the German initiative. In a similar way, when the important Italian trade of the Balkan countries dwindled under the influence of Sanctions, Germany naturally stepped into the breach. From all of them she took the vast proportion of their exportable surplus of agricultural produce, and since she could not pay for it in foreign currency, it has been arranged that payment shall be made in the form of German industrial goods and munitions of war; with the result that Yugo-Slavia, Greece and Roumania, in particular, have had to make drastic reductions in their imports from other countries, and notably from Great Britain, in order to take German goods, and that Germany has gained a notable economic advantage which may or may not be only temporary.

Britain in Palestine. With Russia entrenched, therefore, behind the shuttered Dardanelles, with Spain in chaos, with Germany driving down again to Constantinople, and with the whole Moslem littoral in North Africa seething with unrest, the results of the policy which wilfully threw away the historic Anglo-Italian friendship in the Mediterranean can now be appraised.

Nor is the breach between England and Italy a disadvantage merely to Great Britain; it is a disadvantage to the peace of Europe. For the present phase of League of Nations irritation with Italy must not be allowed to obscure the fact that, in the long run, Italy's strength makes for peace in Europe. Like Great Britain, Italy is a small and exposed country lying on the flank of the great Continental Powers. Like Britain again, she is always concerned to prevent Europe from falling again into two camps grouped around the secular quarrel between Germany and France, if only because such a division must always end by forcing her, as it forces Britain, into subservience either to French or to German policies. Like Britain again, she can never hope to dominate the Continent, and must always find her wisdom in throwing her weight against whatever Power threatens to achieve a dangerous hegemony over the rest. France, Germany and Russia have all at different times been strong enough to aspire to dominate Europe. Italy alone can never be strong enough to attempt such a rôle, and therefore shares with Britain a permanent interest in the preservation of a balance; and if for that reason alone, any permanent alienation between the two countries is a grave derogation from the cause of peace.

The whole Sanctionist episode, indeed, is a lesson in the danger of allowing passing fits of moral rectitude to determine a nation's choice of friends. For it is as well to remember that what has saved Great Britain for more than three hundred years has not been any heroic quality in her statesmanship, but her saving sense of moderation. In the days of her greatest strength, she never abused that strength, and the proof of the fact is that while the whole of Europe has been driven at different times to combine against the over-weening ambition of Spain, of France, of Russia or of Germany, in the whole of modern history it has never been found either necessary or possible to form a general coalition against Great Britain. That this has been the case is due to the fact that Britain has always pursued a policy of "live and let live"; she has never suffered from that kind of megalomania which makes a country seek to dominate everywhere at once, with the result that she has never made too many enemies at one time. In consequence, in every crisis of her fortunes she has never lacked friends

and allies. Thus, no sooner was she seriously threatened by Germany between 1900 and 1914, than she found it perfectly easy to accommodate her differences with all other Powers, and in 1914 she could concentrate her fleet in the vital area in the North Sea, in the confident knowledge that her interests in the Mediterranean would be safe with a friendly France and a friendly Italy, and that her interests in the Far East would be safe with a friendly Japan. Five short years of the policies of Geneva have changed all that. To-day, Great Britain may again be threatened by a resurgent Germany; but this time, as a result of her Geneva policies, she has contrived to affront and alienate both Italy in the Mediterranean and Japan in the Far East, and if she persists in the pursuit of "collective security" as it has been practised at Geneva since 1930, she may well find herself threatened, at one and the same time, by Germany, by Italy and by Japan. British policy conducted from London would never have risked pulling down the pillars of peace by irritating three great military peoples at one and the same time, but British policy conducted at Geneva has already brought us within measurable distance of that catastrophe. It will be a curious irony if, in the service of the nominally altruistic policies of Geneva, British statesmanship should lose that saving gift of moderation, and that sane appreciation of the limits of British strength, which always characterized it so long as it was conducted in terms of its own enlightened self-interest.

So much for the share of the Governments in our present predicament. What of the responsibility of the peoples? So far as Great Britain is concerned, the whole Sanctionist adventure has provided yet another example of certain permanent characteristics of the British people.

The first of these characteristics is the attitude of the English people to the national defence, an attitude which is the outcome of their relative detachment from the Continent, of their social democracy, and still more of their historic dislike of militarism and of a standing army. Approximately once every one hundred years, Great Britain becomes reluctantly involved in a major European war. She enters upon it unprepared and ill equipped, but she slowly mobilizes her great resources and emerges victorious. Having done so, she proceeds to disarm with almost panic haste and to spend the money thus saved upon the social services of her people; and she then continues to live, at peace but vulnerable, upon the prestige of her very real military effort in the past struggle until her diplomatic bluff is called by the rise of some new aggressor. At the beginning of the last century, having slowly roused herself

to beat Napoleon, she followed her usual practice of hastily disarming on the morrow of victory, and her diplomacy lived peacefully upon the prestige of Waterloo for nearly half a century, until the peace was shattered by the intrusion of the Germany of Bismarck and the Italy of Cavour. In our own time, her democracy reluctantly girded itself to defeat the threat from Imperial Germany, only once again to allow its post-war defences to fall to a dangerously low level, and this time the bluff has been called from exactly the same quarters, but after a shorter interval, by the Germany of Hitler and the Italy of Mussolini. The British democracy will make heavy sacrifices for the national defence when war is actually upon it, but it will rarely accept the distasteful necessity of preparing for war beforehand or of maintaining large armaments in time of peace; and it is a truth upon which our League of Nations zealots should reflect, that if, at any time between the Armistice and 1930, the British Government had sought to maintain a fleet which should have been capable of coercing Japan in the Pacific and of overawing Italy in the Mediterranean, it would have been denounced for conducting an armament "ramp" and for blocking the way to disarmament, by precisely those advocates of collective security who, since 1930, have wished to see Japan and Italy coerced.

For the second permanent factor in British foreign policy, which is rarely understood abroad, is the tendency of the British people to carry its genuine humanitarian feeling into the field of international politics. It is one of the anomalies of British affairs that the British public, which is so levelheaded in other things, is sometimes so impulsive in matters of foreign policy. In domestic affairs, the nation seems to feel instinctively that the truth lies somewhere between the extremes of partisan opinion, and it sets its course along that middle way which it likes to describe as being that of commonsense. In foreign affairs, unfortunately, this saving sense of moderation is sometimes obscured by that other British characteristic, a proneness to easy, if genuine, moral indignation. Ever since the rise of the influence of the evangelical section of the middle class in the earlier half of the nineteenth century, there has always been a body of English opinion which is almost painfully anxious that the power of Britain shall always be used everywhere to promote an enlargement of righteousness; but partly because the same body of opinion is rarely well informed about Continental affairs, partly because its interest in such affairs is necessarily somewhat intermittent, and partly because it has an incurable habit of reading English conceptions of liberty and democracy into situations to which those conceptions are entirely

alien, it has sometimes made curious mistakes as to just which cause has really been that of righteousness. To this British practice of allowing these moral indignations to determine national policy, there are several grave objections. The first is that those Englishmen who, in general, are most anxious that Britain should intervene in Continental quarrels in order to promote some humanitarian end are also, in general, the Englishmen who would do least to sustain the quarrel when once the country had been irretrievably embroiled. For the section of the English people which is peculiarly given to exhibitions of self-righteousness in international affairs, and which from time to time expects the Government to run the risk of war in order to champion this or that supposed victim of oppression, is precisely that section of the nation which is at all times profoundly anti-militarist and whose influence has invariably been exercised to keep Great Britain in a state of military unpreparedness.[2] From the days of Charles James Fox onwards, indeed, there has been a body of English middle class liberals who have never been able to fit into one consistent philosophy their highly pacific international ideals and their highly provocative enthusiasm for nations struggling to be free. They have always been passionately and sincerely attached to the causes of international peace and disarmament, but they have also been passionately and sincerely anxious that someone (preferably the British Regular Army, to which as a social class they contribute few recruits) should go to the assistance of peoples whom they believed to be fighting against oppression, and they have not always seen that the two ideals cannot be pursued together. They have seldom realized how highly provocative of international ill-will their somewhat ostentatious self-righteousness can be, and in consequence, they have more than once led the nation to the brink of a war which, under other circumstances, they would have been the first to deplore, and for

2. The root of this highly explosive combination of pacifism with bellicosity in the same people is to be found in the essentially religious basis of English political parties. The section of English opinion which is most apt to carry its humanitarian impulses into the field of foreign affairs can still be roughly identified with the forces which fifty years ago were the backbone of Gladstonian Liberalism. That Liberalism was never primarily a political creed; it was essentially a moral, not to say moralizing, way of life, a way of life which was inextricably bound up with, and which derived its driving force from, the Nonconformist Churches, and in particular, from the Nonconformist Churches of Wales, Scotland and England north of the Trent. It was from its close connection with this body of evangelical opinion that English Liberalism derived both its pacifism and its tendency to carry something of the zealotry of a moral crusade into foreign affairs. It is significant that a map showing the areas of Britain in which the Peace Ballot of 1934 achieved its most striking successes would virtually coincide with a map showing the areas in which the evangelical Churches are strongest. Thus, of the forty-two constituencies which polled more than 60% of the population over eighteen years of age, 13 (including the first 8) were in Wales, 16 were in the smaller towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and 11 in other northern and north-midland counties; i.e. in the traditional strongholds of liberal Non-conformity.

which they have always resolutely refused to prepare. Thus it often comes as a shock to students of English history to discover that, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century when the evangelical middle class was in the heyday of its power, it was Conservative administrations which kept England at peace, while Liberals who have enjoyed a special reputation as the champions of international good will repeatedly brought her to the brink of war. Liberal England, then as now, was profoundly unmilitary in temper and full of ideas of universal peace; but then as now, its language was recklessly warlike. In those days, as in these, England's potential military resources were formidable; but in those days, as in these, her actual military strength was little short of contemptible; so much so, that Bismarck is credited with the remark that if a British army landed in Germany, he would have it arrested. Yet Liberal pacifists of the type of John Bright habitually spoke as though a powerful and perfectly equipped British force could be despatched in the cause of Liberty and at a moment's notice to any quarter of the globe; precisely as the spiritual heirs of Bright have spoken since 1931 as though an unmatched British armada could be sent at once to halt Japan or to coerce Mussolini.

It has all too frequently happened, therefore, that this pacifist pugnacity has been largely a pugnacity of the gallery, and that the price of indulging in it has been paid by someone else. In the course of the last hundred years there have been repeated cases in which Liberal England has run the familiar gamut. It has begun by adopting, and usually by adopting very vociferously, a quixotic attitude on behalf of this or that small people believed to be suffering from oppression. It has then discovered that the Great Power which it has cast for the rôle of oppressor cannot be deterred by mere abuse, and that if its own attitude is persisted in, it will lead to a major war whose effects will far outweigh the good which intervention on behalf of the victim may do, and since it is chronically unprepared for war, it has had no alternative save to back down. There has been no deliberate betrayal. The impulse to go to the assistance of the supposedly weak has been genuine and disinterested: but the stark fact remains that, in every case, some small nation has been first encouraged and then left to its fate. The Poles in 1863, the Danes in 1864, the Armenians in the 'nineties, and the Abyssinians last winter, have all had cause to appraise the true value of these impotent displays of good intention. It is not cynicism, but the merest honesty, to say that moral indignation is not a political attitude; and the charge of cynicism should lie, not against those who, whatever their sympathy with the victim,

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decline to promise what they cannot perform, but against those who indulge in a sort of moral concupiscence by verbally encouraging some unhappy small nation to defy a Great Power when they are in no position to give it help in deeds.

It is worth while to point out, further, that these humanitarian whims are an exclusively Anglo-Saxon prerogative. They are a luxury which can be indulged in only by nations which are safe, as England was safe in the nineteenth century and as the United States and Canada are safe now. Continental nations that have frontiers, and beyond those frontiers jealous neighbours, neither indulge in these fervours themselves nor believe in their sincerity when indulged in by us. It is always a sobering experience, for example, to find that on the Continent of Europe our outstanding moralist, Gladstone, is still regarded as a prince of tricksters in matters of foreign policy, whereas his rival, Disraeli, enjoys a reputation for candour and frankness. The explanation, of course, is that, from the point of view of Continental statesmen, in looking carefully to English interests, Disraeli was playing a known game according to known rules, whereas Gladstone, in making policy a series of moral crusades, appeared to the Continent as an incalculable creature of whims and fervours. Continental nations rarely believe in the sincerity of our moral impulses, and when confronted with them, as in the case of Gladstone's crusade on behalf of the Armenians, they usually have recourse to grotesque and fantastic theories in the attempt to discover what sinister motive really underlies a British humanitarianism which they cannot believe to be real.

When the Italo-Abyssinian conflict began, therefore, it was not difficult to prophesy that there would be an outbreak of righteous indignation against Italy; that that indignation would be most vocal among precisely those Englishmen who for years have pressed for the reduction of British armaments to a level which would make even a conflict with Italy a dangerous risk; that the genuinely disinterested motives for this indignation would be suspect everywhere outside Great Britain; that because of the deficiencies of British armaments and of the doubt as to the intentions of Germany, a policy which based itself upon these moral fervours would invite a national humiliation; and finally, that the cause of the objects of all this militant sympathy, the Abyssinians, would be prejudiced rather than aided by our intervention. Such, in the event, has proved to be the case. Those who hurled insults at Mussolini were the special champions of peace; those who were now passionately and indecently anxious that someone should fight Italy were

those who until recently had been loudly proclaiming that they would never fight anyone; and those newspapers which urged upon the Government a policy which meant war were the traditional organs of radical pacifism, of liberal Nonconformity and of the great Quaker interests, all of them representing long established forces of opinion in Britain which, in season and out, before 1914 as after, have denounced the provision of a gun for the British army or a ship for the British fleet. What a tragi-comedy we saw in June, when the official Opposition, at one and the same time, demanded that the Government should press for the continuance and intensification of Sanctions, but voted solidly against the supplementary Naval Estimates which were designed to enable the British fleet to defend itself in the Mediterranean! It was the climax in their pursuit of this congenial policy of what Mr. Neville Chamberlain so happily called "provocation without preparation". The caricatures of British motives which are current abroad have already been noticed, and as for the objects of our benevolence, the Abyssinians, it is perhaps enough to say that if they had not been encouraged to take up an intransigent attitude, but had been allowed to accept the controlled adjustment of the Hoare-Laval arrangement, the Amharic Emperor would now be in secure possession of all that part of his Empire which is genuinely Amharic. As it is, he has leisure to reflect upon the words of Sir Edward Grey:—"In other countries, whatever the humane sentiments of individuals may have been about their own affairs, they did not take the form of pressure for philanthropic action abroad that might involve their own Governments in complications with continental neighbours. It was only an island such as Britain that could safely afford to embark on diplomatic crusades. To continental countries, these British efforts were often inconvenient,.... and they were often resented, because they were not understood. They sometimes ran counter to obvious British interests, but this did not predispose foreign Governments to think them sincere. On the contrary, it stimulated them to search deeply for some concealed motive, though the true one lay on the surface before their eyes. It was no wonder, then, that in some instances these efforts of British Governments resulted in friction and futility. Their endeavours brought upon them the obstruction and dislike of foreign Governments, and their want of success exposed them to the criticisms of those at home whose earnest and conscious rectitude of purpose made them too impatient to reckon or to allow for the difficulties that had to be encountered."

To this view, that the pugnacity of the supporters of Sanctions was largely a pugnacity of the gallery, it will doubtless be objected

that, in the so-called Peace Ballot of 1934, more than six million Englishmen had formally declared their readiness to support even military Sanctions against an aggressor. It is quite true that these six million Englishmen, in 1934, did so vote for Sanctions against an aggressor. It by no means follows, however, that in 1936 they were ready for war with Italy. For at no time between 1919 and 1935 did the League of Nations Societies of Britain (or of Canada) ever dare to explain to their followers that the application of Sanctions against a Great Power means war. The British (like the Canadian) people was allowed to drift along under the amiably vague assumption that, in Sanctions, Geneva had discovered a new and painless device for the preservation of peace. "Sanctions" is a much pleasanter word than "war". It is evasive and it is pompous. It implies something new in the technique of international relations; something which will be applied by some impartial and remote authority; something which will not embitter too much the nation against which it is applied, nor demand too much of the nations which apply it; and it was under the spell of this jargon that more than six million peace-loving Englishmen declared themselves in favour of military Sanctions. When, last winter, however, the jargon of the Peace Ballot gave way to reality, and when the English people found itself invited, not to apply Sanctions (that remote and technical instrument of righteousness) against an aggressor (that conveniently anonymous lay-figure) but to go to war (that sharp reality) against Italy (that very real, and formerly friendly Power), then it saw the pit which had opened beneath its feet, and it shuddered and drew back.

For the truth is that in English, as in Canadian, minds the cause of the League had been completely confused with the cause of peace. When the English man in the street has declared for the League, he has not been thinking of the Covenant as an international instrument which binds his country to do certain specific things in given situations. He has considered it simply as a declaration of moral principle. The English people declared for the Covenant as the American people declared for the Kellogg Pact, because it believed that in doing so it was declaring for peace and against war; and just as few dared to explain to the American public that the Kellogg Pact was not worth the paper on which it was written so long as the American people was not prepared to do anything to deal with any Power which should offend against it, so few among the League of Nations advocates in Britain ever dared to explain to the English public that, in the last resort, the League could make its will prevail against an aggressor only by

the use of war. In consequence, a decade and a half of League propaganda in Britain (as in Canada) has not produced supporters of the League. It has produced pacifists, in the sense of people who want peace at any price. For fifteen years our League of Nations zealots omitted to explain to their followers that if their ideals should be attacked by force they would have to be defended by force, and devoted themselves instead to teaching men that it is wrong to fight; and they are now somewhat disconcerted that the peoples of the Western democracies are in entire agreement with them. The population of England (like those of Canada and France) last winter had simply no intention of fighting either for the Abyssinians or for the League, and in the last analysis, it was that cardinal fact which governed the policies of the French and British Governments. In preaching peace to the Western democracies, indeed, our League of Nations Societies have been self-defeating. For in the present world, the only effective power at the service of the League is the power of France and of the British Commonwealth; and the populations of both those Powers are so profoundly pacifist, not to say defeatist, in temper, that nothing save the knife at the throat would induce them to fight anyone. This is a fact with which the advocates of collective security would do well to reckon, for they themselves have been largely responsible for the confusion in the popular mind between the cause of peace and the cause of the League. For fifteen years they nursed our peoples in the belief that the League would abolish war. They never dared to tell them that if the League was challenged, it could make its will prevail only by war, and the confusion which they have created between the two ideas has been fatal to their own purpose. For as Lord Lothian once pointed out, collective security is a system whereby the League of Nations will use war as the instrument of international, instead of national, policies; and when the Abyssinian crisis brought this truth into sharp relief, it was only too patent that the people of Great Britain, like those of Canada and France, were not prepared to make war an instrument of any kind of policy at all.