

CURRENT MAGAZINES

THE ROOSEVELT "CLARION CALL".

America, Britain and the League:—Sir Frederick Whyte, in the *Contemporary*.
The Japanese Outlook and Foreign Intervention:—Mr. N. Spencer Smith, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Mistress of the Yellow Seas:—Mr. W. Price, in the *Fortnightly*.

Much Ado About—What?—The Editor, in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.

IT was Mr. Neville Chamberlain who described the Chicago Speech, of October 5, as a "Clarion Call", and every time he has since referred to Mr. Roosevelt it has been with a note of admiration. But it does not necessarily follow that the Chicago Speech was welcome at 10 Downing Street; nor am I suggesting insincerity in such blend of inward annoyance with outward approval. So often do we dislike, and repine against, that which we cannot but admire! Mr. Chamberlain's Opposition critics, and—unless rumor is again a lying jade—some at least of his Cabinet subordinates (whom in his more gracious mood he calls "colleagues") were forthwith sharply on the watch lest he frustrate in detail what he had extolled in principle.

What was this Clarion Call, whose nobility proved so embarrassing to an order of politicians far from noble?

I

Essentially it was the announcement not only of readiness but of eagerness in the United States to concert measures with such other Powers as value freedom, good faith, and the institutions of popular government, so that the present menace from Powers of another type may be collectively resisted. The case of Japan, known to be in the closest cooperation with Germany and Italy, was singled out for special censure. And although pro-Fascist or pro-Nazi critics, in whom the wish is father to the thought, have struggled ever since to explain away what Mr. Roosevelt said as "a mere gesture", the persistence with which he followed it up by promoting the Brussels Conference made their task increasingly hard. Less and less easily were they able to translate his vigour and definiteness into their own evasive prevarication.

For the sake of accuracy, I reproduce the exact words of the paragraph that matters:

The situation is definitely of universal concern. The questions involved relate not merely to violations of specific provisions of particular treaties; they are questions of war and peace, of inter-

national law, and especially of principles of humanity. It is true that they involve definite violations of agreements, and especially of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and the Nine-Power Treaty. But they also involve problems of international economy, world security and world humanity. It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognize the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honoring sanctity of treaties, of respecting the rights and liberties of others, and of putting an end to acts of international aggression. It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients, in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease.

The word found here so startling was "quarantine". Was it possible that Mr. Roosevelt contemplated an embargo, or a boycott? Think what in such a case would happen to certain recent speculative ventures—in nickel, for instance, which had been soaring on the market! Canadian exports of nickel to Japan had actually trebled within a month—and it was not, most of it, for Japanese bath-rooms. Surely "quarantine" was meant only in some harmless metaphorical sense!

So the speculators of many countries, especially the *marchands de canon* as the French call them, comforted one another. In combination they intensified the campaign against Mr. Roosevelt for other things: for his World Court proposal, for his appointment of Justice Black, and so forth. But at first it seemed all of no avail. Apparently Mr. Roosevelt, as Bismarck said of Disraeli, "meant business". If, as our melancholy subsequent evidence goes to indicate, he did not carry out business, if the pious intention came to nothing, whose was the fault? Not wholly, and not chiefly his.

But before considering how the project was frustrated, it will be well to consider further how expansive and inclusive it was.

II

What was perhaps most of all to be welcomed in Mr. Roosevelt's Speech (by those for whom the hope of the world counts more than the hope of the stock market) was the clarity with which it assimilated the Sino-Japanese affair to others of its class. After the fashion of small diplomatists, who warn us with a look of infinite sagacity to "take one thing at a time", altogether different accounts have been given of different pieces of international faithlessness. In 1925

Germany signed (not under constraint, but eagerly) the *Locarno Pact*: we know what became of that in 1936. Italy's *Twenty-Year Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration* with Abyssinia had short shrift in 1935. The proceedings of the *Non-Intervention Committee* on the Spanish Civil War, unparalleled for absurdity except by those of its predecessor, the *Sanctions Committee*, gave a chance which the Blackshirts have steadily used to surpass even their own record in faithlessness. Encouraged by such examples elsewhere, and with her own successful preliminary experiment of 1931 in mind, Japan proceeded to outrage again the *Kellogg Pact*, the *Nine-Power Treaty*, and I know not how many more conventions of civilized usage, with no doubt that she would be again immune.

Mr. Roosevelt's appeal to the nations which had together bound themselves by these insulted engagements was an appeal for fundamental review of the whole situation. It was met, as one might have been sure it would be met, by such insistence on differences of detail as will always provide the likeliest means to prevaricate and postpone. At the same time, with the peculiar depth of disloyalty characteristic of those on whose lips the cant phrases of patriotism are most frequent, internal strife was fostered in country after country, so that vigorous action abroad was made more and more difficult. What could Russia undertake in the Far East, with such peril at home as was judged to call for the mass executions preceded by "trials" that are a world's jest? What could France attempt for the chastisement of Japan, when her own Fascist Leagues—with their fast accumulating stores of armament—were threatening revolution, and the royalist traitors within constituted such encouragement to Mussolini outside? What could even Great Britain intimate in a "stern" warning, with any chance of impressing Tokio, when every fresh batch of English newspapers—including some with the largest circulation in the country—told the Japanese Ministry of War that the British people have intense admiration for dictators, hold the League in contempt, and regard "Sanctions" as an exploded joke?

What happened, then, as at least the immediate and most obvious outcome of the Clarion Call, was to stimulate Germany and Italy and Japan for a definite trial of strength between the rival "ideologies". Which was right? The democratic idealist, still believing that the moral fibre of the world could be thrilled to action in the cause of abstract justice? Or the authoritarian realist, sure that democracies have so large and influential a proportion concerned only for their own class or trade interests as will effectively circumvent any scheme involving their personal

sacrifice? Which showed the keener psychological insight? The records of the Brussels meeting are there to tell the tale. It is not Mr. Roosevelt who has most reason to fear posterity's interpretation of them. For he had risked the finer hypothesis about human nature. He summoned those responsible for national policy in many countries to forget other concerns, by no means unimportant, but for the time relatively trivial, that they might face together an issue supreme for all of them alike. The American President offered just the leadership that the world needed, against the pseudo-charitable sophistries that would explain away and the cynical disbelief that would deride the eternal contrast of right and wrong. As he saw it, and as he endeavored to show it to the Chancelleries of Europe, the whole machinery of international order is now in danger of collapse.

"It has collapsed already"—some mocking voice will exclaim. There is always such a voice in international policies, just as some are always found to declare with apparent conviction that no man is really honest or truthful or honorable an inch beyond the point at which these scruples (or the pretence of them) will serve his personal advantage. A dispute that has been reargued many times, ever since the Platonic Socrates contrived dialectical embarrassment for Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic!* The situation always develops at some stage into the same grotesque incoherence—the gayest sceptic about human morals invoking before long a morality of his own. Do not Mussolini and Hitler drift from cynicism about all scruples to a fervor of quasi-ethical appeal for the Third Reich and "the fateful hills of Rome"? Does not the Japanese propagandist work himself and his audience into passion which is not altogether counterfeit against Chinese "bad faith"—even as on this continent Professor Harry Elmer Barnes, having proved that "psychologically" no one should ever be blamed for anything ("guilt" being an illusion of ignorance) proceeds with Puritanic rigor to blame the authors of the Treaty of Versailles for most of the later woes of Europe! In twenty-three centuries of debate we have reached in general the same conclusion—that certain nations, like certain individuals, are relatively honest, dependable, concerned to be just in the transactions of life; others, individuals and nations, are the reverse. Not a very exciting outcome from so prolonged reflection! In truth we have not needed that length of time to reach it, but we need apparently still longer to exhaust the flippancies of its denial.

III

The method by which Mr. Roosevelt's purpose was frustrated is painfully obvious.

No sooner had his "quarantine" speech been reported in the Chancelleries of Europe, and in the Chancelleries of American high finance, than the familiar influences began to operate. After a decent interval of empty compliment, and on the pretence of a superior wisdom coming from "second thoughts", a terrific onslaught was organized to make the President change his ground, while the British and French and American public were adjured to content themselves with approving in general Mr. Roosevelt's purpose, and to avoid dropping the least hint as to how it might be made practically effective. "Coercive" measures towards Japan must not be named! The whole tragi-comedy of 1931 has been on the stage once more, and the American whose ineffective wisdom in that critical year has been so abundantly attested has to deplore the like fate of another American prophet now. Doubtless six years hence the London press of 1937 will constitute penitential reading, as its editorials of 1931 are penitential reading to-day. "I am filled with hope", wrote Mr. H. L. Stimson, immediately after Mr. Roosevelt's speech, "that this act of leadership on his part will result in a new birth of American courage." It is splendid to retain one's hope even after such experience.

Mr. Vernon Bartlett, in a descriptive paragraph such as one would like to think over-drawn, but which corresponds all too painfully to facts otherwise clear, has sketched the Brussels Conference thus:

One of the principal delegates whom I met on the opening day greeted me with an appeal to produce a policy from my pocket. There was no programme for that Conference, except to keep the United States in good humor. The fact that for months Japanese aeroplanes bought in Great Britain or America, flying on petrol bought in the Dutch East Indies, had been dropping bombs on Chinese women and children hardly entered into the discussions. In an extremely ugly hall, two long rows of delegates argued for hours on end how best they could kid public opinion, through the intermediary of the journalists who were shut outside in the cold, into believing that serious progress was being made towards ending the war.

Is it any wonder that Mr. Lloyd George, speaking in parliament about the low estimate held in Rome and Berlin of the present capacity and courage of Foreign Ministers in Paris and London, felt constrained to add "Would to Heaven I could think it was *too low*"?

Yet one cannot but sympathize with Mr. Anthony Eden. Those limitations under which he has to act at the Foreign Office are so well known, and it is not only the *National Review* which has been warning him that it would be better to resign than to work in such fetters. The German press has caricatured Mr. Eden as "a very melancholy young man": it has been done with success, for melancholy rather than joy suits the talent of the German artist. Of late the British Foreign Secretary has indeed accumulated sorrow upon sorrow. Conversation about him at the recent love-feast of Il Duce and Der Fuehrer would, no doubt, have entertained the "listener-in". His effort on Sanctions, in the Abyssinian affair, unlike his effort on Non-Intervention in Spain, was difficult, but not inherently absurd. In 1935 he set out to construct such collective penalties as would make the Abyssinian adventure too costly for Mussolini to continue. This failed for two reasons: the first was that the partners of Great Britain, especially France (as led by Laval), would not cooperate in raising the price; and the second was that, under the driving force of ambition or passion, Mussolini was prepared to pay a price astonishingly high. What Mr. Eden has now had to watch, and what he must for the time even officially defend or explain away, is just such another enterprise, in hands stronger than his own, which has met with a like fate.

Some time the world will hear what he really thinks of it, when he produces his *Memoirs*. No one is better fitted to tell a startling tale.

But, for the present, we must be content to acknowledge that the Clarion Call has been in vain, and to adjust our expectations accordingly. The formation of the close Berlin-Rome-Tokio alliance, that "Confraternity of the Faithless" defying the honest nations of the world, has been the natural sequel. Each audacity that succeeds is the stimulant to a still greater audacity. For a time no particular change may be noticeable in international usage, but the old meaning has departed from it in respect of relations with three of the Seven Great Powers of the World. Diplomatic courtesies continue; despatches from Foreign Offices conclude, as formerly, with assurance of "deepest consideration"; but no guarantee however passionately proffered from Berlin or Rome or Tokio counts any longer for anything with British or French or American negotiators. It elicits that cold look, with just the suggestion of a smile playing round the corners of the mouth, which a banker turns upon an applicant for credit whose past has made him too well known. Like the bland insistence upon

collateral and endorsers, cutting short rhetorical importunity, comes the answer of polite acknowledgment, together with increased appropriation for national defence in view of "suspicious proposals by diplomats abroad".

The Clarion Call was perhaps the last effort to stop short of acknowledging and accepting such a transformed world scene. Heavy indeed are the responsibilities of those by whose contrivance it was made to fail.

IV

And yet, in its very failure, it may prove indirectly the source of a great success. It can hardly be a mere coincidence that Mr. Roosevelt's action was followed, so soon, by Italy's notice of withdrawal from the League, and by the announcement of a new Triple Alliance. Gratitude is due, from everyone who values straight dealing, to a leader who thus forced to a crisis what had so long drifted in aimless ambiguity. We have now, surely, heard the last of those absurd hopes that Nazi Germany and militaristic Japan will yet "see their way" to return to the Geneva fellowship. And surely we have likewise seen an end to those enterprises in so re-drawing the Covenant of the League that it may lend itself with equal facility to the signatures of Powers whose purposes contradict each other. The art of preserving a document in form while emptying it of significance is one in which our diplomatists, by long practice, have become shamefully proficient. They cannot unlearn it too soon.

Less sensational as an item in the newspapers, but more important by far in its effect than the notice of Italy's withdrawal, was the announcement that Germany's resignation from the League would under no circumstances be reconsidered. We were all more or less fascinated by the artistic effrontery of the Mussolini speech from that flood-lit balcony which has so often been his platform for addresses to the world. One could not withhold a certain admiration from the coolness with which he inverted all the facts: his tribute to the almost limitless patience of the Italian people under the injustices of the League; his lament that not even yet have the conspirators at Geneva offered reparation for the monstrous outrage of "Sanctions"; his lofty contempt for threatening voices from "the flocks of the great democracies". *Qualis artifex!* If ever a diatribe against democracy derived its power from skilful use of the very lowest of demagogic methods, it was this one. The Roman audience shouted itself hoarse in applause. And the Fascist Grand Council, in whose name the

orator professedly spoke, was there at least to assent. No doubt, as Thiers tells us about Napoleon's marshals, present by command at his ecclesiastical coronation in Notre Dame, "silenced rather than convinced"!

But the Nazi comment on this speech was more memorable than the Fascist text. That it was supplied under constraint from Rome, is probable enough: Hitler had so long and so advantageously dangled before the Entente Powers the bait of a possible German return to Geneva that he can hardly except under strong pressure have given up the chance of using the bait again. But it suited Fascist purpose this time that "our gallant ally" should be committed beyond the possibility of changing his mind: yet another by-product of the Clarion Call! So we get those memorable paragraphs:

The decision of the Fascist government to withdraw from the League of Nations and the extremely important statements of the Duce meet with full understanding and the warmest sympathy in Germany.

There could have been no doubt anywhere for a long time past about the fundamental attitude of Italian policy towards the League of Nations. The words of the false gods of Geneva of which Mussolini spoke in Berlin at the end of September still resound in our ears. It is, however, of the greatest importance that the Italian government has brought about a final clarification....

The League of Nations thereby reaps what it has sown in its political achievements. In no period of its existence has it shown itself capable of offering a useful contribution to current problems. On the contrary, it has always exercised a purely harmful and often dangerous influence on the whole political development since the war. Under cover of ostensible ideals, it became more and more a system of political alliance between the individual profiteers of the Versailles Treaty.

As if it were not known to the whole world that the driving force of Italian action was rage at the allegedly insufficient Italian share in the war spoils!

Consciousness of a genuine and not easily exhausted effort for purposes very different from either the acquisition or the retention of plunder may well sustain the League nations now. That they were not only in earnest about peace, but separated by such concern from associates bent only on thwarting them, it is now impossible to doubt, and this particular "clarification"—to use a term of the Nazi manifesto—is all to the good. Within a few weeks of the rupture came an event to clarify its significance still more. We had the return of Christmas, by which ideas about

peace are annually reawakened. And the reawakening in Germany was memorable.

The judgment of the late General Ludendorff, that the Christian religion equally with the League (and, it would seem, for very much the same reasons) is incompatible with Nazi purpose, was manifestly well founded. It was indeed what our sagacious old friend, Sam Weller, would have called "a self-evident proposition". We read that in hundreds of German cities, headed by Berlin, a "substitute" for the Christmas celebration was last month conducted. The Nazi Storm Troops were paraded to render official homage to the Sun! They would observe the winter solstice. Having gone back from Christian worship to the earlier Nature worship, their directors find a fortunate coincidence in the fact that the obsolescent Christian tradition has made Dec. 25 a day of remembrance. That is near enough to the solstice date, Dec. 22, to facilitate a transfer. So those who had been accustomed to exchange greetings, to bestow presents, and to assemble for religious exercise are not required to make any change of habit. They can go on doing very much the same things, but with Nature and the Sun in mind, rather than the objects of Christian devotion. Needless to add, the Nazi purpose includes something more definitely patriotic than astronomical acknowledgment. No occasion may pass without a tribute to the Fuehrer; so in honor of the winter solstice names were read of those who fell on the Nazi side in the street riots which carried Hitler to power; a bonfire was lit; Nazi songs were sung, and a wreath for each fallen comrade was tossed into the flames, after the manner of old German pre-Christian celebration. Christmas carols were banned, and although the Christmas tree was still allowed, it was surmounted in general, not as of old by a Star, but by the Swastika. A correspondent of the Associated Press has secured and published in the *New York Times* a copy of one paragraph from the Secret Order to Storm Troopers:

We must avoid rituals reminiscent of church ceremonies. These ceremonies are dead. Our National Socialist ideology is not a substitute, but a new creation. The singing of Christmas hymns is divorced from our ideology. A solstice ceremony must be in such form that people will be carried along by the strength of our faith.

This from a member of the anti-Communist trio upon which the hopes of conservatively-minded British and French and American observers have rested for defence against revolution!

The Clarion Call against muddled thinking came not a moment too soon.

H. L. S.