

sabotage directed against the League, despite the fact that the results of their former effort are painfully apparent in the condition of Europe to-day.

How do they propose to reform the League? What are the suggested remedies? Are they designed to strengthen the League, or to weaken it? Here is Mr. Neville Chamberlain's proposal:

"The nations who compose the League should review the situation and should decide so to limit the functions of the League in future that they may accord with its real powers. If that policy were to be pursued and were to be courageously carried out, I believe that it might go far to restore the prestige of the League and the moral influence which it ought to exert in the world. But if the League be limited in that sort of way, it must be admitted that it could no longer be relied upon by itself to secure the peace of the world."

We are now exhorted to act courageously. How? By developing the organism of the League? On the contrary, Mr. Chamberlain tells us that in order to restore its prestige and moral influence, we must limit its functions in future. Surely this is sounding the retreat with a vengeance. But Mr. Chamberlain admits that if this is done, we can no longer regard the League as an effective instrument to maintain the peace. This courageous act amounts to the abandonment of the conception of the League as an international authority.

We are tempted to ask what precisely the Chancellor meant when he alluded to the "real powers" of the League. If they are the powers contained in the Covenant, then they have never been tested, because only two out of the five sanctions enumerated in Article XVI were put into operation, and one of these only partially. Therefore, it is untrue to say that the policy of collective security "has been tried out and has failed to prevent war, failed to stop war, failed to save the victim of the aggression." If by "powers" is meant the collective powers of its States Members, it is clear that their combined and potential powers, in other words, their military, economic and financial resources, were ample to ensure the success of the League, had they been willing to use them collectively to deter the aggressor, or to bring the Abyssinian war to a speedy conclusion. Consequently it is idle to suggest that in the recent Italo-Abyssinian conflict, we have tried "to impose upon the League a task which it was beyond its powers to fulfil."

Clearly, the paramount lesson to be learnt from this unfortunate business is the necessity of organising these resources in advance of the crisis, and to make it as difficult as is humanly possible for any nation to repudiate its engagements.

But the remedy proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer can only mean that any future development of the League is to be arrested. The slogan in September was "Up with the League": in May it was "Down with the Covenant."

What is the second remedy which is proposed for the reform of the League? According to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is to "find a more practical method of securing peace by means of regional arrangements which could be approved by the League, but which should be guaranteed only by those nations whose interests were vitally connected with those danger zones."

This proposal means, in effect, the splitting up of Europe into regions or zones, each of which will make its own arrangements for the maintenance of peace, with or without the economic and financial support of the other members of the League.

It resembles the plans for the division of the thirteen American States into regional groups, debated by the Confederate Congress in 1789, which were fortunately defeated by Hamilton and Madison and their supporters. Europe to-day is faced with the same problem. Treaties of mutual assistance within the framework of the League is the euphemistic description given to these proposed arrangements. What do they amount to? Little more than military alliances, directed against one or more of the States in a particular zone. To transfer the responsibilities voluntarily undertaken by its States Members at the conclusion of the World War to the shoulders of smaller groups is to destroy the value and utility of the collective system. Collectivity in every sphere of human society implies that the maximum weight of public opinion, not the minimum, the greatest moral pressure, not the least, is brought to bear upon the aggressor and the defaulter.

At this point, we cannot refrain from asking what are the vital interests which affect those nations in the danger zones. Surely the vital and common interest is peace, a just and righteous peace which, as we know, can only be secured by the intervention of justice or equity backed by superior force. Is equity more likely to be sought after and administered in the danger zone or within the circle of the League? Are the disinterested third parties more likely to be found in the former or the latter? Will the forces and resources at the disposal of zone members confer upon their sanctionist instrument, whatever it may be, the superiority which will deter the potential aggressor from challenging the authority of these regional arrangements? The trouble about danger zones is that the danger is apt to spread. The European powder magazine may blow up anywhere, regional pacts or not. Twenty-two years ago it was ignited at Sarajevo, and on that occasion, our Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, said: "Between Serbia and Austria, I felt no title to intervene, but as soon as the question became one between Austria and Russia, it was a question of the peace of Europe, in which we must all take a hand."

The vital interests of Austria and Serbia were centred in Sarajevo. But Germany and Russia had vital interests in Austria and Serbia respectively. The vital interests of France and Belgium were linked up with those of Russia. It followed that the peace of Europe was involved and, with it, the fate of Great Britain. Consequently, if it is a question of risks, the greater risk is the risk of the regional pact and the danger zone, the lesser hazard is the hazard of the Covenant and the League.

No one has put this point more convincingly than the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a speech in the House of Commons on March 7th, when he said:

"You cannot divide peace in Europe. Under the League, we are interested just as much in the preservation of peace in the east of Europe as we are in the west, and our obligations under the League will apply equally whether aggression takes place on the eastern or western parts of Europe."

At the moment, the people of Great Britain are profoundly disappointed and chagrined. Their first impulse is to put all the blame on France, forgetting that the policy formerly pursued by successive British Governments since 1920 is largely responsible for the humiliation of the Emperor of Abyssinia, the members of the League and themselves. When they have reflected, they may realise that the true remedy is to strengthen, not to scrap, the collective system, and to endow it with those institutions through which their hopes and aspirations for the prevention of war can most effectively be realised.