

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCARNO

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AT last, in the Locarno Security Pact and the accompanying series of treaties, the League of Nations has been provided with a solid basis on which to rest, and an adequate fulcrum for its uplifting propaganda. In the attempt to appraise the value and significance of the achievements at Locarno, it is not necessary to present even a summary of the terms of the various instruments, as full texts of these are available in a variety of publications.

The chief danger for the League seems to arise from the highly rarefied and optimistic atmosphere in which its operations are carried on, supported and encouraged by a very special element in each State, more dominated by idealistic enthusiasm than by critical intelligence. This condition of anxiety to look for and expect what one is most anxious to obtain, naturally lends itself to exploitation by special interests subscribing verbally to its creed and glibly repeating its rituals. All right-minded people welcome most cordially the ideals of Geneva, and should not cavil at even a very modest realization of them. But one cannot ignore the fact that the better elements of the world have already, for nearly two millenniums, accepted in principle and recommended for practice the ideals of Christianity. Unfortunately, such is the continuous perversity of even the best samples of human nature that while Christian ideals—including practically all those of Geneva—are acclaimed by vast majorities, they have been but feebly realized by insignificant minorities. Hence the continuance of strife and wickedness within nations, and of national rivalries and wars between them.

Frankness compels us to admit that only where comparatively sordid but intelligent and far-sighted self-interest is enlisted on the side of peace and stability, is there any very solid ground for the avoidance of wars. Until the world has recovered from the horror, destruction, and burdens of the late World War there is no possibility of its immediate recurrence. The hope of the future, however, beyond that, lies in the forms which these lower but continuous and all-powerful interests may be induced to take. A laying of the foundations for the realization of this hope is the all-important outcome of the Locarno Conference.

The jaunty and unreserved alacrity with which the League of Nations was joined and its principles were accepted by most of those nations which, in their relations with each other in the past, had automatically resorted to war, and continued the practices which inevitably end in it, is a welcome evidence accepted by those who see in the League the means of creating a new heaven and a new earth. But it is also the chief cause of apprehension on the part of others as to the continuance of unregenerate human nature in ultimate control. Even Turkey is an unconditional supporter of the doctrines and pledges of the League, but it seems to understand that, in practice, this will secure to it what otherwise would entail the sacrifices, expenses, and uncertainties of war. Witness its attitude with reference to Mosul! That situation can apparently be referred to arbitration, if considered technically necessary, but only on the preliminary assurance that the verdict is to be in Turkey's favour. Otherwise the vaunted advantages of the League would become wholly illusory, and it must of necessity resort to the old methods of war.

The spirit and intent of the Protocol, which was presented by the League of Nations as a guarantee against future wars, was almost the exact antithesis of the spirit and application of the Locarno Pact. Thus the Protocol illustrated one of the fundamental dangers to which the League is exposed. It is, indeed, so far from novel for essentially militaristic proposals to be presented in the irreproachable garb of peace, that almost every declaration of that nature for the past two centuries appears as aiming at peaceful stabilization, under the caption of "the balance of power." So the practical outcome of the Protocol was to surround Germany, stripped of military resource by the Treaty of Versailles, with a thoroughly equipped circle of military opponents, who were to keep her and her associates in a peaceful frame of mind by daily reminders that any departure from this would mean immediate military invasion.

Now, practically, there can be no question that Germany as a nation had to suffer severely for accepting and submitting to the leadership of her dominant military order. She had to be deprived, also, of the very prevalent national delusion that she was destined to become, by military means, the dominant Power of the world. Without securing these two results as the outcome of the war, the future possibility of peace and safety for the leading nations of the world was plainly impossible. But these objects once realized, the conquerors in the hour of victory naturally enough reconstructed the frontiers of Europe in a very self-interested

manner, and expected their gains to be stereotyped in perpetuity. Yet, in view of many such reconstructions in the past under similar circumstances, a haunting fear remained of the possible reversal, in time, of the latest re-adjustment, and this was plainly at the bottom of the Protocol, devised in order to strengthen Article Ten of the Covenant of the League. Thus it was hoped not only to link up in a mutually guaranteeing pact the beneficiaries of the Treaty of Versailles, but to insure the military assistance of the other chief countries of the world in securing the indefinite possession of their acquisitions. They even went so far as to specify in the Protocol that whatever lapses from rectitude any of these nations might be convicted of, and to whatever penalties they might be condemned in consequence, such penalties should never take the form of interference with their boundaries as secured at the close of the war. But, quite apart from any desirability of securing present national possessions, no form of guarantee could be more objectionable in the interests of real peace. Part of the lip-service to the pacific principles of the League is the professed desire to secure, as soon as possible, a reduction of armaments. Yet, under the plea of maintaining the Protocol, justification may be had not only for maintaining past military equipment, but for constantly augmenting it by every new device of destruction to be discovered in the future.

The possibility of Germany being admitted to the League in time was, of course, recognized, but one can see how attractive were the inducements for her to join. On the contrary, was it not to be expected that Germany must be driven, however reluctantly, into an alliance with Russia for the formation of a counter-league of armament to compensate for that required under the fostering maternity of the League of Nations?

Probably the strong criticism of Britain by the parties devoted to preserving peace through the mechanism of war, more than her specific declarations of distrust in the Protocol, led the rulers of Germany to recognize the possibility of a return to the comity of nations on a basis of equality and good faith, and of entering the League under a frank recognition of the obligations thereby entailed. Be this as it may, there was at least encouragement for Germany to take the lead in putting forth a new set of proposals, as a less ambitious but more practicable basis for permanent peace. This the British at once seized upon and vigorously promoted. Under the circumstances, it has been to the unqualified honour of the French representatives that, discarding the Protocol as impracticable, they heartily co-operated in perfecting the Locarno Pact and bringing it into quite realizable shape.

One may not at once appreciate what a remarkable change of front and advance the Locarno agreements represent as compared with the proposed Protocol. We may particularize a few of its special merits. In the first place, it builds frankly on cordial mutual agreements between the chief parties whose continued animosity would most seriously threaten the peace of the world. In the second place, it is essentially a modest and workable instrument, which does not profess to aim at a final and universal and therefore impracticable solution. Thirdly, it guarantees a settlement of only justiciable disputes, which do not involve the essential of national sovereignty. But what is undoubtedly its greatest contribution to the permanent safety of the world is that it insures delay in resolving on a final and inevitable resort to war. War as possibly a final arbitrament of international disputes is clearly recognized, but it must be deliberately chosen only after serious and prescribed efforts have been made by the parties towards the settlement of these difficulties on peaceful grounds.

Unfortunately, in connection with the last war Germany was the only first-class nation which presented itself as essentially a menace to peace. As evidenced in history, the Germans are, in themselves, almost the least belligerent people in Europe. Yet special historic conditions had conspired to render the Empire for a considerable time the one great menace to European peace. Germany had emerged as a victor from three consecutive wars of increasing importance. The first was with Denmark, the second with Austria, and the third with France. In each case the results were highly profitable to Germany, and especially to its most belligerent constituent, Prussia, which had thus been enabled to dominate the other States of a somewhat loose confederation, and ultimately in Paris, the capital of its last and greatest enemy, to consolidate firmly the whole Empire under the Prussian House of Hohenzollern. The former rivalries within the Empire being successfully repressed, under the persistent exaltation of the greatness of the Empire on a military basis, Germany began an industrial, commercial and colonial development which was even more successful than its military organization. Yet, on the easily accepted popular argument of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, it was represented as the natural and inevitable outcome of military achievement, and essentially dependent upon it. The economic leaders were, of course, not deceived by such easy logic, but the great uncritical mass of the people were very naturally captured by it. As Bismarck had clearly perceived in his day, and as he accurately anticipated, the very strength and efficiency of the German military organiza-

tion, which he considered indispensable owing to the geographic position of Germany, was at the same time its own chief danger and the chief menace of the world. Thus Germany came to be divided into two forces, the economic and the military, the former developing more rapidly than the latter, and very likely in the end to deprive it of its leadership. The industrial expansion of the Empire concurrently developed with it the power of the trade unions, which furnished a rapidly growing prophecy of democratic political control. This was regarded as a most serious menace to military ascendancy in the country. The military leaders recognized that the only guarantee against the encroachment of this democratic power, and the most certain means of re-establishing their dominant position, was the waging of another successful war. An obvious superiority of their military equipment, in both trained national armies and the materials of war, put out of court any argument from their domestic opponents as to the possibility of a military defeat. The only argument left lay in the demonstration, by an array of economic facts and statistics, of the essentially unprofitable nature of even a military victory. Had not German prosperity come to depend largely upon her increasing trade with her prospective enemies?

A crucial test of the relative strength of these rival elements in Germany was furnished by the Agadir incident in the summer of 1911. This the military element seized upon as a fitting opportunity to make war suddenly on the relatively unprepared Powers of England and France, and thus rehabilitate their prestige at home and abroad. It so happened that, being engaged at the time in an investigation which required that I should—if possible—have access to the chief administrative governments of Europe, I had been provided with the opportunities required, through the kindness of the British Foreign Minister, afterwards Lord Grey of Fallodon. In the course of my programme I passed from Vienna to Berlin just as the discussion of the Agadir incident had reached a very critical stage. The British Ambassador at Berlin could do nothing for me with the German government, so I remained for a time an impotent but specially privileged spectator, at close quarters, of the international crisis. The Kaiser had become the focal centre of the rival economic and military forces. Conflict was intense for a few days, but in the end, under the leadership of such men as Ballin, the economic forces gained the ascendancy, and the rapidly darkening war clouds were speedily dissipated. Great relief in the shipping, trading and industrial sections of the country was everywhere manifest; but the rage and disappointment of the

military element was equally evident, and I was informed that the chiefs of that important section were going about vowing that they would not be balked next time. Although the Kaiser had ultimately sided with the economic element, the Crown Prince had adopted the cause of the military chiefs. The result was evident enough in the open conflict which ensued between the Kaiser and the Prince.

A close observation of the incident had thoroughly convinced me that this result marked the final victory, in Germany, of the pacific forces, and the ultimate dominance of the intelligent self-interest of the nation, with the future guarantee of international peace. But I was mistaken. The military forces recognized that time for consideration was the greatest danger to their ascendancy. Their vow that they should not be beaten next time was realized through rushing the country into war before the forces of peace could bring their slower but more powerful influences into consideration.

When this stratagem was so successfully operated in 1914, I was again in Britain and had opportunities for conferring with prominent American authorities in politics and economics who had been pursuing their studies in German centres, including Berlin, when war was so unexpectedly precipitated. It seemed to most of these at the time, and has since been abundantly established, that if time for consideration had been permitted within Germany itself, not to mention consideration between the nations, the forces of peace would have again prevailed. But it was equally evident that the general mass of the German people, whether in favour of war or of peace, were no less convinced that no possible combination in Europe had any chance of withstanding the large and thoroughly equipped armies which they were about to throw immediately into the field. Yet there was a general apprehension also that when their military chiefs returned triumphant from the war, their arrogance would be insufferable, and the democratic aspiration of the common people would receive a severe check for at least a generation.

The German military machine has been broken, and the popular delusion, so long and carefully nourished, that Germany's sure avenue to world domination was through her invincible army has been dissipated. Thus a permanent international peace is made possible. But to assure it of an almost certain realization, the securing of time for the operation of the forces of peace is most essential. It is the great achievement of the Locarno Conference that, in the first place, it includes on a perfectly common basis all but one of the Powers of Europe which may become a possible

menace to world peace, and that the all-important factor in the agreements which they have signed is the mutual guarantee of an adequate investigation of all disputes before they can result in war. The absence of guarantees for enforcing the awards of arbitration is regretted by many. But the absence of this factor, in all but the preservation of the boundary between Germany and Belgium and France, is undoubtedly far more valuable than its presence. Provision for the compulsory execution of awards is just the factor which would militate against the submission of many matters to any tribunal, and thus tend to precipitate war. But the assurance that a nation is free to decline an award and resort to force in the end is the surest means of securing a peaceful settlement before the resort to arms. It is just the time allowed for the consideration of the matters in dispute which is all-important for its settlement. The treatment of the Irish boundary dispute is an excellent case in point.

The lack of finality in the Locarno agreements, the very number of them, which permits of their simple and close-fitting application to specific needs, without involving all the parties to the Pact, are very essential grounds for satisfaction in the present and hope for the future. No treaty between nations at any given time can be assumed to be final, least of all one framed under the condition of that of Versailles. The frank acceptance by Germany, with the guarantee of Britain and Italy, of the eastern boundaries of Belgium and France goes as far as such guarantees were really called for. Other European national boundaries may be open to future re-adjustment, but the Locarno Pact wisely limited itself to providing that all future subjects for re-adjustment should be treated on the basis of just and equitable arbitration, and not by war.

I have, of course, not touched upon many important functions of the League of Nations, in providing so many permanent instruments and channels for improving the expanding international intercourse among the various nations of the world. These important phases of the League depend so closely, however, upon the maintenance of peaceful relations between the chief Powers, that whatever improves the prospects of continued international peace must correspondingly improve the prospect of international benefit from the positive factors of the League's services. It is on this ground, one may say, that the Locarno Pact has for the first time given a decided assurance of stability for the extended services of the League. Moreover, instead of seeking to supplant the functions of the League, as ultimately the chief instrument for the preservation of world peace, it specifically provides that when

temporary conditions and obligations, prescribed by the Locarno Pact, have resulted in a sufficiently stable international relationship in the limited European field with which it deals, its special functions shall cease and become automatically transferred to the larger instrumentality of the League of Nations.

Finally, we may ask how the outlying parts of the British Empire, and especially Canada, have been affected by the outcome of the negotiations at Locarno. Although the Protocol was framed in general terms, yet, as we have seen, its real significance applied almost entirely to the special situation in Europe. Now, it is quite obvious that, confining our attention to Canada, we could take no more effective part in settling future possible disputes in Europe than we could have taken in controlling the circumstances which led to the outbreak of the Great War. In matters relating to the League of Nations, the Canadian representatives must simply take their part along with those of the other nations in seeking to promote the general peace and welfare of the world. But this will ever remain a very modest function, and our obligations must be correspondingly modest, notwithstanding the necessarily simple and generally unqualified terms in which these have been expressed. But, while very rightly objecting to the much more specific and indeed quite impossible obligations which the Protocol would have imposed upon us, and while, I trust, entirely approving of the Locarno Pact, yet, as dealing with specific European problems, we have no occasion formally or officially to approve or disapprove of its provisions. To do so would simply be to make pretence of a long-distance wisdom impossible to substantiate, and to assume obligations which we could not fulfil, except at an impossible sacrifice. Therefore we must leave it to Britain, as an European Power, to deal with what, in the meantime, are purely European problems. We observe that even she very wisely stands aside from all but the most vital obligations which this involves. Further, in the actual drawing up of the Locarno Pact, British wisdom is once more exemplified in specifically exempting us from even her obligations. "The present treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government of such Dominion or of India signifies its acceptance thereof." (Article IX).

To provide against all possibility of our being involved in any world war is beyond the range of any conceivable action on our part. But such an arrangement as that achieved in Locarno is the most practicable guarantee against this which could have been devised. Nor is there any occasion for regretting, as some do,

that the United States is not a party to the Locarno agreements. The interest of the United States in the maintenance of world peace is too obvious to require argument. But it now wields a power of its own which will provide most effective support for the Locarno Pact, and that is its great power in international finance. No country can avail itself of the financial assistance of the United States, now so eagerly sought for, without affording satisfactory guarantees, approved by the chief financial experts of the world, that the credits advanced to it shall be employed in lines assuring the safe and permanent integrity of the principal and the regular payment of interest. When such factors of cold self-interest are vitally enlisted on the side of peace, there is no form of support at all to be compared with it. Altogether, therefore, the prospects for the maintenance of world peace among the great Powers assembled at Locarno are most reassuring.