

MINOR POWERS AND THE LEAGUE

BY ANNA WICKSELL

DURING the last fifty years the principle of non-intervention has taken hold of the public mind and become a fixed rule of international law. It implies a right for every State which has reached a certain degree of civilization to conduct its internal affairs and even its foreign policy without being hindered or restrained by any Power which has no direct interest in the point at issue. The principle has been developed as a defensive measure, a protection for minor States against unwarranted interference from the Great Powers; it was born as a reaction — and a just reaction — against the tendencies of the Holy Alliance, tendencies which since that time have lost ground, but have never quite vanished.

These facts ought to be borne in mind by everyone who wants to understand the caution with which the small States have approached the idea of a League of Nations. It is easy to see, and we acknowledge with gratitude, that it is an important concession on the part of the Great Powers to declare themselves willing to resort, in all conflicts, not to force but to a court of arbitration or to a procedure of inquiry and conciliation; we all consider such an agreement a guaranty of our national security, better than any armaments which we can afford. We are perfectly aware that the acceptance of a duty of this purport implies a sacrifice for the Great Powers, in many cases certainly a sacrifice of a possibility of wrongdoing, but still a sacrifice to the profit of weak nations which have

always lived under the risk of being obliged one evil day to yield to force or menace. Sweden has lived for many years under the pressure of a supposed Russian wish to gain access to the Atlantic through Swedish territory and Norwegian ports. It is quite certain that this fear has been used, and even abused, in this country to create a sort of preparedness which has pressed unduly on the middle and working classes. With an international system of judicial procedure, or a procedure of investigation and conciliation, in the case of every international conflict, whatever its nature, this fear will be removed, and room will be made for a more liberal and broad-minded policy than has been prevalent in Sweden for the last generation.

The great crux, however, of the League of Nations problem is the plan of international sanctions. The use of such sanctions is intervention *in optima forma*, and it is not much to be wondered at that we feel a certain misgiving and a certain distrust in seeing that old bogey suddenly peeping in at the window, when we thought it had been happily expelled through the door. We are perfectly ready to admit that an absolute principle of non-intervention cannot be theoretically maintained. With the growing interdependence of States, and especially with a real international judiciary organization, the great common interest of creating universal respect for this organization must warrant interference by the comity of nations against any power which attempts to break its funda-

mental principles. But in practice even the name of international law and order may be abused and, as a matter of fact, it has been abused in order to cover selfish purposes. We understand perfectly well that international sanctions, justly wielded, form in themselves a part of that guaranty for the security, especially on small States, which is the main purpose of a legally organized League of Nations. But will they always be justly wielded?

In many cases it is very difficult to know when an international intervention in the name of public order is justified. We have an illuminating example of this difficulty in the very actual problem: Are we morally and politically justified in taking concerted military action against the Russian Bolsheviki and their methods of realizing the august principles of liberty, equality, and human brotherhood? Personally, I think we are, but a great many morally and politically developed men and women in Great Britain as well as in this country think we are not. Even if we all readily agree that an intervention caused by inner troubles ought only to take place in very exceptional cases, instances may happen where the troubles are of a really international character and where great discretion and knowledge are needed in order to decide upon the course to be taken. Can we, then, always be sure that the recourse to a sanction may not be prompted by rather selfish Great-Power interests? There is no denying that the habits of the Great Powers have not always been quite irreproachable in this respect.

Now, I do not mean to say that such risk ought to cause the small States to remain outside an established League of Nations armed with effective sanctions. Even if nothing could be done to lessen dangers of this kind, these

risks *with* a League of Nations are for the small peoples certainly preferable to the same risks *without* a League of Nations, which is what we have now. But I think the small States are quite justified in studying this question very intently with a view to finding possible guaranties against the dangers here mentioned. Such guaranties can be found, and, even if they do not remove all risks, they still go a long way toward making the coming League of Nations secure for us all.

It ought not to be difficult to see that it is all but impossible for the small European nations to enter a League of Nations that did not reckon as its members all the Great Powers. One might think it sufficient that the league should be *open* to all the Great Powers, but I fear it is not; however unreasonable it may appear that a single power should, by its refusal to join the league, obstruct an arrangement considered beneficent to all mankind, still there is no denying that a League of Nations, with only a single one of the Great Powers standing aloof, will take the form of an alliance of one group of nations against another, and we shall then have again the same system of 'groupings and alliances and a precarious equipoise' which it is the very object of the league to remove. That is why we look forward to a clean peace as a *conditio sine qua non* for a future League of Nations. A German victory would never have given us that clean peace. We are confident that the victory of the Allies will do so. We do not demand that the peace which the Allied Powers will create shall be without faults and mistakes in details; it is sufficient that good will should be manifested, the good will that from the beginning of the war was shown by British statesmen, and in which both the President of the U. S. A. and French statesmen have joined.

But even given a clean peace and the forming of a League of Nations with all the Great Powers adhering to it, other conditions are required. A heavy reduction of armaments seems to be a corollary to a League of Nations. No single member of the league must be allowed to give to its armaments by land or sea such capacity as would enable it to oppose the whole league, or would force the other members to arm on the same scale. The amount of military and naval forces which each country shall continue to possess must be settled internationally and controlled internationally. When Lord Grey, in his admirable speech of October 10, last year, says that 'the one thing which is going to produce disarmament in the world is a sense of security,' I think he is saying only half the truth. If a sense of security is a necessary condition for disarmament, it is no less true that nothing will give us that sense of security so much as a real international reduction of armaments, decided and executed in good faith.

President Wilson said in one of his messages that the goal of this war is to make the world safe for democracy. But it is not enough that the members of the League of Nations should be, at least to a certain extent, democratic States; it is necessary that the organization of the league should itself be founded on a democratic base. Lord Grey said in one of his earlier speeches last year that the small States could perhaps be spared the obligation to furnish part of the international police force, or whatever it is to be called, and even in the United States this idea has gained adherents, who have also drawn the natural conclusion that these small States are not to be given the same amount of influence in the decisions of the league, especially the decision when, where, and how the military force of the league is to be used.

The small nations can never consent to such a plan. They must demand to share both the risk and the responsibility of the execution of international sanctions, and they must claim due influence as to their actual use. It may be that in some cases a greater part — even relatively — of the military burden will fall upon the Great Powers than upon the Minor Powers; but I do not think this circumstance would justify a greater preponderance on their part than is given to them as things are, solely on the ground that they are Great Powers. Perhaps a fair way of regulating the decisions of the league upon this point is given in Lord Parker's plan (House of Lords debate, March 19, 1918), that the majority entitled to resolve upon the use of economic or military sanctions should be not only a majority of the members present and voting, but also a majority of the councilors representing the Great Powers. That would give the Great Powers what may be due to them without infringing upon the rights of the smaller nations.

Finally, I think very great care must be taken to give an accurate definition of the *casus fœderis* with respect to concerted action by the members of the League of Nations. Whether such action be confined to the sole case of a member of the league refusing to submit its quarrel with another State to arbitration or investigation, or whether it be extended to the case of a refusal to obey an award of an international tribunal, the fixing of the exact moment when an economic or military sanction may be resorted to is a very difficult matter. Such refusals may have motives and reasons that can make them excusable, perhaps even justifiable, or at least intelligible, and these reasons and motives ought to be looked into by a proper authority. Not till that has been done ought any sanc-

tion to be permitted, and a military sanction only when the recalcitrant State itself has resorted to military measures.

There are a great many other difficult problems connected with the organization of international sanctions, but they concern great and small States alike, and need no discussion here. We are waiting now for the proposal to be made from the side of the Allies. To-day everything is fluid in Central Eu-

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rope. It will require much wisdom, moderation, and a keen sense of justice in the Allies, if the league is not to be drowned in the blood of civil war even before it is born. The responsibility for the most frightful war that has ever been lies with Germany and Austria-Hungary; the responsibility for the peace which shall make the future safe for great and small nations lies with the Allies. *Victoire oblige.*

A CELESTIAL LAUREATE

BY ERNEST BRAMAH

To Wong Ho, the merchant, pleasantly immersed in the calculation of an estimated profit on a junk load of birds' nests, sharks' fins, and other seasonable delicacies, there came a distracting interruption occasioned by a wandering poet who had sat down within the shade provided by Wong Ho's ornamental gate in the street outside. As he reclined there he sang ballads of ancient valor, from time to time beating a hollow wooden duck in unison with his voice so that the charitable should have no excuse for missing the entertainment.

Unable any longer to continue his occupation, Wong Ho struck an iron gong. 'Bear courteous greetings to the accomplished musician outside our gate,' he said to the slave who had appeared, 'and convince him — by means of a heavily weighted club, if necessary — that the situation he has taken up is quite unworthy of his incomparable efforts.'

When the slave returned it was with

an entire absence of the enthusiasm of one who has succeeded in an enterprise.

'The distinguished mendicant outside disarmed the one who is relating the incident by means of an unworthy stratagem, and then struck him repeatedly on the head with the image of a sonorous wooden duck,' reported the slave submissively.

Meanwhile, the voice, with its accompaniment, continued to chant of the deeds of bygone heroes.

'In that case,' said Wong Ho coldly, 'entice him into this inadequate chamber by words suggestive of liberal entertainment.'

This device was successful, for very soon the slave returned with the stranger. He was a youth of studious appearance and an engaging openness of manner. Hung about his neck by means of a cord were a variety of poems suitable to most of the contingencies of an ordinary person's existence. The name he bore was Sun, and he was of the house of Kiau.