

Keeping the Peace

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH
METHOD

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"QUIS CUSTODIET
CUSTODES?"

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—The method of keeping the peace by "a collective preponderance of strength over probable aggressors" is transparently simple and has, at first sight, the appearance of an infallible formula. The phrase, or some equivalent of it, has frequently occurred of late in the profoundly interesting correspondence you have published on the future of the League. Most of your correspondents appear to regard it as denoting the only possible means of attaining the end in view. Sir Arthur Salter, from whom I quote the phrase, describes it in his letter of May 14 as "the fundamental condition of any system of collective security."

The simplicity of the method is, however, superficial only. Beneath its apparent simplicity there lies a multitude of very formidable difficulties. What these are may, perhaps, be best indicated by the following questions:—

In what form is collective strength to be embodied? Is it to be a *standing* force of all arms ready "to go anywhere and do anything" at a moment's notice, or is it to be a *reserve* force with the units distributed in the various countries to which they belong and ready to be mobilized and assembled whenever an emergency may arise?

If a standing force, what is to be its total strength and how are the contributions to it to be assessed? Is the total strength to be fixed or is it to be variable according to the strength of the aggression it has to restrain, and if the latter by what authority are the variations to be determined? Is it to include the entire fighting forces of the peace-keeping nations or only a proportion, and if so what?

How and by whom are the international danger-points to be selected and strategic plans drawn up in advance for dealing with them? On what principle are its forces to be divided and their operations governed in the event of more than one aggressor needing repression at the same time? At what point, or points, are the various elements of it to be assembled? Where, on the world map, is it to have headquarters and a base or bases of operation? Who is to be responsible for its discipline and its moral in times of inaction and for the willingness of the component units to act loyally together on the battlefield as and when required? By what means are the component units to be kept immune from political intrigues in their respective home lands, and from the internal jealousies, animosities, treacheries, and plottings that would ruin its effectiveness in war—after the manner of the Highland clans at the battle of Culloden?

Finally, what is to assure that the force will be used only for the purpose for which it is intended, that of restraining aggression, and never tempted, as a preponderant force might conceivably be, to embark on aggressions, conquests, or other adventures of its own?

Such are some of the questions to which an answer is needed when we think of collective strength as embodied in a standing force, perpetually mobilized and ready to act on a moment's notice. Conceiving it in the other form, as a force held wholly or mainly in reserve, with the component units distributed in the countries to which they belong, all questions may be summed into one. How is such a force to be mobilized in time to resist the surprise attack of a powerful aggressor?

It may be said that all these questions fall to the ground in view of the fact that a preponderant collective force would never have to fight (since no aggressor would dare to challenge it) but only to exist and to threaten. To which it seems sufficient to answer that a fighting force which never fights and knows that it will never have to do so is an absurdity both in logic as in fact. No army, navy, or air force, collective or otherwise, could even exist on such terms. It is for those who use this mode of argument to explain, if they can, what they mean by a collective preponderance of armed strength so powerful that it will never have to use its arms, risk the lives, or shed the blood of its members in actual warfare.

For these reasons I submit that more light is needed in order that laymen, like myself, may be able to translate the vague expression I have quoted into concrete terms. Naturally we look to the military experts, who have so far been silent, to help in the translation. Till further light is shed upon the matter by those competent to enlighten us it seems to many of us that "a collective preponderance of strength" would be highly dangerous if embodied as a standing force, and wholly ineffective if held in reserve. At present the phrase does little to raise our hopes of collective security, but serves rather to prompt the question, *Quis custodiet custodes?*

I am, &c.,

Oxford.

L. P. JACKS.

MR. EDEN'S ADVICE

The conclusion, therefore, was failure. But the attempt could not be regretted, and the verdict passed against Italy as an aggressor would not be removed. And the British Government therefore, "on advice which I felt it my duty to give," thought it was no use to continue these measures as a means of pressure on Italy. This declaration was followed by loud Opposition outcries of "Shame!" and Mr. EDEN had to appeal for a chance to state his reasons. They were that only a war could put the Emperor back on his throne, and that, if "sanctions" were maintained for no ostensible purpose, the League front, now ordered, would crumble. Nevertheless, if the Assembly rejected this view the British Government would obey the League.

If this view were accepted, the Government would maintain their assurances of help to other Powers if they were attacked in consequence of League action. That was improbable, but the assurance was not empty. They would also permanently strengthen British defences in the Mediterranean. Finally, they had already begun to consider, in conjunction with the Dominions, the dominating problem of reforming the League. They were determined that the League should go on and succeed next time. At the September Assembly they would therefore present a considered plan for League reorganiza-