Chapter XXIV

The Need of Military Unification

In the process of centralisation by which all the powers of an organised community come to be centred in one sovereign governing body,—the process which has been the most prominent characteristic of national formations,—military necessity has played at the beginning the largest overt part. This necessity was both external and internal,—external for the defence of the nation against disruption or subjection from without, internal for its defence against civil disruption and disorder. If a common administrative authority is essential in order to bind together the constituent parts of a nation in the forming, the first need and claim of that central authority is to have in its hands the means to prevent mortal dissidence and violent strife that would weaken or break up the organic formation. The monarchy or any other central body must effect this end partly by moral force and psychological suggestion. For it stands as the symbol of union and imposes respect for their visible and consecrated unity on the constituent parts, however strong may be their local, racial, clan or class instincts of separatism. It embodies the united authority of the nation entitled to impose its moral force as greater than the moral right of the separate parts, even if they be something like sub-nations, and to command their obedience. But in the last resort, since these motives may at any moment fail when revolting interests or sentiments are strong and passions run high, the governing body must have always the greatest military force at its command so as to overawe the constituent elements and prevent the outbreak of a disruptive civil war. Or if the civil war or rebellion comes about, as can always happen when the monarchy or the government is identified closely with one of the parties in a quarrel or is itself the subject of dissatisfaction and attack, then it must have so great a predominance of force behind it as to be morally sure of victory in the conflict. This
It can only be secured to the best possible perfection,—it cannot be done absolutely except by an effective disarmament,—if the whole military authority is centred in the central body and the whole actual or potential military force of the society subjected to its undivided control.

In the trend to the formation of the World-State, however subconscious, vague and formless it may yet be, military necessity has begun to play the same large visible part. The peoples of the world already possess a loose and chaotic unity of life in which none can any longer lead an isolated, independent and self-dependent existence. Each feels in its culture, political tendencies and economic existence the influence and repercussion of events and movements in other parts of the world. Each already feels subtly or directly its separate life overshadowed by the life of the whole. Science, international commerce and the political and cultural penetration of Asia and Africa by the dominant West have been the agents of this great change. Even in this loose unacknowledged and underlying unity the occurrence or the possibility of great wars has become a powerful element of disturbance to the whole fabric, a disturbance that may one day become mortal to the race. Even before the European war, the necessity of avoiding or minimising a collision between one or two that might prove fatal to all was keenly felt and various well-intentioned but feeble and blundering devices were tentatively introduced which had that end in view. Had any of these makeshifts been tolerably effective, the world might long have remained content with its present very unideal conditions and the pressing need of a closer international organisation would not have enforced itself on the general mind of the race. But the European collision rendered the indefinite continuance of the old chaotic regime impossible. The necessity of avoiding any repetition of the catastrophe was for a time universally acknowledged. A means of keeping international peace and of creating an authority which shall have the power to dispose of dangerous international questions and prevent what from the new point of view of human unity we may call civil war between the peoples of mankind, had somehow or other to be found or created.
Various ideas were put forward with more or less authority as to the necessary conditions of international peace. The crudest of these was the foolish notion, created by a one-sided propaganda, which imagined that the destruction of German militarism was the one thing needful and in itself sufficient to secure the future peace of the world. The military power, the political and commercial ambitions of Germany and her acute sense of her confined geographical position and her encirclement by an unfriendly alliance were the immediate moral cause of this particular war; but the real cause lay in the very nature of the international situation and the psychology of national life. The chief feature of this psychology is the predominance and worship of national egoism under the sacred name of patriotism. Every national ego, like every organic life, desires a double self-fulfilment, intensive and extensive or expansive. The deepening and enriching of its culture, political strength and economic well-being within its borders is not felt to be sufficient if there is not, without, an extension or expansion of its culture, an increase of its political extent, dominion, power or influence and a masterful widening of its commercial exploitation of the world. This natural and instinctive desire is not an abnormal moral depravity but the very instinct of egoistic life; and what life at present is not egoistic? But it can be satisfied only to a very limited degree by peaceful and unaggressive means. And where it feels itself hemmed in by obstacles that it thinks it can overcome, opposed by barriers, encircled, dissatisfied with a share of possession and domination it considers disproportionate to its needs and its strength, or where new possibilities of expansion open out to it in which only its strength can obtain for it its desirable portion, it is at once moved to the use of some kind of force and can only be restrained by the amount of resistance it is likely to meet. If it has a weak opposition of unorganised or ill-organised peoples to overcome, it will not hesitate; if it has the opposition of powerful rivals to fear, it will pause, seek for alliances or watch for its moment. Germany had not the monopoly of this expansive instinct and egoism; but its egoism was the best organised and least satisfied, the youngest, crudest, hungriest,
most self-confident and presumptuous, most satisfied with the self-righteous brutality of its desires. The breaking of German militarism might ease for a moment the intensity of the many-headed commercial wrestle but it cannot, by the removal of a dangerous and restless competitor, end it. So long as any kind of militarism survives, so long as fields of political or commercial aggrandisement are there and so long as national egoisms live and are held sacred and there is no final check on their inherent instinct of expansion, war will be always a possibility and almost a necessity of the life of the human peoples.

Another idea put forward with great authorities behind it was a league of free and democratic nations which would keep the peace by pressure or by the use of force if need be. If less crude, this solution is not for that any more satisfactory than the other. It is an old idea, the idea Metternich put into practice after the overthrow of Napoleon; only in place of a Holy Alliance of monarchs to maintain peace and monarchical order and keep down democracy, it was proposed to have a league of free—and imperial—peoples to enforce democracy and to maintain peace. One thing is perfectly sure that the new league would go the way of the old; it would break up as soon as the interests and ambitions of the constituent Powers became sufficiently disunited or a new situation arose such as was created by the violent resurgence of oppressed democracy in 1848 or such as would be created by the inevitable future duel between the young Titan, Socialism, and the old Olympian gods of a bourgeois-democratic world. That conflict was already outlining its formidable shadow in revolutionary Russia, has now taken a body and cannot be very long delayed throughout Europe. For the war and its after consequences momentarily suspended but may very well turn out to have really precipitated the advent and accentuated its force. One cause or the other or both together would bring a certain dissolution. No voluntary league can be permanent in its nature. The ideas which supported it, change; the interests which made it possible and effective become fatally modified or obsolete.

The supposition is that democracies will be less ready to go
to war than monarchies; but this is true only within a certain measure. What are called democracies are bourgeois States in the form either of a constitutional monarchy or a middle-class republic. But everywhere the middle class has taken over with certain modifications the diplomatic habits, foreign policies and international ideas of the monarchical or aristocratic governments which preceded them. This continuity seems to have been a natural law of the mentality of the ruling class. In Germany it was the aristocratic and the capitalist class combined that constituted the Pan-German party with its exaggerated and almost insane ambitions. In the new Russia the bourgeoisie during its brief rule rejected the political ideas of the Czardom in internal affairs and helped to overturn autocracy, but preserved its ideas in external affairs minus the German influence and stood for the expansion of Russia and the possession of Constantinople. Certainly, there is an important difference. The monarchical or aristocratic State is political in its mentality and seeks first of all territorial aggrandisement and political predominance or hegemony among the nations, commercial aims are only a secondary preoccupation attendant on the other. In the bourgeois State there is a reverse order; for it has its eye chiefly on the possession of markets, the command of new fields of wealth, the formation or conquest of colonies or dependencies which can be commercially and industrially exploited and on political aggrandisement only as a means for this more cherished object. Moreover, the monarchical or aristocratic statesman turned to war as almost his first expedient. As soon as he was dissatisfied with the response to his diplomacy, he grasped at the sword or the rifle. The bourgeois statesman hesitates, calculates, gives a longer rope to diplomacy, tries to gain his ends by bargainings, arrangements, peaceful pressure, demonstrations of power. In the end he is ready to resort to war, but only when these expedients have failed him and only if the end seems commensurate with the means and the great speculation of war promises a very

1 So also has Socialist Russia taken over from the Czars these ideas and habits with very little or no modification.
strong chance of success and solid profit. But on the other hand, the bourgeois-democratic State has developed a stupendous military organisation of which the most powerful monarchs and aristocracies could not dream. And if this tends to delay the outbreak of large wars, it tends too to make their final advent sure and their proportions enormous and nowadays incalculable and immeasurable.

There was a strong suggestion at the time that a more truly democratic and therefore a more peaceful spirit and more thoroughly democratic institutions would reign after the restoration of peace by the triumph of the liberal nations. One rule of the new international situation was to be the right of nations to dispose of their own destinies and to be governed only by their free consent. The latter condition is impossible of immediate fulfilment except in Europe, and even for Europe the principle is not really recognised in its total meaning or put into entire practice. If it were capable of universal application, if the existing relations of peoples and the psychology of nations could be so altered as to establish it as a working principle, one of the most fertile causes of war and revolution would be removed, but all causes would not disappear. The greater democratisation of the European peoples affords no sure guarantee. Certainly, democracy of a certain kind, democracy reposing for its natural constitution on individual liberty would be likely to be indisposed to war except in moments of great and universal excitement. War demands a violent concentration of all the forces, a spirit of submission, a suspension of free-will, free action and of the right of criticism which is alien to the true democratic instinct. But the democracies of the future are likely to be strongly concentrated governments in which the principle of liberty is subordinated to the efficient life of the community by some form of State socialism. A democratic State of that kind might well have even a greater power for war, might be able to put forward a more violently concentrated military organisation in event of hostilities than even the bourgeois democracies and it is not at all certain that it would be less tempted to use its means and power. Socialism has been international and pacific
in its tendencies because the necessity of preparation for war is favourable to the rule of the upper classes and because war itself is used in the interests of the governments and the capitalists; the ideas and classes it represents are at present depressed and do not grow by the uses or share visibly in the profits of war. What will happen when they have hold of the government and its temptations and opportunities has to be seen but can easily be forecast. The possession of power is the great test of all idealisms and as yet there have been none religious or secular which have withstood it or escaped diminution and corruption.

To rely upon the common consent of conflicting national egoisms for the preservation of peace between the nations is to rely upon a logical contradiction. A practical improbability which, if we can judge by reason and experience, amounts to an impossibility, can hardly be a sound foundation for the building of the future. A League of Peace can only prevent armed strife for a time. A system of enforced arbitration, even with the threat of a large armed combination against the offender, may minimise the chance of war and may absolutely forbid it to the smaller or weaker nations; but a great nation which sees a chance of making itself the centre of a strong combination of peoples interested in upsetting the settled order of things for their own benefit, might always choose to take the risks of the adventure in the hope of snatching advantages which in its estimation outweighed the risks. Moreover, in times of great upheaval and movement when large ideas, enormous interests and inflamed passions divide the peoples of the world, the whole system would be likely to break to pieces and the very elements of its efficacy would cease to exist. Any tentative and imperfect device would be bound before long to disclose its inefficacy and the attempt at a deliberate organisation of international life would have to be abandoned and the work left to be wrought out confusedly by the force of events. The creation of a real, efficient and powerful authority which would stand for the general sense and the general power

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2 The subsequent history of the League of Nations, which had not been formed at the time of writing, has amply proved the inefficacy of these devices.
of mankind in its collective life and spirit and would be something more than a bundle of vigorously separate States loosely tied together by the frail bond of a violable moral agreement is the only effective step possible on this path. Whether such an authority can really be created by agreement, whether it must not rather create itself partly by the growth of ideas, but still more by the shock of forces, is a question to which the future alone can answer.

An authority of this nature would have to command the psychological assent of mankind, exercise a moral force upon the nations greater than that of their own national authority and compel more readily their obedience under all normal circumstances. It would have not only to be a symbol and a centre of the unity of the race, but make itself constantly serviceable to the world by assuring the effective maintenance and development of large common interests and benefits which would outweigh all separate national interests and satisfy entirely the sense of need that had brought it into existence. It must help more and more to fix the growing sense of a common humanity and a common life in which the sharp divisions which separate country from country, race from race, colour from colour, continent from continent would gradually lose their force and undergo a progressive effacement. Given these conditions, it would develop a moral authority which would enable it to pursue with less and less opposition and friction the unification of mankind. The nature of the psychological assent it secured from the beginning would depend largely on its constitution and character and would in its turn determine both the nature and power of the moral authority it could exercise on the earth’s peoples. If its constitution and character were such as to conciliate the sentiment and interest in its maintenance the active support of all or most of the different sections of mankind or at least those whose sentiment and support counted powerfully and to represent the leading political, social, cultural ideas and interests of the time, it would have the maximum of psychological assent and moral authority and its way would be comparatively smooth. If defective in these respects, it would have to make up the deficiency by a greater
concentration and show of military force at its back and by extraordinary and striking services to the general life, culture and development of the human race such as assured for the Roman imperial authority the long and general assent of the Mediterranean and Western peoples to their subjection and the obliteration of their national existence.

But in either case the possession and concentration of military power would be for long the first condition of its security, and the effectiveness of its own control and this possession would have to be, as soon as possible, a sole possession. It is difficult at present to foresee the consent of the nations of the world to their own total disarmament. For so long as strong national egoisms of any kind remained and along with them mutual distrust, the nations would not sacrifice their possession of an armed force on which they could rely for self-defence if their interests, or at least those that they considered essential to their prosperity and their existence, came to be threatened. Any distrust of the assured impartiality of the international government would operate in the same direction. Yet such a disarmament would be essential to the assured cessation of war — in the absence of some great and radical psychological and moral change. If national armies exist, the possibility, even the certainty of war will exist along with them. However small they might be made in times of peace, and international authority, even with a military force of its own behind it, would be in the position of the feudal king never quite sure of his effective control over his vassals. The international authority must hold under its command the sole trained military force in the world for the policing of the nations and also — otherwise the monopoly would be ineffective — the sole disposal of the means of manufacturing arms and implements of war. National and private munition factories and arms factories must disappear. National armies must become like the old baronial armies a memory of past and dead ages.

This consummation would mark definitely the creation of a World-State in place of the present international conditions. For it can be brought into truly effective existence only if the
international authority became, not merely the arbiter of disputes, but the source of law and the final power behind their execution. For the execution of its decrees against recalcitrant countries or classes, for the prevention of all kinds of strife not merely political but commercial, industrial and others or at least of their decision by any other ways than a peaceful resort to law and arbitration, for the suppression of any attempt at violent change and revolution, the World-State, even at its strongest, would still need the concentration of all force in its own hands. While man remains what he is, force in spite of all idealisms and generous pacific hopes must remain the ultimate arbiter and governor of his life and its possessor the real ruler. Force may veil its crude presence at ordinary times and take only mild and civilised forms,—mild in comparison, for are not the jail and the executioner still the two great pillars of the social order?—but it is there silently upholding the specious appearances of our civilisation and ready to intervene, whenever called upon, in the workings of the fairer but still feebler gods of the social cosmos. Diffused, force fulfills the free workings of Nature and is the servant of life but also of discord and struggle; concentrated, it becomes the guarantee of organisation and the bond of order.