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The President of the United States. March 25, 1938

Dear Mr President,

It is very good of you to have written in acknowledgment of my letter. I do not mean to give you the trouble of doing so again by sending another brief comment. But further experience since I wrote does seem to show that you are treading a very dangerous middle path. You must either give more encouragement to business or take over more of their functions yourself. If public opinion is not ready for the latter, then it is necessary to wait until public opinion is educated. Your present policies seem to presume that you possess more power than you actually have.

To-day, however, our thoughts are occupied with other things than economic prosperity. I venture to enclose an article which I have published to-day. At any rate the poem which serves as its motto is very good! The tragedy is that the right-minded show no indication of supporting one another. You will be reluctant to

support us; we are reluctant to support France; France is reluctant to support Spain. At long last we shall get together. But how much harm will have been done by then?

Yours very sincerely,

JM Keynes

A POSITIVE PEACE PROGRAMME

Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell? I humbly crave,
Let me once know.
I sought thee in a secret cave,
And seek'd, if Peace were there.
A hollow windle did seem to answer, No:
Go seek elsewhere.

Our troubles are of our own making and our errors were obvious at the time when we made them. The guilt of the Treaty, of French policy for ten years after that and of our own weakness and betrayals since then, we all now acknowledge. But behind this there has been at work another cause of undoing, where we have been, not guilty, but deceived. We have assumed that a negative pacifism, backed by no sanctions and supported by no definite undertakings, would prevail against a positive militarism, whenever and wherever that might arise. If we now look back, is it not evident that positive militarism was sure to arise somewhere at some time? With a slightly different turn of events it would have come, not from Germany, but from Russia. The Japanese aggression is largely independent of European totalitarianism. Negative pacifism was most unlikely to stand any severe strain. We have been relying on an illusion.

With the instrument of negative pacifism broken in their hands, the Prime Minister and his group seek for Peace, it seems, "in a secret cave." Their policy is not lightly to be rejected. To gain time, to avoid at all costs any risk of war, how much there is to be said for it! To keep our own liberties and lives and happiness intact, to attain true isolation in a disastrous world, withdrawing to our secret caves from Cornwall to Orkney as to a cloister, how willingly, and perhaps rightly, would many of us retreat. But if the Prime Minister gathers to his support those whom a withdrawal instinctively attracts, he gains followers who do not belong to him, and whom he deceives. For this is not what he means. He has not decided, once and for all, to abandon British power in the Mediterranean and to surrender without resistance the more vulnerable portions of the British Empire. Far from it. He is not escaping the risks of war. He is only making sure that, when it comes, we shall have no friends and no common cause. He is forgetting the imponderables of the world, the power of courageous bearing, the majesty of right action, the comfort and stiffening to our friends of faithful words and counsel. He is leaving all the imponderables to the other side, allowing them to exploit the foreseen and the inevitable for purposes of terror and prestige. Yet what a response an act of constructive statesmanship would evoke! Is it impossible to build a bridge between "I dare not" and "I would"? What would one do if one had the power?

There is no middle position to-day between non-resistance and a positive pacifism. Within the scope of the existing League of Nations we must, therefore, set out to construct a new European pact open to all the European members of the League, who would give definite undertakings to one another and the power to act by the voice of the majority; since we know by experience that a League with no definite sanctions and a *liberum veto* for each member is useless. The constitution of such a European League could be extremely simple. For example, the three major League Powers, Great Britain, France and Russia, would have 10 votes each; Poland and Czecho-Slovakia four votes each; Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, the Scandinavian and the Balkan countries two votes each; the Baltic States and Spanish Provinces one vote each. All the members, subject to the safeguards which follow, would bind themselves to abide by a majority vote as to the fact or imminence of aggression involving two European powers, the appropriate action to avert or meet it, and all other matters, following in general the procedure and principles of the existing League, without, however, any specific guarantee of the *status quo*. It is not essential that all the eligible powers should adhere from the outset. The Pact should begin to function with the three major powers and any others who were ready to join.

If our politicians mean anything by their lip-service to Collective Security, they have a duty to make some such proposal as this. But there is one urgent matter which they must settle first. The British and French governments, out of regard both to their own and the general interest, must demand an immediate armistice in Spain and a negotiated peace on the basis of the independence of Catalonia and the Basque Provinces; and, in the event of refusal there should be an end of "non-intervention" and a free hand to France with our full support. The time

has come, on every ground of humanity and policy and the state of public opinion, to end the Spanish War. Does anyone doubt it?

It is also a necessary preliminary to new guarantees that Czecho-Slovakia should at least attempt to negotiate with Germany a reasonable solution of the problem of the Sudeten Germans, even if this means a rectification of the Bohemian frontier. Racial frontiers are safer and better to-day than geo-physical frontiers. But such things will give us no enduring relief except as facilitating a new European Pact, and to the details of this Pact let us now return.

The sanctions attaching to the new Pact would be of three orders. The first, financial assistance and the rupture of relations. The second, a blockade. The third, a full military alliance. But the smaller powers with less than four votes should not be committed to join in any sanctions without their own assent in the particular case. The members of the Pact amongst themselves would, of course, accept the results of arbitration, endorsed by a majority vote of the members, in all matters of dispute between them, including frontiers, renouncing altogether the instrument of war. Their general staffs would be in regular collaboration with particular reference to air defence and blockade. But they should be concerned not less with the arts of peace and aim at becoming the nucleus of a new system of freedom in trade and intercourse, so that to be a citizen of the European League would be to enjoy again the old personal liberties. We ourselves should offer on reciprocal terms freedom of trade, freedom of investment, freedom of remittance, and freedom of the movement and employment of individuals, or, failing that, trade and currency agreements going as far as practicable in these directions; subject only to safeguards relating to wholesale or abnormal movements of capital or population. There should be an offer to Germany to make organised arrangements for all German and Austrian Jews who wish to migrate and be naturalised elsewhere.

What would be the relation of the new League to the old League? The new League would be the first-born off-spring of the old, domiciled at Geneva, dwelling in amity in its parent's house, sharing all common interests and activities. But the old League should be relieved of its inoperative organs. The articles relating to sanctions should go and all European problems should be handled in the first instance by the new League. When the European League decided to act, the members of the old League, including the British Dominions, would be invited by their own free will to participate in the decision. The hope would be for the blessing of other off-spring, in particular an American League, headed by the United States and limited in membership to the American continents; and perhaps in due course a Pacific League, an African League, a League of Middle and Nearer Asia.

None of these proposals is dangerous. Their whole object is the avoidance of war. But we are suffering to-day from the worst of all diseases, the paralysis of will. Nothing can be more dangerous than that. We have become incapable of constructive policy or decisive action. We are without conviction, without foresight, without a resolute will to protect what we care for. We just rearm a little more, grovel a little more, and wait to see what happens. We mutter the necessity for Collective Security and do not lift a finger to achieve it. Our strength is great, but our statesmen have lost the capacity to appear formidable. It is in that loss that our greatest danger lies. Our power to win a war may depend on increased armaments. But our power to avoid a war depends much more on our recovering that capacity to appear formidable, which is a quality of will and demeanour.

Mr. Churchill understands this vital element of policy, but Mr. Chamberlain seems to forget it. The Dictators appear much more formidable, the Democratic Powers much less formidable, than they really are. It is the reversal of that position which will serve most effectively to preserve the peace. If we want to lure the adversary to his destruction, let us sharpen our teeth and silence our snarl. But if we wish to keep him at a distance, the lion's roar is worth more than his power to spring.

We are learning to honour more than formerly the achievements of our predecessors and the Christian civilisation and fundamental laws of conduct which they established in a savage world. We are seeing and enduring events, worse than which have not been seen and endured since man became himself. If we still recognise the difference, not merely between peace and war, but between good and evil and between right and wrong, we need to rouse up and shake ourselves and offer leadership.