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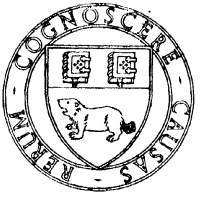
A CASE HISTORY

The Sino-Japanese Dispute, 1931-33

BY

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To the memory of

EVAN FRANK MOTTRAM DURBIN

NOTE

In order to avoid possible confusion, the reader's attention is drawn to the two following points:

(1) In all instances, the phrase "Author's italics" indicates italicisation by the author of this book.

(2) Whenever "the *Guardian*" is mentioned, the newspaper referred to is the *Manchester Guardian*.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is the outcome of a long felt concern about the misleading versions of British foreign policy between the First and Second World Wars which have been widely popularised and are still prevalent. The time may not yet have come for an impartial history of that policy, but there is nothing, save the magnitude of the task, to stand in the way of a study of one vitally important part of the subject, viz. the state and movements of public opinion about foreign policy. The present volume, it is hoped, may make a contribution to such a study.

The form of the book requires some explanation. To cover the whole period adequately was not a practicable proposition for one heavily burdened with teaching and other duties. In any event, it would have necessitated a series of volumes. The important point here is that detailed analysis, stage by stage, is required. Serious difficulties and dangers are involved in any attempt to make generalisations about " public opinion," or about the opinions of any individual or group of individuals, over a period of years. It is not only that the opinions embraced by " public opinion " are of great variety and complexity ; they also change, and may be subject, indeed, to considerable fluctuation. Constant reference needs, therefore, to be made to the actual sequence of events, and to the views held at each particular stage.

Memories can be stifled with great facility by those who wish to convey the impression that their attitude at some particular time was different from what it actually was. Indeed, taking a more charitable view, it is quite easy for people to come genuinely to believe that they advocated action which, in fact, they opposed ; and easier still for them simply to forget the qualifications and reservations with which they proposed or supported any particular course of action, their hesitations, their second thoughts, their attainment to wisdom after, sometimes long after, the event. We hear much of the vacillations of statesmen. In this respect, as in others, it is desirable that the records of their critics, particularly of the intellectuals among them, should be subjected to the same kind of scrutiny. The point is of special importance because critics of British foreign policy have often changed their ground. In doing so, they have not

infrequently presented versions of their own previous opinions—as well as of the opinions of other sections of the public—which do not conform to the facts.

Since the entire period between the wars could not be dealt with in sufficient detail, at any rate in one volume, the analysis has been confined to one phase only of British foreign policy—that relating to the Manchurian crisis of 1931-3. The attempt has been made to provide an adequate and illuminating case history.

The reasons for selecting the Manchurian affair are as follows: In the first place, it covers a relatively brief period, and is substantially complete in itself. It seems unlikely that any further information which may be forthcoming will compel any drastic revision of judgments on British policy. Publication of the relevant *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (not available at the time of writing) will, it is hoped, clear up some important points of detail.[1] An account by Viscount Simon of the conduct of British policy would, of course, be most welcome and important. But such information as may be made available in that kind of way is not necessary for this book, which is concerned with the opinions expressed in this country on the basis of the knowledge available either at the time or in subsequent years.

Secondly, and more important, the Sino-Japanese crisis of 1931-3 provides effective illustrations of the wider themes. It might even be said that the general pattern of opinion in this country at the time was to be reproduced in subsequent crises.[2] Certainly, all the main issues were raised ; and it can legitimately be contended that the Manchurian problem, and the controversies which it provoked, give invaluable clues to an understanding of later developments.

Lastly, the importance of the Manchurian affair, although variously assessed, is universally acknowledged. Apart from its place in the sequence of events which culminated in the Second World War, post-war developments give it a special interest. The Manchurian wheel came full circle. The Japanese " aggressor " was totally defeated and evicted from the Asiatic mainland ; but Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity were not restored in Manchuria. Acquisitions were made there and elsewhere at China's

[1] Curiously, these documents will be the last of the series in order of publication.

[2] It is being reproduced, at the time of writing, in connection with the Korean crisis, although there are some fascinating, even if perhaps superficial, reversals of rôles.

expense by the Soviet Union, which had joined in the war against Japan for less than a week. The territories and rights enjoyed by Japan in Manchuria in 1931 came into the possession of Soviet Russia. That was the price, or part of it, demanded for that country's entry into the war and conceded by China's allies, the United States of America and Great Britain. China had helplessly to concur in the bargain, made without her knowledge, in the secret Yalta agreement. That agreement attempted to mask the real nature of the transaction by speaking of a restoration of " the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904." It is unnecessary to discuss the process by which Imperial Russia had acquired those rights in the years 1895-8, since they had long since lapsed. But the face-saving formula served, apparently, to soothe many troubled consciences. In this country, certainly, the revelation of the secret Yalta agreement attracted relatively little attention, and, with a few honourable exceptions, little criticism either in Parliament or in the Press.[1] The consequences of this new intrusion of Russian power into Manchuria are another matter ; suffice it to say that they have already proved far-reaching. As for Manchuria itself, no doubt it was only one of a score of similar cases in the post-war world. No doubt, Great Britain was more concerned with cases nearer home. Yet Great Britain had problems nearer home in 1931-3. Doubtless also, a major share of power and responsibility rested at the close of hostilities with the United States of America. But was not that also true in 1931-3 ? Anyhow, previously ardent advocates of collective resistance to aggression were, for the most part, strangely silent, and not only in regard to Manchuria. Former champions of international morality, however uneasy, were mostly so restrained as to appear acquiescent. Was that the fruit of wisdom painfully acquired in the interval ? It would hardly seem so, for no modifications can be detected in their criticisms of pre-war British policy. Whatever the answer may be, the contrast between the 'thirties and the later 'forties is striking.

Even restricted to the Manchurian crisis, an adequate historical analysis encounters difficulties arising from the vast amount of material which might be examined. Some limitations had to be imposed, but the attractive idea of concentrating mainly upon Parliamentary proceedings had to be abandoned. It is true that

[1] Among the exceptions, there is special reason to point out, was the *Manchester Guardian*.

Parliament is the place where the most direct public pressure can be brought to bear upon the Government of the day. It is true also that opinions having any substantial backing in the country are certain to secure expression in the House of Commons. On the other hand, Parliamentary debates on foreign policy, even on a serious international crisis, may be, and usually are, infrequent. In the case of Manchuria, as will be seen, they were in fact few and far between. Opinion, as expressed in debates at Westminster, may present apparently considerable divergences from opinion as expressed in the Press and in other ways outside Parliament. Objections, whatever their degree of validity, would inevitably be raised to any investigation restricted too closely to Parliamentary opinion. Such objections would be strengthened by the facts of the Parliamentary situation resulting from the General Election of October 1931. Opposition critics of the Government's policy were poorly represented in the Parliament of 1931-5 ; and, in so far as there were critics on the Liberal benches, these may have been restrained during the year following the General Election by the presence in the Government of their party leaders. None the less, it remains true that there are adequate opportunities for the expression in Parliament of any strong popular feeling. The official Labour Opposition, though weak both in numbers and ability, were certainly capable of presenting any case formulated outside the House of Commons. Moreover, any substantial trends of opinion in the country are invariably reflected in the ranks of a Government's supporters. There is another point of importance. In the House of Commons, Ministers and critics confront each other. It is an easily discernible fact that criticisms of Ministers are expressed in much more extreme and in much less responsible forms outside the House of Commons than they are inside. The reason, of course, is simple. In Parliament, Members cannot "get away" with accusations which they and others make with impunity on the platform and in the Press. The proceedings in Parliament are particularly valuable in assessing the weight and significance of opinions in the country. On the whole, they are a much safer guide than is provided by the Press. But, obviously enough, they do not give a sufficiently comprehensive and detailed picture. For that, reference to the Press is requisite. It has not been practicable, however, nor has it seemed necessary, save in special instances, to carry investigations beyond the great national dailies and some of the leading weeklies. No

omission seems likely substantially to modify the analysis presented in the following pages.

Briefly described, the main purposes of the book are :

1. To present as clearly and accurately as possible the opinions expressed at each successive stage of the crisis ;

2. To examine subsequent versions of what was done and said during the crisis ; and

3. To consider the charges made against British foreign policy in the light of what was known at the times when the charges were made.

The chief subsidiary purposes are to throw light on political behaviour, the methods employed in political controversy, the formation of " public opinion," and the relationships between " public opinion " and foreign policy.

The method of treatment is, naturally, for the most part chronological, but later versions and controversies are considered in relation to the particular incidents concerned wherever that can conveniently be done. The book deals not only with opinion at the time, but also with subsequent developments in opinion. Influential commentaries on the Manchurian crisis, such as that comprised in Viscount Cecil's book, *The Great Experiment*, are, therefore, critically examined. The chronological analysis occupies by far the greater part of the book (Parts I-V).

Throughout, the attempt has been made to place the crisis in the wider setting of the changing domestic and international situation. Investigation brings out the marked variations in the degree of public interest during the period of over twenty months, and in the attention given to the crisis by different groups within the community. Surprise may be occasioned, for example, by the relative indifference displayed by the organised political and industrial Labour Movement. The record also shows how little significance was at first attached to events which have loomed large in later controversy.

It is now customary, largely under the influence of subsequent happenings, to speak of Japanese " aggression " in Manchuria. At the time, the crisis was not generally held to be the result of any simple act of aggression, but to be one of extraordinary complexity ; and Japan was widely considered to have a strong case as against China. That, indeed, may be regarded as the view of the Lytton

Commission itself. And, although Japanese actions were eventually declared by the League of Nations to be inconsistent with the obligations of the Covenant, the question whether or not Japan had exposed herself to " sanctions " was not, in fact, brought before the League.

The evidence suggests that neither in this nor in any other country would the requisite support have been forthcoming at any stage for coercive measures against Japan. After Sir John Simon became Foreign Secretary, nearly two months after the initial Japanese action in Manchuria, the policy of the British Government was clearly enunciated and consistently pursued. It was a policy of mediation and conciliation through the machinery of the League of Nations (see Chapter XXV) ; and when, in the spring of 1933, their long and patient efforts had plainly failed, the Government, while not excluding the possibility of bringing pressure to bear upon Japan, opposed any coercive measures likely to involve this country in war.

The policy of conciliation, it will be seen, had at the time almost general, if sometimes reluctant, approval. Differences of view related essentially to the methods by which it could most effectively be promoted. On one side, steps were from time to time advocated which were dubiously compatible with it or which even implied abandonment of a task considered temporarily hopeless. On the other side, it was contended that the steps actually taken by the League of Nations (for which the British Government shared the responsibility) were inconsistent with the Government's policy and seriously prejudiced its prospects of success. This book demonstrates what is nowadays usually forgotten, namely, that criticism came from both sides, and that, during the dispute itself, the second type was more influential than the first. It was directed primarily against alleged League mismanagement of the dispute in the first two months, and was renewed in relation to League policy after the breakdown of conciliation in the closing stages. The first type of critic urged " firmer action," but the record makes it plain that this meant little more than moral condemnation of Japan and a " bluff " that coercion might be employed.

In all quarters there was resolute opposition to any unilateral British action of a coercive nature. There was also general refusal to take the risks of a Far Eastern war. Any suggested coercive measures by the League of Nations were almost always made

conditional upon the participation of the United States of America. At no time, throughout the dispute, was there any clear demand for the application of economic sanctions by the League alone. For brief periods there was considerable controversy on the subject. Its scope and nature have been fully investigated in the following pages. In the first phase of the dispute, some loose talk about the possibility of sanctions met with strong and vehement protests (see Chapter II). Only at the height of the fighting at Shanghai in the early part of 1932 did conditional advocacy of sanctions assume any notable proportions, and it rapidly petered out with the cessation of hostilities in that area. In the last phase, following the publication of the Lytton Report, the desire for some kind of action was expressed in the " safety first " demand for an arms embargo against Japan. The arms embargo campaign (Chapter XVII) and the British Government's response thereto (Chapters XVIII and XIX) not only provide conclusive evidence about the state of opinion in this country at the time of the League Assembly's " verdict " against Japan but also bring out clearly the nature of the sanctions problem during the Far Eastern crisis.

The policy of the United States of America may well be regarded as the crux of the whole matter ; and the more familiar charges against the British Government in connection with the crisis rest, as will be plainly shown, upon the alleged refusal of that Government to co-operate effectively with the United States. The problem of Anglo-American co-operation, the extent to which it was achieved, the nature of American policy as known at the time and as revealed later, are the subjects of exhaustive examination in Chapters III-VII. Particular attention is given to Stimson's 1936 book, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, and to the strange interpretations of it which have exercised so potent an influence. The development of the various myths involved is traced step by step. It is a highly instructive story for the student of politics.

The illusions about American policy which persisted in certain sections of the British Press until nearly the end of the crisis constitute one of its most remarkable features. The record discloses a deplorable lack of information in the Press about relevant events in the United States. The differences in the reliability of newspaper correspondents are even more striking.

Time and time again evidence is forthcoming of the haste, carelessness and short memories of journalists and publicists. The

analysis demonstrates, moreover, how influential a handful of journalists—even one prominent journalist—may be in the formation of public opinion. The reader will find it difficult to resist the conclusion that the treatment accorded to Sir John Simon's speech of December 7th, 1932 (see Chapters XIII and XIV) is a classic—though not, of course, unparalleled—example of misrepresentation in political controversy.

One particularly interesting phenomenon is revealed in the following pages, and, I think, by any examination of criticisms of British foreign policy in the decade before the Second World War. Criticism became more widespread and more extreme the farther critics were removed in point of time from the action or inaction complained of. The less the possibility that criticisms might affect the conduct of policy, the more outspoken they tended to become. One might almost speak of a "law of increasing virulence in propaganda," although the later attacks are invariably foreshadowed in earlier stages. The development of controversy on party lines after the crisis had passed (see Part V) provides an illustration.

In Part VI of the book, the four final chapters are devoted to a commentary upon (1) the positions of the political parties during the course of the dispute and their internal differences; (2) the nature of the obligations of the Covenant and the problems which confronted the British Government in regard to their implementation; (3) the power situation in the Far East and the state of the British armed forces; and (4) the policy pursued by the British Government.

This case history raised problems of presentation which may not have been satisfactorily solved. I am fully aware of the dangers involved in quotation; I have done my best to avoid them; and would welcome correction of any failure to do so. If the book be overburdened with quotations (as to some readers it assuredly will be), the excuse must be a sincere determination to avoid, if possible, even the appearance of misrepresentation. It is hardly to be expected that all the reported expressions of opinion by individuals mentioned (and often criticised) should have come to my notice. In the event of any resulting injustice, correction is again invited.

Naturally the book is not expected to be popular, but popularity is not its aim. It may be construed in some quarters as a mere defence of British policy. That, however, is not its purpose. My

object, well- or ill-achieved, has been to ascertain and defend the truth. If, as a result, a defence of British policy emerges, that, welcome or unwelcome, cannot be helped. Critically to examine popular charges made against that policy has been, of course, one of my chief tasks. Elimination of false or highly dubious accusations is a necessary preliminary to fruitful discussion of the real issues. That there remains plenty of scope for legitimate criticism goes without saying.

R. BASSETT.
February 1951.

Frant, Sussex.

PROLOGUE

1. "Calmness and Tranquillity"

"EVER since 1931," wrote Mr. Geoffrey Mander, M.P. (now Sir Geoffrey), in 1941, "our plighted word as signatories of the Covenant has been broken, and our international obligations disregarded by those who held office."[1] Such is the comprehensive indictment of post-1931 British Governments which has been made so often and in so many ways—in books, pamphlets, articles and speeches—that a very large proportion of the people of this country now repeat it unquestioningly. For most of the younger generations it has become an article of faith.

The year 1931, we have been told repeatedly, marks the great dividing-line, "the turning point," as Mr. Hugh Dalton described it in the House of Commons (December 5th, 1935). Until then, until the 24th day of August, 1931, to be precise—because on that day MacDonald formed the so-called "National" Government—all had been well. "International relations at large," said Mr. Dalton, "were more hopeful, the world was more peaceful and this country was more secure than for many a long year either before or since. . . ." The international situation, wrote Mr. Mander, was "unusually calm and tranquil" when MacDonald's Labour Government resigned. Thereafter, it began rapidly to deteriorate.

MacDonald himself might seem to constitute an obstacle to acceptance of the implied view that the change of Government here was responsible for any such deterioration. At first sight, it would appear difficult to believe that he was suddenly transformed from an ardent supporter into a "saboteur" of the League of Nations. But no difficulty of that kind seems ever to have perturbed MacDonald's critics. To many of them, it is true, a man who could separate himself from his party, even at the call of what he conceived to be his duty, or change his party label (unless, of course, to the right party) was clearly capable of any villainy. Others, however, came to accept another solution of the problem. MacDonald could never have been what everybody had thought him to be; and the credit for the Labour Government's foreign policy must go, therefore,

[1] *We were* not *all Wrong*, p. 12.

exclusively to the Foreign Secretary, Henderson, MacDonald's successor in the leadership of the Labour Party.

Two brief illustrations, chosen not so much because of their appropriateness as because of the standing of the persons concerned, may be given. In his book *The Great Experiment*, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood described Henderson as " the most successful Foreign Minister we have had since 1918," and said of MacDonald that " though he supported the League of Nations in principle," he " never liked it." In a public lecture given at Oxford shortly after the commencement of the war in 1939, Professor Gilbert Murray contended that the whole course of history would have been different if, *inter alia*, " at the time of the Disarmament Conference we had had as Foreign Minister Arthur Henderson, who believed in disarmament, instead of Ramsay MacDonald, *who preferred that it should fail.*"[1] That Professor Murray, in the Michaelmas Term of 1939, should have made the assertion comprised in those last six words provides a striking example of the lengths to which even deservedly much-respected men allow their feelings to drive them in these controversies. It may be recalled that Mr. Churchill, speaking during the period of the Disarmament Conference,[2] attacked British foreign policy, which, he said, had not only been directed but dominated by MacDonald for the whole of the preceding four years, precisely because its " staple " had been disarmament, impelled by MacDonald " with all the resources at his disposal." In the same debate, it is worth noting, Mr. Mander congratulated MacDonald " most warmly " on his activity and his " bold initiative " in the cause of disarmament.

This is not the place for an assessment of Henderson's work as Foreign Secretary ; but some references to it are puzzling. Mr. R. B. McCallum has written that Liberals regard Henderson's tenure of the Foreign Office as a " brief golden age," on the ground, apparently, that he was a " sanctionist " and a supporter of Article XVI of the Covenant " with all its consequences."[3] The difficulty here is to ascertain what Henderson did, or attempted to do, while

[1] Author's italics.

[2] On March 23rd, 1933, in the House of Commons.

[3] *Public Opinion and the Last Peace*, p. 91 and p. 139. Mr. McCallum implies that " Liberals " were " sanctionists " during this period. That is far from having been the case. It may be pointed out by way of illustration that Liberal sentiment was predominantly antagonistic to the Geneva Protocol. Throughout his book Mr. McCallum displays a curious reluctance to recognise that his " sanctionists " were, first and foremost, advocates of " disarmament."

he was at the Foreign Office which would justify that view of him. At the time of the discussions on the Geneva Protocol (1924-8), his position on " sanctions " was certainly not so definite as Mr. McCallum seems to suggest, and evidence is lacking that his attitude had changed in the years 1929-31. As Foreign Secretary he did not revive the Geneva Protocol project. The Labour Government's view in 1929-31 remained unchanged that if " disarmament " could be achieved, and a system of compulsory pacific settlement established, then no occasion for the application of " sanctions " would ever arise. Efforts were directed, therefore, towards strengthening what Henderson called " the constructive machinery of peace." The policy was to " underpin " the Covenant with " peaceful guarantees," i.e. legal instruments, the chief of which was to be a Disarmament Convention. Henderson was credited with two outstanding applications of this policy. The first was the signature of the " Optional Clause," and the second was the accession to " The General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes." These now appear unimpressive achievements, but at the time they aroused considerable enthusiasm, and they do much to explain why Henderson was then acclaimed by the supporters of " Security through Disarmament and Arbitration " as " the best Foreign Secretary."

Such steps having been taken, " the whole foreign policy of the Government," said Mr. Dalton (March 26th, 1931) was focussed on " Disarmament "—" this immediate and supreme objective." In the book already referred to, Lord Cecil treated summarily, and without enthusiasm, the one actual achievement of the Labour Government in the sphere of disarmament, the London Naval Treaty of April 22nd, 1930. Perhaps that was because, as he explained, MacDonald kept this question in his own hands ! The attempt to make 1931 the great turning point, and the fact that MacDonald, who played a very active part in the conduct of foreign affairs, is given no share of the credit for the alleged achievements of this " brief golden age " period in 1929-31, compel the conclusion that an important element of partisanship has entered into the matter.

Lord Cecil, however, must be acquitted of ignoring entirely the steady worsening of the international situation throughout the period of the Labour Government of 1929-31. Although his treatment of the subject was far from adequate, he said more than enough to disprove the contention that the deterioration only set in with the

disappearance of Henderson from the Foreign Office. In truth, that deterioration began in the autumn of 1929, although it certainly was not due to the foreign policy of the Labour Government. It was due essentially to the rapid development of the great world economic depression and to internal developments in Germany. Mr. Dalton was to be reminded when he spoke some years later about the " turning-point " that, on the Christmas adjournment in 1930, he had frankly admitted the unsatisfactory situation in certain parts of Europe. By the spring of 1931, Europe was in an extremely nervy condition ; and the Franco-German tension was both exemplified and exacerbated by the announcement, and by the subsequent annulment under political and financial pressure, of the Austro-German Customs Union. In Germany itself the fate of parliamentary government was clearly in the balance from the spring of 1930 onwards ; and when it is recalled that, in September of that year, the General Election showed that the National Socialist vote had risen from less than half a million in 1928 to six and a half million, while four and a half million had voted Communist, the absurdity of talk about the international situation being " unusually calm and tranquil " and " more hopeful " needs no further proof.[1] In the House of Commons on June 29th, 1931, MacDonald had described the outlook as " terribly distressing and disturbing."

In Eastern Asia, " calmness and tranquillity " had not existed for many years. Apart from the long chaotic civil wars in China, the rise of the Nationalist movement, its alliance and subsequent breach with Russian Communism, violent anti-foreign movements involving serious clashes with Great Britain and other Powers having interests in China, and the rapid breakdown of the nominal unity achieved in that country in 1928, trouble was obviously brewing in Manchuria. In 1929, Chinese seizure of the Chinese Eastern Railway there had led to an attack by Russian forces and to an ignominious Chinese collapse. Meanwhile causes of friction between the Japanese and the Chinese multiplied. In the summer of 1931 a series of incidents produced an extreme state of tension. And it was less than a month after the formation of the " National " Government in Great Britain that the Japanese Army in Manchuria seized the city of Mukden and other cities in the south of that country.

[1] The " tranquillity " legend should be finally disposed of by chapter VI, volume I, and chapters I-IV, volume II, second series, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39* (edited E. L. Woodward and R. Butler).

2. The Indictment

The resulting crisis in the Far East gave rise to the first count in the indictment of British foreign policy in the period after August 1931 ; indeed, one might almost say the chief count, since it has long been fashionable to argue that all subsequent cases of aggression were due to the failure of the League of Nations to deal effectively with Japanese action in Manchuria ; and only slightly less fashionable to contend that the British Government was responsible for that failure. " We now know," wrote Mr. Mander in 1941 (in the book specially reprinted for the General Election of 1945) " that the pathway to the beaches of Dunkirk lay through the wastes of Manchuria." That was only a topical variation on what had become an old theme.

The development of the charges against the first and second " National " Governments in regard to the Sino-Japanese crisis of 1931-3 is in itself of much interest. In the early stages, criticism of the British Government was, with a few conspicuous exceptions, mild and expressive of baffled anxiety. The Government was charged vaguely with dilatoriness and weakness, and, a little later, with failure to co-operate effectively with the Government of the United States of America. Eventually—the process was gradual, and much slower than many seem to realise, although naturally uneven—weakness became treachery to the Covenant ; failure continuously to co-ordinate action with the United States became British rejection of co-operation ; and the once almost universally accepted refusal to take the risks of a Far Eastern war became the Government's breach of the nation's plighted word. The charges were ultimately transformed and merged into the accusation that the British Government had " sabotaged the collective system of the League." And, by an easy transition, to be paralleled in later cases, the more popular and partisan critics were to go further and accuse the British Government of encouraging Japanese aggression.

The indictment has been most vigorously presented. The Government of the time has been charged with having broken its plighted word (Mr. Mander) ; sabotaging or undermining the League of Nations (Sir Stafford Cripps) ; virtually surrendering to Japan (Viscount Cecil) ; repudiating the Covenant (Mr. Zilliacus) ; preferring retreat (Sir Norman Angell) ; pursuing a line " absolutely destructive of the whole basis of collective security "

(Lord Lytton) ; failing to apply sanctions (Professor Seton-Watson) —the catalogue could be indefinitely extended. The charge had pride of place in the Labour Party's manifesto at the General Election of 1935.[1] It was by no means overlooked in the Election of 1945. Under the operation of what has been called " the law of increasing virulence," observable even in the same sentence, Mr. Attlee denounced the Government on October 22nd, 1935, on the ground that it " acquiesced openly in forcible action by Japan, . . . encouraged every kind of forceful action " ; and, similarly, on October 21st, 1937, " At the time the Government condoned Japan's aggression—I should say even encouraged that aggression." Indeed, said Lloyd George a week later, " The fault was entirely ours."

These forceful criticisms raise a number of highly important issues about the nature of the obligations of the League Covenant, the problem of coercive sanctions, and the relations between the British Government and public opinion. There are other questions. What, for example, was the attitude of later critics at each particular stage of the dispute ? What action did they then think the British Government ought to have taken ?

3. The Four Phases

The Sino-Japanese crisis of 1931-3 passed through several easily distinguishable phases. It should be noted that the period from September 18th-19th, 1931, until the end of March 1932 was that during which the decisive events occurred, and concerning which subsequent controversy has mainly arisen. By the middle of March 1932 the Japanese were in effective control of the whole of Manchuria, excluding Jehol ; fighting had virtually ceased there, and hostilities had also terminated in the Shanghai area ; the independence of Manchuria had been proclaimed ; and Mr. H. P'u had been installed as Regent of the new State of Manchukuo. This period, however, falls naturally into two parts, and the end of the year 1931 provides a convenient dividing line.

The first phase, therefore, runs from the military coup in mid-September until the close of 1931. It covers the meetings of the Council of the League of Nations : (1) at Geneva, September 19th-

[1] " The Government has a terrible responsibility for the present international situation. It did nothing to check the aggression of Japan in the Far East and thus seriously discredited the League of Nations and undermined the collective peace system."

30th ; (2) at the same place, October 13th-24th ; and (3) at Paris, November 16th-December 10th. For our purposes, its main features are the Resolutions of September 30th and December 10th, and the juridically invalid Resolution of October 24th.

The second, and more complex, phase runs from the beginning of the year 1932 and peters out towards the end of March. Its salient features are : (1) the policy declarations of the United States Government ; (2) the Japanese action at Shanghai ; and (3) the meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations which began on March 3rd, and its Resolution of March 11th. From the closing days of January 1932 the situation at Shanghai put the Manchurian issue into the background.

A long third phase extends from the beginning of April 1932 until the close of September in that year. The Shanghai situation continued to be the main feature of interest in the early weeks : the last Japanese troops were withdrawn at the end of May. The summer months may be described as, essentially, a period of waiting for the completion of the investigations of the League's Commission of Inquiry and for the publication of its report.

The last, long-drawn-out, phase begins with the publication of the Lytton Report at the beginning of October 1932, covers the Japanese military operations in Jehol and Northern China from January 1933 onwards, and ends with the Tangku Truce of May 31st, 1933. Its main features, for our purposes, are the sessions of the League Assembly : (1) December 6th-9th, 1932, and (2) February 21st-24th, 1933.

PART ONE

THE FIRST PHASE

(SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER 1931)

CHAPTER ONE

THE LEAGUE COUNCIL AND MANCHURIA

1. Preoccupations

THE degree of interest in Far Eastern events displayed in this country naturally varied considerably from stage to stage. Study reveals several important facts in this connection. First, the relative lack of interest during the first phase, and the slowness of its development. Secondly, interest reached its highest peak during the early and critical phase of the Shanghai episode, in February and early March of 1932. Thirdly, this interest rapidly declined, and for long periods subsequently seems almost to have disappeared. Fourthly, it flared up to a secondary high peak in January and February of 1933, and then fizzled out with remarkable speed.

It may come as a surprise to many when it is pointed out that there was no debate in the full sense of the term in the House of Commons on the Far Eastern crisis in its first (1931) phase ; indeed, the first full debate did not take place until March 22nd, 1932, and, even so, was partly concerned with the question of disarmament, the World Disarmament Conference having opened in Geneva on February 2nd. The political circumstances must, of course, be kept in mind. The first " National " Government had been formed less than a month before the Japanese army in Manchuria took action. The so-called " mutiny " at Invergordon had occurred only three days before. Two days after the Japanese coup Britain was forced off the Gold Standard. Before the end of September a General Election was plainly imminent. The intention to dissolve Parliament was announced on October 6th ; prorogation came on the following day ; and for the next three weeks the country was immersed in the election campaign. The membership of the second " National " Cabinet was announced on November 6th, and the new Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon (now Viscount Simon), entered upon his duties a few days later.

Two very brief statements on Manchuria had been made in reply to questions before the dissolution. On November 11th Sir John

Simon made a longer statement in the same way; but so preoccupied was the country with its own domestic problems that in the Debate on the Address (November 10th-16th) only one member appears to have mentioned the subject of Manchuria. That subject had played no part at all in the General Election. The House of Commons was sitting throughout the period of the crucial meeting of the League Council in Paris (November 16th-December 10th), yet, apart from an occasional question, the only discussion took place on November 25th, when the Leader of the Opposition raised the subject on the motion for the adjournment of the House and the Foreign Secretary made a statement in reply. It remains true, and of some significance, that no ardent supporter of the "collective peace system" asked leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance. Nor did His Majesty's Opposition put down a motion of censure on the Government about Manchuria, although it did do so about the domestic situation. More significant still, no advantage was taken of the opportunity of raising a discussion on the Paris Council meeting when the House adjourned for the Christmas recess on December 11th.

From the outset the newspapers necessarily gave some attention to the matter; and during the later weeks of the first phase in 1931 considerable controversy was proceeding. Most of the chief issues involved in the affair were raised in one form or another, and the conflicting points of view were revealed, although not for the most part expressed as sharply as at subsequent stages. But, with the conspicuous exceptions of the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*, it was not until the early days of November, after the General Election, that the Manchurian crisis attracted much editorial comment. The first editorial notice of any kind in the *Daily Herald* appeared on November 3rd, and on no occasion during the first phase did Manchuria secure first place in that paper's editorial attention. It was on November 3rd also that the subject had first place for the first time in the *Daily Express*, although there had been two previous minor comments in the editorial column. Not until November 5th did the matter receive editorial notice in the *Daily Mail*; while the *Morning Post*, after a secondary leader on October 13th, did not again refer to the Far East editorially in the year 1931. The *News Chronicle*, after several brief comments, had its first main leading article on the subject on November 11th; while

the *Daily Telegraph*, similarly, had its first main editorial on October 15th and its second on November 12th.

2. Conflicting Criticisms

It was very frequently to be argued later, particularly at the time of the Shanghai episode, that the first phase was the crucial one, indeed, that the initial stages were decisive. The argument assumed a variety of forms ; but there were two main conflicting standpoints.

One side contended that if " firm action " had been taken against Japan, or " greater firmness " displayed, at the outset, the crisis might have been successfully surmounted. The other side maintained that this desirable result might have been achieved if, at the outset, greater understanding of the Japanese case had been shown, and a more impartial, less narrowly legalistic, attitude adopted.

3. " If firm action had been taken "

The following quotations may be taken as representative of the former line of argument :

1. . . . it was of vital importance to this country that we should not connive at Japanese aggression, for peace is the first object of British policy abroad, and the League of Nations, acting through the Covenant, is the only instrument through which we can hope to make a peace policy effective. It was for their apparent inability to realise the importance of the dispute from this point of view, in its early stages, that Sir John Simon and the representatives of the other Powers on the League of Nations Council were chiefly to blame. Had they then made it clear that they intended, come what might, to stand by the Covenant it is probable that the dispute could have been settled quietly by diplomatic means. (*Manchester Guardian* editorial, February 1st, 1932.)

2. . . . there can be no doubt at all that the League could have exercised a very large measure of restraint on the Japanese, and then the Manchurian adventure would have taken on a much more tolerable form if the little firmness shown by the Council on Friday and yesterday had been shown from the beginning.

The Japanese general staff acted with considerable hesitation at first, but, finding that no one was prepared to interfere, they went ahead, and the more they went ahead the less was done. The Japanese are certainly disunited, in the sense that the general staff has not been altogether in the control of the Government.

The hands of the moderates would have been enormously strengthened if it had been possible to convince the general staff that there was a danger of rupture with the Great Powers, but as there was obviously no such danger the moderates in Japan were left without the support the Powers could have given them, support that might have been decisive. (Geneva Correspondent, *Manchester Guardian*, February 1st, 1932.)

3. If the Council had had the honesty and the spunk to take this line a few months ago, things need never have come to the present pass. The original occupation of Manchuria was, as all the world knows, despite the pretences of the Japanese and their abettors abroad, a " try-on " by the military party. It was not favoured by the Foreign Office in Tokyo, or by the moderate elements in the Government and the country. It could have been nipped in the bud by M. Briand and his colleagues on the Council. But those guardians of international morality and peace, with incredible short-sightedness and pusillanimity—or worse—frittered away their opportunity. Their half-hearted resolutions consolidated the jingo spirit in Japan, reduced the Chinese to desperation, and encouraged the invader to come down from Mukden to Shanghai and strike at the vitals of his victim. (The *New Statesman*, February 20th, 1932.)

4. Mainly as a result of the failure of Governments represented on the League Council to give timely support, by firmness in word and deed, to civilian influences in Japan, the world is now confronted with what may become the most serious crisis that has arisen since July 1914. (Mr. Wickham Steed, Letter to the *Times*, February 22nd, 1932.)

5. I have always believed that wholehearted co-operation between England and the United States of America to maintain the new system of international co-operation set up under the Covenant, and specifically under the Washington Treaty, would have made Japan see that the Manchurian issue must necessarily have world-wide reverberations. Unfortunately, the British Government has shown a distinct reluctance to walk boldly in step with Washington, and consequently the united front of persuasive firmness which a true Anglo-American understanding might have presented has never been realised. I am convinced that a definite attitude of this kind at any of the early stages of Japanese action in Manchuria since September 1931 would have compelled the Japanese military party to take a more serious view of the consequences of its own policy. (Sir Frederick Whyte, interview, *Manchester Guardian*, October 3rd, 1932.)

6. A year ago, immediately after Japan delivered her first military stroke at Mukden (on a pretext blown sky-high by the Lytton Commission), Sir John did more than any other Western statesman to muff the chance of making immediately and dramatically effective the machinery of peace. (Mr. A. J. Cummings, the *News Chronicle*, November 21st, 1932.)

The *Manchester Guardian* apparently forgot that Sir John Simon was not the British representative on the League of Nations Council during " the early stages " of the dispute ; and Mr. Cummings overlooked the fact that Sir John did not become Foreign Secretary until nearly two months after " the first military stroke at Mukden." But those are minor, if not altogether unimportant, details. The main points made in the passages quoted are : (1) that firmer action should have been taken in the early stages of the dispute, and (2) that this would have been the most effective way of assisting the moderate elements in Japan. The other important point is that failure to check the Japanese military party was due to the absence of whole-hearted co-operation between the British and American Governments, for which the former Government is held responsible.

4. Belated Wisdom

Study of the Press during the first phase shows that, with the partial exception of the *Manchester Guardian*, these views were arrived at very belatedly. In that section of the Press concerned, there was little criticism, and that mildly expressed, of the League Council until during and after its Paris session in late November and early December. The previous criticism was almost entirely confined to the *Guardian*. Moreover, it was directed primarily against the United States Government, which was held mainly responsible for the shortcomings of the Council's actions. The distribution of blame was much less unequal in the criticisms which accompanied and followed the Paris Council meeting. In the columns of the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman*, the British Government then began to figure prominently in the strictures upon the Council Powers. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that no direct criticism of the British Government appeared in the *News Chronicle* until January 9th, 1932 ; nor in the *Daily Herald* until the report of a speech by Mr. Dalton in the Croydon by-election (February 2nd, 1932) in which he spoke of the Government's " feeble trifling."

It is possible that there might have been greater and more severe criticism of the British Government had it not been for the fact that Lord Cecil was the Government's representative on the League Council throughout the first phase (although the Foreign Secretary, Lord Reading, attended during the October session at Geneva, and his successor, Sir John Simon, made several visits

during the course of the Paris meeting). Lord Cecil was himself to say much later[1] that the British Government should have taken a stronger line than they had done in many stages of the dispute. Whether that remark implied any " self-criticism " is a matter of conjecture. At the time, Lord Cecil almost escaped personal criticism in this country from that standpoint. Only the *Manchester Guardian* expressed dissatisfaction with him. It welcomed the news that Lord Reading was to attend the League Council meeting on October 13th, " as Lord Cecil's diplomacy at the last meetings was so extraordinarily diplomatic that he appeared in one speech to be undoing what he had achieved in another." The form of that criticism makes it clear that the *Guardian* had also had Lord Cecil in mind when, on October 1st, it had said : " The same speaker who had severely lectured the Japanese delegate, almost like a schoolmaster, was heard a few days later to praise the Japanese for their conciliatory attitude."

Reference was made, however, in other newspapers to criticism of Lord Cecil made at Geneva from the same angle. Mr. Wilson Harris reported to the *News Chronicle* (September 26th) that Lord Cecil was " being criticised for adopting an attitude of impotence and for appearing to manifest sympathy with the Japanese delegate rather than the Chinese." The Geneva Correspondent of the *Observer* also reported (September 27th) that criticism of Lord Cecil's speech at the Council on the 25th was widespread, " on the ground that the British delegate appeared to lean to the Japanese side rather than the Chinese, and refrained from bringing into action against Japan any of the moral or material weapons with which the Covenant invests the Council in such crises." The criticism was said to be " almost universal " (i.e. at Geneva), and, amusingly in the circumstances, American journalists were mentioned " in particular." It foreshadows, in an interesting way, later criticism of Sir John Simon. Not that either Mr. Wilson Harris or the *Observer*'s Correspondent themselves endorsed this criticism ; on the contrary, they both regarded it as superficial and supported Lord Cecil. Mr. Wilson Harris said there were " more statesmanlike ways " of " reaching the desired goal " than by the Council trying " a fall with Japan " ; while the Correspondent of the *Observer* considered that Lord Cecil's speech had been " prompted by a just belief that Japan would

[1] In an interview, reported by Geneva Correspondent, the *News Chronicle*, May 10th, 1932.

withdraw if the League made it possible for her to do so with good grace, the alternative being open conflict between Japan and the League, with results almost certainly unfortunate for both."

5. The September Council Meetings

When the League Council met on September 22nd, 1931, to consider the dispute, the Japanese delegate urged direct negotiations between the two parties, while the Chinese delegate took the standpoint that no such negotiations could take place until the *status quo ante* had been restored. Lord Cecil urged that an appeal should be made to both sides not to aggravate the position and to avoid further fighting ; he expressed the view that troops occupying territory of the other party should be withdrawn ; pointed out the dangers of the plea of self-defence for military measures ; and suggested that the United States should be kept fully informed. The President (Señor Lerroux) was authorised to make the suggested appeal to the parties ; to endeavour, in consultation with them, " to find adequate means of enabling the two countries to withdraw their troops immediately without the lives of their nationals and the safety of their property being endangered " ; and to forward the minutes of all the Council meetings and the documents relating to the subject to the United States Government for its information.

The Chinese delegate had proposed the appointment of a League Commission of Inquiry. This was supported by Lord Cecil and, apparently, by the representatives of the other Great Powers. Anxious as the League Council was from first to last to secure American co-operation, it sounded the United States Government on this proposal, suggesting that an American representative should serve on the Commission. Mr. Stimson, the United States Secretary of State, in view of Japanese opposition to such a Commission, and precisely with the object of strengthening the hands of the moderate elements in the Japanese Government, opposed the proposal, and expressed himself in favour of direct negotiations between Japan and China.[1] In view of the American attitude, the suggested Commission of Inquiry was not pressed. The line taken by Lord Cecil in his speech on September 25th was that, since the Council was acting under Article XI, its duty was confined to safeguarding peace : it had no duty to settle the dispute or to pass any judgment

[1] For Mr. Stimson's account, see *The Far Eastern Crisis*, pp. 42-4.

on the action of the parties ; and the question of the dispute was a matter for the parties themselves. At the time, it is important to remember, the Japanese troops in Manchuria appeared to be in process of withdrawal to their original locations.

The League Council recognised that time had to be allowed for the withdrawal, particularly in order to ensure the safety of Japanese life and property. Its resolution of September 30th, based upon the assurances of both parties, was drawn up accordingly.

The facts about the attitude of the United States Government were known at the time and commented upon in the British Press. Adverse criticism, mildly expressed, came only from the *Manchester Guardian*, which was plainly dissatisfied with the League Council's resolution. The " refusal of the United States to take part in a commission of inquiry," it declared, had " soon showed how the whole authority of the League is weakened by American non-participation." The Japanese, it was added, had got off lightly.

6. Helping Shidehara

In this first phase there was general agreement in this country on the desirability, indeed, the necessity, of helping, not hampering, the moderate elements in Japan, and, in particular, the Foreign Minister, Baron Shidehara. It was generally recognised that the Japanese army in Manchuria had acted without the authorisation of the Cabinet.[1] Policy, it was therefore agreed, should be directed to strengthening the hands of the " civilians," the moderates, the more pacific elements, or " the peace party," as they were variously described.

Mr. Stimson's aim was, in fact, generally approved here. It did not necessarily follow that the line he pursued was that best calculated to promote his object. A difference of opinion about that developed ; but it was not conspicuous in the first phase of the crisis. Even in the *Manchester Guardian*, a statement of the case against Mr. Stimson's method and in support of the method of " firmness " did not appear until towards the end of January 1932. And, on that occasion, " A Student of the League," in the first of a series of articles criticising the League Council's handling of the Manchurian

[1] The *New Leader* (October 2nd) was an exception. That an insubordinate army had acted in defiance of its Government was, in the view of the I.L.P. organ, a " fiction," " a useful subterfuge."

problem, frankly admitted that his conclusion about the course which ought to have been pursued was formulated " in the light of later knowledge " and could not have been held at the time :

At first the Council was inclined to apply the League's well-tried machinery according to precedent, and the Japanese themselves wavered, for at the outset of the conflict there is no doubt that the Japanese Government were well aware that the Covenant, Peace Pact and Nine Power Treaty had all been violated and were thoroughly apprehensive of the consequences. But their attitude stiffened when the news came from Washington that Mr. Stimson agreed that Japan's feelings should not be harrowed by pressing for a committee of inquiry, and as the Council rightly attached the utmost importance to American co-operation the idea was dropped, and the weak Resolution of September 30th passed. . . .

Had the United States and the League at the outset vigorously protested against the violation of the Covenant, the Paris Pact and the Nine Power Treaty, as the Japanese Government apprehended, the latter would have been furnished with the one argument it needed to bring its military to heel—namely, that persistence in their course would get Japan into hot water with all the Great Powers and indeed the whole civilised world. Looking back, in the light of later knowledge, this conclusion seems obvious, but at the time it could scarcely have been drawn. (*Manchester Guardian*, January 21st, 1932.)

However obvious it seemed to " A Student of the League," it was very far from being so to others. Much later, more than eight months later, a Special Correspondent of the same newspaper repeated the argument at greater length, and then asserted that the League Council, in falling in with Mr. Stimson's view, had made " what has since been generally recognised, both by the State Department and in Geneva, to be a big mistake . . ." [1] That may or may not have been true of whomsoever the Correspondent had in mind when using the phrase " in Geneva " ; but it is hardly likely to have been true of the State Department. Mr. Stimson himself thought he had been right, and remained of that opinion.[2]

[1] The *Manchester Guardian*, October 1st, 1932.

[2] In his *Far Eastern Crisis* (1936), Mr. Stimson wrote : " My action was based upon my former experience with the Far East and I think my judgment has been confirmed by the subsequent events. I believe that the imposition of such an inquiry at that moment upon Japan would have accelerated the outbreak of nationalistic feeling which subsequently occurred ; . . ." More recently, Mr. Stimson has spoken emphatically in defence of his policy at the time, and his words plainly cover his attitude towards the proposed Commission of Inquiry : " His original decision to support Shidehara by patience and reticence he thought sound enough, and he would do it again. This was certainly the best chance of success in maintaining peace under law." (*On Active Service in Peace and War*, (H. L. Stimson and M. Bundy.)

" A Student of the League's " conclusion was certainly not drawn by the *Manchester Guardian* itself at the outset. On September 23rd, it expressed the view that merely to denounce the Japanese Government would encourage it in its error. The Council could only hope to succeed by persuasion ; and since the Japanese Government was much divided, the Council might succeed. " A moderately worded appeal like that issued yesterday from Geneva," it was said, ought to strengthen the Japanese Foreign Secretary's hands, " where a definite rebuke would merely have inflamed national pride and secured the victory of the bellicose party in the Cabinet." On the following day, emphasis was again placed on the divisions in the Japanese Cabinet. The League, said the *Guardian*, though " under very great disadvantages," had to act, but " must act with circumspection." It can be taken for granted that no complete reversal of attitude had taken place when this leading article proceeded : " Its aim must be to strengthen the forces which are strong for peace in Japan." No doubt, the later attitude of the *Guardian* implied an increasingly strong disagreement with the policy of the American State Department. It certainly called for " firm action," but it did not link that demand with the aim of strengthening the strong Japanese peace forces. By the end of October 1931, it appears to have come definitely to the conclusion that " Japanese policy was entirely dictated by the War Department."

Nor, apparently, was any argument of the kind employed in the first phase in other papers which afterwards gave expression to it. Indeed, at the start, they plainly shared the widely held contrary view. The *New Statesman*, for example, thought that the Council's appeal and the attitude of the United States had perhaps helped to strengthen the hands of the more prudent sections in Tokyo (October 3rd). A fortnight later, far from clamouring for " firm action," this weekly expressed the view that what was apparently meant by that was " hardly practical politics or wise diplomacy," and said that there was a strong party of moderates in Japan in which it was reasonable to put some confidence. It seems that the *New Statesman* itself showed that " incredible shortsightedness " of which it was later to complain. Mr. Wilson Harris, writing in the *News Chronicle* on September 28th thought that the League Council's discussions had made things " considerably easier " for " the more pacific section of the Cabinet in Tokyo." There was no criticism, on the contrary implied approval, of Mr. Stimson's opposition to the

dispatch of a Commission of Inquiry ; nor was there any criticism in that paper of the Council's resolution of September 30th.

7. The October Resolution

In that section of the Press later to be so condemnatory of British policy, serious criticism of the handling of the crisis only arose during the Paris Council meeting in November-December 1931, and, even so, blame was assigned as much to the United States as to Great Britain and the other League Powers. It is true that, after the *Economist* had described the Council's action as " rather subtle," the *Manchester Guardian*, on October 7th, had retorted that it was " pitiably weak." There were foreshadowings, too, of later criticism at one phase of the October session of the Council, but attention was then almost exclusively concentrated upon the General Election campaign, which was going on during the whole course of the session.

Although the news of the Japanese bombing of Chinchow on October 8th came as a general shock and disappointment, anxieties were lessened by the publication on October 12th of a telegram from Mr. Stimson to the Secretary-General of the League, and by the presence at the Council table from October 16th onwards of an American representative, in response to a Council invitation given after prolonged opposition by, and against the vote of, Japan. In his message, apparently sent on October 5th, Mr. Stimson said

> it is most desirable that the League in no way relax its vigilance and in no way fail to assert all the pressure and authority within its competence. . . . On its part the American Government, acting independently through its diplomatic representatives, will endeavour to reinforce what the League does and will make it clear that it has a keen interest in the matter and is not oblivious to the obligations which the disputants have assumed to their fellow signatories in the Pact of Paris, as well as in the Nine Power Pact, should a time arise when it would seem advisable to bring forward those obligations. By this course we avoid any danger of embarrassing the League in the course to which it is now committed.

Pessimism, however, quickly returned because of the strict limitations imposed upon the American representative's participation in the Council's proceedings. Mr. Wilson Harris reported

to the *News Chronicle* (October 22nd) that the situation was " profoundly disquieting " ; that the League Council seemed to be showing a distinct weakening in its attitude ; and that this was attributed to lack of " the measure of American support which had been hoped for." It appeared, said Mr. Wilson Harris, that the Japanese had correctly interpreted the American attitude as one of inability to participate in any action taken under the League Covenant and of reliance upon the " marshalling of world opinion " under the Pact of Paris, whereas Mr. Stimson's assurances of support had been taken in League circles to indicate merely a refusal to be bound in advance. This is an early illustration of the constantly recurring self-deception in " League circles " about American policy which is one of the outstanding features of the whole crisis. However, the *News Chronicle* seems to have been reassured by subsequent developments at the October Council meeting, which it did not discuss. The *Daily Herald* also made no comment on the Resolution of October 24th with which the proceedings at that meeting of the Council terminated. Polling day, it must be kept in mind, was on October 27th.

That Resolution was, on the whole, warmly welcomed by the *Manchester Guardian* and the *New Statesman.* Since Japan voted against it, it was juridically invalid, and its most striking feature was that it called upon the Japanese Government to begin immediately with the withdrawal of its troops into the railway zone and to effect total withdrawal before the next Council meeting, fixed for November 16th. The Resolution recommended direct negotiations between the parties " as soon as the evacuation is completed." Two days before, the *Guardian* had urged the fixing of a definite date for complete withdrawal. Its Geneva Correspondent described the draft Resolution on October 23rd as " very satisfactory," and on the same day the leading article expressed the view that it might " save China and fortify the reputation of the League of Nations," while regretting that no League Commission had been appointed to guarantee the Japanese evacuation. The *New Statesman,* which had previously dwelt on " the patience and persistence " of the League Council while fearing that there might be " a deplorable confession of failure," spoke of the " clear and bold language " of the demand. It was not, this journal asserted, a pious exhortation, but went as near a command as the Council of the League was able to go.

8. Critics of the Paris Council

Any hopes aroused in these quarters by the Resolution of October 24th, and they were in some cases extravagant,[1] were quickly shattered. The Japanese forces in Manchuria, far from being withdrawn to the railway zone, extended the area of their operations. When the League Council reassembled in Paris on November 16th, it was confronted by an extremely difficult situation.

On November 19th, the Paris Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* asserted that the Council was intimidated by Japan's threat to leave the League. He complained that " had they taken a strong line from the first the Japanese would never have dared to defy them as they are now doing," and maintained that " even if the Council took a strong line now the Japanese would give way." As for the British delegation, it was not supporting Japan, he said, nor supporting anything. Two days later, the same Correspondent asserted that the Council members knew that they and the American Government were capitulating to Japan. The revived proposal for a Commission of Inquiry aroused no enthusiasm in the *Guardian*: it was considered a face-saving device. Criticism of the League Council grew stronger as its meeting proceeded. Its " plain ineffectiveness " appeared actually to have helped the Japanese military authorities (November 24th). The Paris Correspondent accused the British and French Governments of wrecking the Covenant (November 26th). On December 7th, the Council was said to have made " a pitiable exhibition of indecision and impotence," in which the representatives of the Powers, Great Britain included, had been " conspicuous figures." Next day the Council's efforts were described as " miserable "; they had made it " contemptible in the eyes of the world "; the whole affair had been " a sorry business," and Great Britain had played a sorry part in it; no lead had been given by Sir John Simon and Lord Cecil; it was a serious thing that the signatories of the League Covenant should have failed to honour their obligations under it; the Great Powers had not even seriously protested against, let alone resisted, Japanese aggression.

When " A Student of the League " wrote his articles in the following January, he complained that the British and French

[1] The Geneva Correspondent of the *Times* reported (October 26th) that quite a large number of observers expressed the belief that when the Japanese came to realise that the rest of the world was against them they would withdraw their troops. See also Sir John Pratt, *War and Politics in China*, p. 225, quoted below, p. 621.

Governments had done nothing whatever to support the October 24th Resolution. As for the United States Administration,

it required nearly the whole of the three weeks between the October and November Council meetings to make up its mind on the October Resolution. Finally, on the eve of the November 16th meeting, the news came that the United States had decided it approved the whole of the October 24th Resolution—except the time limit ![1]

The British, French and other Governments, he said, preferred to scuttle the Covenant rather than oppose Japan.[2] The British Government had tried to put the blame for inaction on the United States, " and certainly American policy as interpreted by General Dawes was cryptic and disappointing." But, said the " Student," a Presidential Election was imminent ; and American opinion at Paris warmly resented the attempts of the British and French Governments to put the blame for their inaction upon the United States.[3] Sir John Simon had said " nothing whatever " during his two or three brief visits, and Lord Cecil had been left with " the melancholy task of building bricks without straw—that is, of trying to frame a League policy out of the British Government's decision to let the Covenant go by default and, whatever happened, not to allow the issue to be raised that the Covenant was being violated."[4] The editorial on that day went farther. Great Britain had not only failed to give any kind of lead but had even encouraged the Council's complete capitulation to Japan.

But the *Manchester Guardian* presents a striking contrast to other papers which were later to equal and sometimes even to surpass it in the virulence of its criticism. Only Mr. H. N. Brailsford, who entered the lists in November, showed the same bitter spirit. He wrote in the *New Leader* on November 27th that the League of Nations was in full retreat, despite the aggression being unusually clear and despite the assistance of the United States. He dismissed the Commission of Inquiry contemptuously ; its report, when compiled, should make a valuable addition to the League's library. As for the League itself, it might still act effectually in Europe, but only if the

[1] The *Manchester Guardian*, January 22nd, 1932.

[2] The *Manchester Guardian*, January 23rd, 1932.

[3] On October 1st, 1932, " A Special Correspondent " (whose style was strongly reminiscent of that of " A Student of the League ") said that General Dawes was " unhappily, less interested in a settlement of the Sino-Japanese conflict than in not spoiling his chances as a Republican Presidential candidate by too successful co-operation with the League."

[4] The *Manchester Guardian*, January 25th, 1932.

victim of aggression was one of France's numerous allies, and more especially if the purpose of the aggression was to upset some disposition of the Treaty of Versailles.

The *New Statesman* was much milder. On November 7th, before the Paris Council meeting, it thought it probable that, if Great Britain and the United States were resolute, the danger of extreme measures could be avoided ; but, unfortunately, the United States was irresolute—"or so it is generally believed." A week later, it welcomed a report that the American attitude was stiffening. On November 28th, it declared that the Powers, great and small, were vacillating and fumbling because they were afraid of Japan. However, the *New Statesman* could write more hopefully on December 5th about the League Council's " patience and persistence," only in the following week to describe the performance in Paris as " pitiable." After the end of the Council meeting, on December 19th, it offered no criticism of the proceedings other than the sentence " The League has failed." The comment was made a week later that the American representative at the meetings of the League Council had not offered much encouragement, but that slight signs of stiffening at Washington were visible.

As for the *Daily Herald*, roused at last in these weeks to editorial comment, it contented itself (December 10th) with stating the " hard facts " that the League had been defied by a member of its own Council and had yielded. For some days this paper had published no reports of the Paris proceedings.

Before the Council meeting, on November 7th, the *News Chronicle* had given a general warning against " timidity, dilatoriness and feeble statesmanship." By November 23rd it was accusing the Council of " timidity," but emphasised the dependence of Governments upon public opinion, and considered the proposed Commission of Inquiry useful. Two days later, a " distinguished diplomatic authority," just back from Paris, wrote that the Council had given up any intention to take strong action, and attributed this primarily to " the perfectly futile action of the United States of America." He had been informed that it was impossible to get anything precise from Washington or from General Dawes about what they were prepared to do ; " while Dawes has been shouting ' Hell Maria ' in his sitting-room, he has not even murmured ' Boo ' when Briand has definitely asked him what he thinks should be done." The public, said this authority, should not be bluffed by the Commission of

Inquiry, nor imagine that America had been of the slightest assistance. Editorially, the *News Chronicle* had nothing more to say about the Paris meeting of the Council. The ending of the proceedings with the Resolution of December 10th was passed by in silence ; but Mr. Wilson Harris was not " disposed to palliate " the League's failure. " Naked military force, coupled with patent diplomatic procrastination," had prevailed ; and not a word of condemnation of Japan's action had been publicly uttered. Towards the end of the year, a leading article in this paper asserted that in the long run defiance of world opinion had rarely paid, and that Japan could not afford to leave that wholly out of account.

9. The League of Nations Union

The attitude of the League of Nations Union during this first (1931) phase provides some useful pointers to the state of public opinion. Many might expect to learn that the L.N.U. expressed itself in no uncertain terms and displayed great activity, though some division of opinion in its ranks would not occasion surprise. What is so striking, despite the fact that Lord Cecil was representing Great Britain at the meetings of the League Council, is that the Union, for the greater part of the period, was silent and apparently inactive in regard to the Far Eastern crisis. Its organ, *Headway*, said little, and said it very discreetly.

In a letter to the *Times* on October 14th, Professor Gilbert Murray, after referring to concentration on domestic troubles, stressed the importance and the complexity of the problem, and the need for courage as well as skill. His description of the case as " one of those complicated tangles of mutual exasperation which are apt to arise on the borders of disturbed or anarchical societies " was not likely to commend itself to the *Manchester Guardian*. That the L.N.U. and its Chairman should have come to be scathingly criticised by that newspaper indicates as clearly, perhaps, as anything else the fact that the latter was representative only of a small section of British public opinion. However, the first Press comment on the Union in connection with the crisis apparently came from the *News Chronicle* on November 23rd. Urging that the British Government could not take the leadership unless public opinion were mobilised, and refusing to believe that the true opinion of the people was reflected by what it described, not unamusingly, as the " Little-

England " attitude of a section of the Conservative Press, the *News Chronicle* asked why the L.N.U. did not use " its large and varied resources of personnel, technique and enthusiasm " to organise demonstrations " in reasoned support of an effective League policy." Incidentally, no indication was given of what such a policy would involve.

It was not long before the *Manchester Guardian* opened its attack upon the Union. By November 16th, it had found " disturbing " the " attempt by a powerful section of the Conservative Press to justify Japanese aggression in Manchuria." Three days later, it found it " astonishing " that in this country " the force of public opinion, as it finds expression through the Press, should be in favour of the Japanese Government's monstrous attempt . . ." On December 8th, it again found it " astonishing " that the League Council's tactics should have been " enthusiastically approved by a large section of the British Press, including the more careful Conservative newspapers." The *Guardian* was in despair. What hope was there " if public opinion in this country cares so little for the League and has so little faith in its machinery . . . if even that amiable body, the League of Nations Union—not to mention a Socialist Premier and a Liberal Foreign Secretary—is dumb when the territorial integrity of China is flagrantly violated . . ." Almost everybody was out of step, except our Mancunian !

The " somewhat unaccountable silence " of the L.N.U. was broken at the meeting of its general council at Caxton Hall on December 10th-11th. Its resolution, according to *The Headway*, was a compromise between views which differed widely. It deplored Japan's actions, recorded recognition of the League Council's efforts to restore peaceful relations, called attention to the continued supply of munitions by States Members of the League, and expressed the conviction that the British Government would have British public opinion behind it in action it might deem wise and effectual for maintaining the authority of the League. The proceedings at Caxton Hall led to a clash between the *Guardian* and Professor Gilbert Murray. The resolution itself was, of course, wholly unsatisfactory to the *Guardian*, but what aroused the editorial anger and ironically expressed scorn (December 11th) was the Professor's speech, and particularly certain passages in it which were interpreted to mean that it was the duty of the L.N.U. to stand behind the League Council in anything it might do. Professor Murray

wrote protesting against misrepresentation, and defending the League Council.[1] In its editorial reply on the same day (December 18th), the *Guardian* renewed its objections to the Union's approval of the League Council's handling of the dispute. Professor Murray and the L.N.U., it declared, were perfectly entitled to regard the meagre result with satisfaction, but it was open to others to believe that by so doing they were ill-serving the cause they had particularly espoused. The *Guardian* did not comment on what must have been to it the equally or even more unsatisfactory speeches of Lord Grey and Lord Cecil at the Central Hall on December 11th. The latter then made high claims for the League Council : " We have prevented war, have made some attempt to secure justice, and have laid the foundation for what we believe to be a better state of things." Lord Cecil believed that the Commission of Inquiry was " a tremendous opportunity."

Judging from its correspondence columns, the *Guardian* had little backing from its readers, some of whom frankly said that they were " puzzled." Indeed, the Manchester District Secretary of the L.N.U. shortly afterwards spoke of " facile sneers," in what was plainly an allusion to his City's greatest newspaper.[2] It was not until mid-February 1932 that the L.N.U.'s attitude mollified the *Guardian*. On January 25th it was still expressing amazement at the Union for endorsing the League Council's " pathetic efforts to save its face," and at the apparent indifference to the matter of those who were calling for disarmament.

10. The " Manchester Guardian "

The misleading expressions " pro-Japanese " and " anti-Japanese " were much bandied about in the course of the dispute. Plainly enough, the bias of the *Manchester Guardian* was against Japan from the start. No doubt that newspaper maintained that it was concerned simply and solely with the maintenance of peace through the application of the Covenant of the League of Nations ; and it would be unjust to say that it failed to recognise that Japan had a case at

[1] In the course of his letter, Professor Murray said that the L.N.U. had been blamed for having decided not to hold one particular meeting. " We dropped it not on the orders of the Foreign Office but because I found on inquiry that the persons actually engaged on the negotiations thought it would not be helpful." He went on to say that he knew of 621 meetings which had been held, " at most of which Manchuria was either the chief subject or, combined with disarmament, a prominent subject."

[2] C. E. Clift, at Withington Town Hall, reported in the *Guardian*, January 12th, 1932.

all. But, certainly, at no point did it attempt to do justice to that case. Its references to Japanese grievances were perfunctory and made only to be dismissed as irrelevant. Indeed, it would be difficult to find in its columns more than a passing recognition that there was any substance in any Japanese contention at any point in the dispute. And, as the crisis proceeded, any support for a Japanese contention, even on a matter of procedure, was denounced as aid to the aggressor.

The one-sidedness of the *Guardian* was paralleled, on the other side, only by the *Daily Mail*, and, possibly, by the *Daily Express*. Particularly striking, in view of the space it devoted to the Far Eastern crisis, is the absence of adverse comment upon the Chinese Government and its policy and upon the conditions prevailing in China proper as well as in Manchuria out of which the crisis arose. On September 21st, it is true, two days after the Japanese Army's original coup, an editorial spoke of " a serious provocation which naturally inflamed Japanese opinion," and commented : " The truth is, of course, that in her present state of disintegration China cannot guarantee the safety of foreigners any more than of her own citizens." But in the next sentence it was stated that the immediately important thing was not to judge the merits of the case, which would have to come later, but to prevent the outbreak of open warfare. That foreshadowed the line which the *Guardian* was quickly to adopt and adhere to : Japan was the aggressor (October 10th) ; Japanese troops must be withdrawn from the areas occupied before there could be any negotiations about the original dispute (October 20th) ; Japanese grievances were irrelevant (November 10th) ; the issue was not between China and Japan, but that of a breach of the Covenant (November 13th) ; " China may be entirely in the wrong, Japan entirely in the right—as far as the League Council is concerned such questions are beside the point at this stage " (November 16th).

That it was not the business, for the time being, of the League Council to discuss the substance of the dispute and to try to effect a settlement of it was the line taken by Lord Cecil on September 25th and adopted by the Council. That the total withdrawal of Japanese troops to the railway zone must precede the proposed negotiations between the parties was the standpoint of the Council's Resolution of October 24th. Hence the angry disappointment of the *Guardian* with the proceedings at the subsequent Paris Council meeting, when these positions were tacitly abandoned. Its view was well expressed

by Professor (now Sir) Alfred Zimmern, when he said, early in November, that counsel was being darkened in the Manchurian question by discussions on the merits of the case in dispute, whereas the real issue was the use of military force as an instrument of national policy.[1]

II. Views on the Issues

From the outset there was widespread recognition that this issue of the use of military force was involved, and that the crisis was a test of the machinery and authority of the League of Nations. It is interesting to note that concern for the fate of the impending Disarmament Conference was particularly prominent.[2] There was much talk about the "prestige" of the League being at stake. As to the nature of the "test" involved there were considerable differences of view, but that it was likely to be severe was agreed. Many regarded the crisis as "a test case" of whether or not the League could preserve peace in a dispute in which one of the parties was a Great Power.[3]

To the *Manchester Guardian*, it was a matter which had to be made a test case. It almost seems that that newspaper regarded the crisis as an unsought but not, rightly considered, unwelcome opportunity of trying out the League's machinery on a Great Power. "It is irrelevant to say that the crisis could not have come at a worse time. . . . The League Covenant was intended to apply to bad times, and if its provisions do not work at a critical moment the sooner we know it the better. After eleven years a case has arisen of a menace of war between two distant Powers of first-class importance. The League machinery must therefore be tested . . ." (October 9th). "Action, with or without success, is called for" (October 7th).

[1] Carpenter Memorial Lecture, Manchester College, Oxford, reported in the *Guardian*, November 11th, 1931.

Sir Arthur Salter took the same line in a speech to the Women's Advisory Council of the L.N.U., Livingstone Hall, November 24th, 1931 : "It mattered not what were the merits or demerits of the origin of the dispute : what was essential was that hostilities should cease . . ."

[2] See, for example, *Daily Telegraph*, October 10th ; *Times*, October 12th ; *Economist*, October 17th ; *Observer*, October 18th and November 8th ; Mr. Wickham Steed in the *Sunday Times*, November 8th ; the *New Leader*, which declared that if the League failed the Disarmament Conference better not meet, November 13th ; and the *News Chronicle*, November 16th.

[3] For example, the *Economist*, October 17th, 1931, which dealt at some length with the early Corfu case in which Italy was involved.

In those newspapers which showed any editorial interest in the earlier stages, there was general appreciation of the fact that the League of Nations stood, in words used a little later by Sir John Simon, "for the principle that, whatever may be the merits of a particular dispute, nations should submit that dispute to peaceful settlement."[1] There was also general criticism of Japan for not having submitted its grievances to the League before resorting to force; although it was widely felt that there were mitigating circumstances. The crude charge (often to be made later) that the bulk of the national Press approved of the Japanese military action in Manchuria, or refrained from expressing condemnation of it, does not survive examination. It holds good only of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* and their satellites; and even in those cases there are some qualifications to be made.[2]

12. Japan's Strong Case

What is true, however, is that for the most part (the *Manchester Guardian* being at first the only conspicuous exception) the view held was that the Japanese action was by no means entirely unjustified. That the Japanese had a strong case against the Chinese was

[1] House of Commons, November 25th, 1931.

[2] In the earlier stages, the reports in the *Daily Mail*, particularly those of its Geneva Correspondent, were objective; and when editorial comment began, which was not until November 5th, the main concern was to keep Great Britain out of "the quarrel." On the merits of the dispute itself, it is true, the *Daily Mail* was unqualifiedly of the opinion that Japan had right on her side. Certainly, there was no censure of Japanese action in Manchuria; and such phrases as "no one can blame Japan" (November 14th), and "no one can wonder, then, if in such circumstances Japan decides either to annex Manchuria or to assume control of it" (December 22nd), gave colour to the charge referred to; and the subsequent attitude of the paper was to give further ground for it. It should be pointed out, however, that the *Daily Mail* believed, or professed to believe, that there was a project to expel Japan altogether from Manchuria; and drew attention to the "grave risk" that Soviet Russia might step in. The impression conveyed by a study of this newspaper is that all such arguments were subsidiary and designed to strengthen its main case for "not meddling."

The case of the *Daily Express* is much the same, except for its frank contempt for the League of Nations. In the early weeks this paper was cynically indifferent, and there was certainly no word of protest or regret at the Japanese military action, which, indeed, it later (November 3rd) likened to "a punitive and order-restoring expedition" on the Indian North-West Frontier. But it grew alarmed at "anti-Japanese feeling" and at the danger of Great Britain being drawn into war. On November 9th, asserting that the ordinary man in the street had very little interest in Manchuria and was unperturbed, the leading article described this as "a perfectly sane, if somewhat lazy, attitude of mind," but asked, "is he sure that he is not going to get mixed up in this Far Eastern war?" To prevent any such involvement was the chief preoccupation of the *Express*. Right at the end of the year it maintained that Japan in Manchuria was "the one effective guarantee of order, stability, civilisation," and that "all nations should support her, as the British people certainly do." It was, assuredly, a somewhat belated plea.

the overwhelmingly predominant opinion. It remained the prevalent view throughout the crisis, and was by no means confined to the Conservative Press and Conservative political circles.[1] Moreover, if the Japanese had been guilty of aggression at all, which some doubted, it was widely agreed that it was no ordinary or simple case of aggression.[2] While the Pact of Paris might have been violated, though some did not endorse that opinion, it was far from clear that there had been any breach of the Covenant of the League of Nations.[3] On such points views varied considerably. It was also widely pointed out that the Japanese Government had been trying for months to get redress of its grievances from the Chinese Central Government at Nanking, and had shown great patience under long-continued provocation.

13. Critics of the October Resolution

In the circumstances, the view quickly developed that consideration of the merits of the dispute ought not to be put on one side if the crisis were to be successfully handled. And, on this basis, criticism of the League Council arose at an early stage. By declining to consider the substance of the dispute between Japan and China, it was held, the League Council had placed itself in a false position.

[1] For example, Lord Grey: "Japan had a strong case in Manchuria, where her interests were being threatened by lawlessness, and if Japan had submitted her case to the signatories of the Covenant and the Pact, it would have been the business of those signatories to see how the remedy could be applied." (Central Hall, December 11th, 1931.)

As late as February 1933, Lord Lytton was expressing the same view: "Let me say to the partisans of China that the case of Japan *vis-à-vis* the League may be a weak one, but the case of Japan *vis-à-vis* China is a strong one." (Speech at Manchester, the *Manchester Guardian*, February 18th, 1933.) "Japan has a case. She has a very strong case on merits. But she has no case at all for the action she has taken." (Interview in the *Daily Herald*, February 24th, 1933.)

[2] For example, Professor Gilbert Murray: "It is not a simple case of military aggression which can be corrected by an order to retire." (Letter to the *Times*, October 14th, 1931.)

Lord Cecil: "The difficulties between China and Japan were only part of the general difficulties that had been going on in that part of the world for many years. . . ." (Speech at Liverpool, *Times*, November 12th, 1931.)

[3] "In our judgment Japanese action in Manchuria did not raise the international issue as contemplated by the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact." (The *Observer*, January 31st, 1932.)

"The right of a Government to protect its interests against barbarism and anarchy is a well-recognised one, and if Japan is studious to keep within it her position is a strong one." (The *Daily Telegraph*, October 23rd, 1931.)

Professor Gilbert Murray said that it was not clear in the opinion of jurists that Japan had broken any particular clause of the Covenant, "but it appears," he went on, "that she has violated the second clause of the Kellogg Treaty. She has attempted to get a settlement of a dispute by other than peaceful means. . . ." (The *Manchester Guardian*, December 11th, 1931.)

The Council had appeared to assume, if it had not actually assumed, that Japan was an aggressor ; it had appeared to be, and perhaps was, biased against Japan ; it had inflamed Japanese opinion with a sense of injustice ; and it had encouraged the Chinese to refuse to enter into negotiations for a settlement of the dispute. In these ways, it was contended, the Council had seriously prejudiced its chances of strengthening the hands of the moderate elements in Japan.

Such criticism mounted rapidly after the October session of the Council. The view strongly expressed was that, by insisting upon total withdrawal of the Japanese troops as a condition precedent to any negotiations for the settlement of the dispute, the Council was not only ignoring the realities of the Manchurian situation but prejudging the whole Japanese case ; and that, by fixing a " time limit " for such withdrawal, was only adding fuel to the flames of Japanese resentment, and uniting the Japanese Government and people behind the aggressive military party.

The evolution of opinion on this side can be traced most plainly, perhaps, in the *Times*. Later on, during the Shanghai phase of the crisis, this newspaper summed up its view of British public opinion in the early stages in these terms :

> No doubt the Council did lose reputation and alienate sympathies, when the dispute first broke out in Manchuria, by immediately taking the part of China without any sort of investigation of Japanese grievances. At that time public opinion was quick to perceive that there had been real provocation by the Chinese both in Manchuria and in Shanghai. And it was divided between sympathy with the grievances of the Japanese and dislike of their manner of redressing them. (February 24th, 1932.)

Apart from the first sentence, that is true of the attitude of the *Times* itself during the first phase, and true also of public opinion, in so far as it was expressed through the bulk of the Press. But the opening statement does not seem accurately to express the view of the *Times* at the outset. With whatever misgivings it may have viewed the League Council's initial approach to the problem (both the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* were relieved by the " sagacity " of Washington, and its effect upon the Council), the *Times* specifically approved, on October 15th, the postponement of consideration of the merits of the dispute. The *Telegraph*, on the other hand, was to claim, justly, that from the beginning it had urged that the original attitude of the Council in this respect was wrong.[1]

[1] Editorial, November 20th, 1931.

However, by October 21st the *Times* had begun to suggest that the claims of justice had, perhaps, been overlooked by the Council; and its approval of the Resolution of October 24th was curt and coldly formal. The *Telegraph* made no editorial comment when the Resolution was passed, Japan dissenting; but it described it on the 23rd as "the best the Council could do in the circumstances," without concealing its dissatisfaction. Both papers, in all probability, were influenced by a desire not unduly to embarrass the Government. The *Times* was non-committal when pointing out that the Council had not so far attempted to consider the fundamental merits of the dispute. But, in less than three weeks (November 14th), it was arguing frankly and powerfully against the standpoint adopted by the Council. In doing so, then and subsequently, it took the line that the Council had acted on a narrowly juridical basis, and urged that while, on that basis, Japan was undoubtedly in the wrong, on the wider basis of equity Japan was generally felt to be largely in the right.

The *Daily Telegraph* put the point in stronger terms on and after November 12th, and criticised the Resolution of October 24th directly and sharply. The equity and good sense of the Manchurian question, it declared, were "on the side of the Japanese Government," and "a point of legality was being strained against a Power whose treaty rights have for years been ignored, and the lives of whose nationals are daily endangered by the total impotence of the so-called Government which flouts those rights." As for the October 24th Resolution, with its time limit for the withdrawal of the Japanese forces, it was described as "a blunder" which "amounted to taking sides against Japan on a question on which that Power has manifestly a strong case in equity and commonsense." It was difficult to imagine that any member of the Council really believed that Japan could or would comply with such a request, for "it was common knowledge that Manchuria, apart from the region where order was being maintained by Japan, was a helpless prey to the brutal depredations of hordes of bandits and disbanded Chinese soldiery, utterly beyond the control of the so-called Government seated far away in Nanking" (November 16th).[1]

[1] Mr. O. M. Green, in an article on November 3rd, had said: "It is abundantly clear that Japan will not evacuate Manchuria, as called upon to do by the League of Nations. In point of fact she cannot—as surely the League must know. . . . The notion that China could take control there and restore order by the 16th is preposterous. In the Japanese

Reports from Tokyo made it only too plain that the " firmer " line taken by the League Council in its Resolution of October 24th had strengthened the militarists rather than the moderates. Anti-British feeling, due primarily, it seemed, to the allegedly unfriendly attitude of Lord Cecil,[1] led to a remarkable explanation and appeal in the *Times* on November 2nd,[2] and to public reassurances in Tokyo from the British Ambassador.[3]

On November 8th, the Tokyo Correspondent of the *Observer* said that Japanese resentment over what was considered unjustifiable pressure by the League was already tending to " drive the nation into the hands of the reactionaries." The *Telegraph* does not appear to have attached much importance to attempts to strengthen the Japanese moderates against their extremists, but it was very conscious of the danger of further inflaming Japanese opinion, taken as a whole. On November 16th it argued that the October 24th " time limit " had " added disastrously to the humiliating effect of the Council's action on a proud people convinced of the justice of its own cause."

The *Observer* had little to say at first about the October 24th Resolution. But, by November 8th, it was deploring the fact that, owing to the technical correctitude of Nanking, the prestige of the

view, the anarchical state of Manchuria has never been fairly considered abroad, and this has increased their irritation with the League."

On October 15th, the Tokyo Correspondent of the *Times* reported that Baron Shidehara had said that evacuation in the disordered conditions prevailing was impossible.

According to the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* (November 27th), Washington had " intimated that it did not demand, or even desire, the immediate withdrawal of the Japanese troops to the railway zone—lest a worse chaos than the present one should supervene in Manchuria."

[1] On November 1st, the *Sunday Times* quoted the *Asahi Shimbun*, described as one of the most moderate and level-headed of Japanese newspapers, as speaking of " the conspicuously and even maliciously unfriendly attitude which the British delegate assumed towards Japan in the sessions of the League Council."

[2] The editorial that day once again explained what the *Times* considered to be British opinion on the Manchurian issue. There was both sympathy and admiration here for Japan's constructive work in Manchuria ; and full appreciation of Japan's long list of legitimate grievances. " Under such provocation it is no wonder that Japan should have asserted herself. In the essentials of her dispute with China there appears to be more than a little justice on her side." But it was all the more deplorable that Japan should have taken action without any previous appeal for redress to the League of Nations. For that reason only was British opinion critical of Japanese policy. Nothing could be further from the truth than that British policy was " anti-Japanese." But Japan's refusal to evacuate territory seized from another country until that country had negotiated certain fundamental questions was quite out of harmony with the spirit of the Pact of Paris ; and in such circumstances the League Council had endorsed China's refusal to negotiate, a decision for which Great Britain had her share of responsibility. The article ended with an appeal to the Japanese Government to understand " before November 16th " the " extreme embarrassment in which she places her friends."

[3] See *Daily Telegraph*, November 11th, 1931.

League had been engaged in some measure " in an anti-Japanese sense " ; and on November 15th, in an article of much importance, J. L. Garvin maintained that in some vital respects the Council's methods during the previous two months had not been " either wise or fortunate." He vigorously condemned the " time-limit " Resolution :

> Japan was summoned by Geneva to withdraw her troops in Manchuria from all points outside the zone where they are fully based on treaty rights. The withdrawal was to be effected by to-morrow, November 16th ! There can be no obedience to Geneva in this precise particular. Tokyo forcibly recalls the British expedition to Shanghai and other cases. To name any fixed date for withdrawal—the actual complications being what they are—was foolish enough. To name a date so early and impracticable was an incredible mistake. It was a blunder of the kind committed in July 1914, when Europe was insanely rushed into a world tragedy for the sake of timetables.

When the Council was dealing with the resulting situation at its Paris meeting, the *Observer* deprecated the talk in certain circles about the League's failure : " It was not a failure. It was a mistake " (November 22nd). Later on, this paper was to write of " the unwise provocation of Japan by Geneva in the matter of Manchuria " (February 7th, 1932). J. L. Garvin, in his article of November 15th, strongly criticised what he held to be the narrow pedantry of the League Council. Manchuria, he said, was not at all the relatively simple kind of case as between nation and nation generally contemplated by the Covenant : " Manchuria is a totally different case, full of mixed issues." It was not a normal case of aggression by one nation against the frontiers and territories of another nation, but " a unique case of juridical and practical confusion," calling for the spirit of " discriminating and remedial statesmanship." Garvin repudiated entirely the methods adopted by the League Council in the first two months of the dispute, and in subsequent articles went more deeply into the issues involved.[1]

The views of the *Sunday Times* during the 1931 phase, and, indeed, during the greater part of the whole affair, may be said to have been an uneasy compromise between those expressed by the Editor, those of Mr. Wickham Steed, and those of " Scrutator."[2] It had little to say in the first stages. At the time of the October Council

[1] See, in particular, the articles on December 20th, 1931, and February 21st, 1932.
[2] Then Herbert Sidebotham.

meeting, it apparently endorsed the view that the immediate issue was not the substance of the dispute.[1] No editorial objection was raised to the Resolution of October 24th, but that Resolution, it was said, did not mean that the Council was prejudging the matters in dispute. Mr. Wickham Steed, on the same day,[2] described the affair as " head-breaking, if not heart-breaking," and said that Sir John Simon had certainly not come into an enviable inheritance. However, he was all in favour of " standing up " to Japan. On November 15th, nevertheless, the editorial said that in October the Council had asserted " the strictly juridical view," but Japanese opposition had made the Resolution of the 24th futile. Japan was in no mood to take orders from Geneva, and her moral position had been strengthened by the renewal of civil war in Manchuria and the consequent increased peril to her own nationals. Editorial comment on the Paris Council meeting and the Resolution of December 10th was slight and restrained. The dignity and prestige of the League had both suffered, and the most that could be said for the Resolution was that the opportunity of re-establishing peace had not been entirely lost. There was no article by Mr. Wickham Steed on the subject.

To the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* alike, the League Council's proceedings at the October meeting were wholly indefensible. The " well-meaning busybodies " there, said the former, had unluckily taken sides, and had pursued " a course tainted with anti-Japanese bias." The latter held that the League had on the whole leaned to the side of China. Both papers were alarmed by the belief in Japan that British opinion was anti-Japanese and that British influence had been thrown against Japan at Geneva. The *Express* argued that had it not been for the League the whole dispute in all probability would have been settled before then by direct negotiations. It proposed British withdrawal from the League, which was described as " an international agency of embroilment," and urged that British participation in the Paris Council meeting could lead only to " humiliation." In the view of the *Mail*, the League had to keep its head if it did not want to look ridiculous.

14. The Chinese Anarchy

During this first phase, the *Times* asserted with almost monotonous regularity that Japan had a strong case, but had put herself

[1] See editorial, October 18th, 1931. [2] November 8th, 1931.

regrettably and unnecessarily in the wrong. Hardly one of its leading articles on Manchuria failed to emphasise both points, which were invariably linked together. At an early date the *Times* took the view that the Japanese action in Manchuria was inconsistent with the obligations of the League Covenant and the Pact of Paris —even " flagrantly " so.[1] At the same time stress was continuously placed upon the lawless conditions prevailing in China, the weakness of the Central Government, the absence of any effective authority on its part in Manchuria, and the provocations given by anti-Japanese activities. Later (November 7th) the question was raised whether Chinese sovereignty in Manchuria could be said to have been infringed when it was not effective ; and by November 23rd the *Times* was questioning whether China fulfilled even a single one of the qualifications for membership of the League of Nations, as laid down by the Mandates Commission. Its Shanghai Correspondent was, throughout, much stronger in his criticism of the Chinese.[2] Editorially, the strictures on conditions in China were mild relatively to those made in other places.

Lord Grey was among those who attributed the crisis to the anarchic conditions prevailing in China and who preceded the *Times* in suggesting that China was not an organised State, within the meaning of the League Covenant.[3] Many references were also made in this connection to the difficulties which other countries, and Great Britain in particular, had experienced with the Chinese and their nominal Government in the then recent past. The Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Observer* wrote on October 18th, 1931, that the Japanese representative on the League Council, in presenting his case, " immediately disarms, in some degree, the criticism

[1] See editorials on October 12th, 15th and 21st, 1931.

[2] E.g. " An experienced observer wrote the other day of Chinese troubles with foreign Powers that their root cause is to be found, as ever, in misrule, in violation of treaty and individual rights, in failure to suppress banditry and violence, and in neglect to redress wrongs, coupled with tortuous prevarication and procrastination, all carried to the extreme limit of the endurance of those involved. These words exactly fit the situation in Manchuria. . . ." (*Times*, November 18th, 1931.)

[3] " The League was founded as a body which by peaceful means would compose disputes between nations each of which was master in its own house, but since the League was founded the condition in China had been one of almost perpetual fighting, a state of civil war with which the League of Nations was positively disqualified from dealing.

" Generals commanding armies in China had not only not obeyed but had not even recognised the authority of the Central Chinese Government. With conditions like that it was certain that foreign nations who had dealings with the country would be exposed to acts of provocation which were not the acts or will of the central Government, but which arose from the disorder existing in the country." (At an L.N.U. meeting, Southport, November 12th, 1931.)

of every foreign Power, for they have abundant experience of the like difficulty in their own case."

At the outset of the dispute the *Economist* recalled the " unofficial war " between the Soviet Union and China, in Northern Manchuria, in 1929, pointing out that it was not brought to an end by the diplomatic intervention of other Powers but by Russian military operations, and adding that " this time, again, the provocation seems to have come from the Chinese side." The *Daily Telegraph* contended on October 14th that " the root difficulty " was the absence of any stable Government in China : " The militarist control of the country has been spasmodic and irresponsible, and Japan is not the only Power whose patience has been strained by repeated conduct contrary to the usages of international relations." On that occasion, this paper took a similar line to that so consistently taken by the *Times*, for it added : " That, of course, is no excuse for the Japanese Government taking the law into its own hands, or, more exactly, allowing the army to do so, without first submitting the quarrel to the arbitration of the League." Nevertheless, the *Telegraph* moved rapidly to the position that the League Covenant was not strictly applicable in Chinese circumstances :

> The difficulty in which the League has found itself is, in fact, the natural outcome of its own misguided insistence upon treating China as a national entity in the practical sense of the term. China is a country in which no effective administrative authority exists, as Great Britain has only too good reason to know. (October 23rd.)

On the whole, the *Observer* took a consistent line, although it tended as the crisis proceeded to modify its criticisms of Japanese action and to emphasise the point that the real origin of the trouble lay in the lack of an effective Chinese Government and the complexity as well as the disorder of the resulting conditions. While admitting that Japan was " technically " in the wrong (October 25th), it never went so far as to accuse her of violating the Kellogg Pact or the Covenant. " The Japanese occupation is irregular, but the whole position is irregular." That phrase on November 22nd broadly summed up the view of the *Observer*. " The peculiar circumstances, the treaty rights of Japan, the virtual lack of a Chinese Government, political chaos in Manchuria," robbed the Chinese case as presented at Geneva of its value.[1] In contrast,

[1] " On the face of the matter Japan appears to have used her army as an instrument of national policy, and the superficial idealists give rein to their views. The substance of

the *Sunday Times*, while admitting that both sides had their grievances, and that " the balance of offence " might be against China, was inclined to stress the view that Japan had put herself in the wrong " by occupying Chinese territory and using that vantage to exact her own terms." In the editorial judgment on one occasion (November 8th, 1931) Japan's action was a violation of international right, and a breach of both Covenant and Pact.

15. Impartial Mediation

Garvin, in the *Observer*, had never subscribed to the view that the merits of the dispute were for the time being irrelevant. On November 14th, just prior to the Paris session of the League Council, the *Times* openly abandoned and criticised that view. It contended that the duty of the League was " to reconcile the opposing parties by finding a solution acceptable to both." The opinion was expressed that Sir John Simon's legal training and judicial outlook was " peculiarly fitted to this country's position in the Manchurian imbroglio." Great Britain was involved, not on account of her Far Eastern interests, but " as a member of an arbitral body which is called upon to find a solution in accordance with the Covenant of the League." The Government had not to take sides, or to declare for one country or the other. Next day, in the article already referred to, Garvin urged that it was the duty of the League Council in Paris to " forget formulas, theories and timetables," and to look at the whole matter " in a fresh way altogether," which meant, as the *Observer* put it, the following week, that the Council should concentrate on " the business of a sensible Sino-Japanese settlement."

It is not surprising, therefore, that these papers were reassured by Sir John Simon's statement on the adjournment of the House of Commons on November 25th. The *Times* found it " wholly satisfactory." Sir John had contended that the League principle of peaceful settlement of disputes itself involved the consequence that, as long as there was any chance of the Council operating usefully, the Government had " to avoid taking up a position which might seem to prejudge or condemn." He also indicated plainly that he

the matter is not so simple. If China had been a tangible national entity, neither the present muddle nor the precedent injustice to Japanese interests in Manchuria would have been possible. The problem is baffling, because China is baffling." (The *Observer*, January 3rd, 1932.)

considered it advantageous for the Council to continue to proceed under Article XI of the Covenant (requiring the assent of both parties) in connection with the proposed Commission of Inquiry.

The *Times* warmly approved, and, in doing so, maintained that Great Britain could have no independent policy, having merged her individual effort in the common deliberations of the League, in accordance with the principles of the " new diplomacy " inaugurated by the League's establishment. The *Manchester Guardian* was plainly unhappy, and criticised Sir John Simon's statement more especially on the ground that there was no prospect of securing the evacuation of the Japanese troops before the proposed inquiry began. But the *Observer* described the Foreign Secretary's statement as an admirable act of statesmanship, welcoming particularly his " level-headed reflection upon the peculiar difficulties of the Far Eastern situation and upon the true function of the League," and his references to Article XI. And the *Daily Telegraph*, on October 30th, asserting that the League Council itself had been betrayed at first into the blunder of appearing to regard Japan's case as ill-founded, considered that the error had been retrieved, " thanks in no small degree to the cool-headed diplomacy of Sir John Simon."

16. Supporters of the Paris Council

When the Paris Council meeting ended with the Resolution of December 10th, the *Times* was cautiously restrained in its assessment of the degree to which the authority of the League had been impaired, but, in an interesting passage, it reiterated the view to which it had come on the main point in controversy :

> There are tendencies and movements that cannot be judged, still less controlled, by a purely juridical standard, and history certainly also affords many examples of useful and even noble work that has required ruthless methods for its performance. The question that has been raised by the Manchurian dispute is whether the Council should not in future take into account from the first moment general considerations of a non-juridical order, instead of condemning out of hand a party that may have technically infringed the Covenant. The League must not become a cover for national incompetence. At the same time it may be hoped that no nation will take the law into its own hands without previous reference to the League. (December 11th.)

The *Observer*, not unnaturally, thought the Resolution of December 10th " a considerable achievement, a fair reward for the triumph

of the right over the wrong method," and, on December 20th, Garvin considered that the experience would be decisive for the future :

> Upon the next serious occasion, when any controversy involving a Great Power is concerned, the League Council, we may be sure, will hold its hand pending the fullest evidence concerning both sides of the case. It will seek to promote direct negotiations between the parties in dispute, and will not encourage the refusal of either to adopt that method. The League Council, while mediating actively, will preserve an impartial and conciliatory character, and will not quickly commit itself to specific intervention. Above all things whatsoever, the supporters of the League, as they value the cause of peace, must refrain from premature threats of ' sanctions ' directed against one party to the dispute.

That last sentence raises another aspect of the controversy in the first (1931) phase of the crisis. The argument, soon afterwards to be advanced, that " firm " or " firmer " action should have been taken against Japan in the early stages makes it necessary to inquire what sort of action was advocated at the time by the critics concerned. Furthermore, the attitude of those who took the contrary view cannot be fully understood without reference to their reaction to the suggestions or demands presented.

More often than not, it is true, " firmness " was left undefined. So were phrases like " standing up to Japan " or " standing by the Covenant." " Action " itself is a very comprehensive term. Occasionally, what critics had in mind was strict adherence to the line of policy expressed in the League Council's Resolution of October 24th. But what did that, in their judgment, involve ? Sometimes, no doubt, all that was meant was that there should have been outspoken formal protest against and condemnation of Japan. But language was often used which suggested much more than that, and which aroused real anxiety and intense hostility in certain quarters. What, then, were the views expressed about " sanctions " in the 1931 phase ?

CHAPTER TWO

THE "SANCTIONS" CONTROVERSY: FIRST STAGE

1. Speculation and Uproar

INEVITABLY there was speculation about the possible application of coercive measures by the League of Nations, and some discussion of the hypothetical questions involved. Indeed, it might well be said that it was for a few weeks during this phase that controversy on the subject was most vigorous, and even that it was decisive for the crisis as a whole. Be that as it may, the debate was strikingly one-sided, short and sharp. The most vocal side fought, so to speak, a "preventive war," and resorted to it at the first threat of serious danger. However genuine their anxiety may have been, the evidence suggests that there was little real, though undoubtedly a good deal of superficial, justification for it. When people write loosely and ambiguously of "firm," "strong," "resolute," "coercive" action, and at the same time allude to "boycott," "blockade," and even "war," they could hardly have been surprised if they were taken to mean much more than in fact they did.

It has been said that Japanese aggression in Manchuria did not produce any precise or spontaneous demand for the imposition of sanctions.[1] That is true; and the statement covers the whole period of the crisis. Yet, if one were to judge solely from the uproar made by opponents of sanctions in some organs of the Press at particular stages one might well think otherwise.

2. Little Interest at Westminster

That the subject was not at all prominent in the House of Commons during the 1931 phase follows from what has already been said of the proceedings there. The first reference to the possible employment of sanctions was made by Mr. Mander on November 11th in some brief remarks at the end of a long speech on other topics in the Debate on the Address:

[1] W. N. Medlicott, *British Foreign Policy since Versailles*, p. 146.

I hope the Council of the League will go on and use all the moral force they possibly can to compel Japan to take a proper attitude on this matter. But, if they find that moral force is not enough, I hope they will go further, take the next step, and withdraw the Ambassadors of all the Powers from Tokyo, and the Ministers if necessary, and use financial and economic pressure, and, if that will not do, use pressure in the way of a blockade in preventing goods going into or coming out of Japan. . . . We have to take a bold and courageous view and, without using any physical force—that will not be necessary—mobilise all the different methods of economic, financial and moral pressure which are available to force Japan to realise that war is not going to be permitted to break out again.

These remarks did not altogether escape comment in the Press, although no other member mentioned Manchuria ; but they were overshadowed by the references to sanctions made on the morning of that same day by the *Manchester Guardian.* They amounted to a conditional advocacy of diplomatic and economic sanctions ; and it will be noted that Mr. Mander thought that physical force would be unnecessary, even for or in connection with a blockade !

In a supplementary question on November 25th, Mr. Aneurin Bevan asked if it were not desirable that the League Council " should declare immediately against the action of Japan in Manchuria," and the Leader of the Opposition (Lansbury) wanted to know if nothing could be done by the Foreign Secretary to let Japan know the feelings of this country on the matter. There was no demand for sanctions in those suggestions ; nor was there in the Opposition Leader's speech on the Adjournment that day. At any rate, that seems to be the legitimate conclusion to draw from Lansbury's remarks on the subject. It is true that he said the League " must maintain its own principles against all the opposition Japan can put up against it," though he appeared to have " moral " influence in mind. It is true, also, that he declared it to be " quite impossible to allow Japan to secure acceptance of her demands without taking every step possible and utilising every possible resource to prevent it," but he proceeded :

> In saying this, I do not want to be considered as urging that the moment has come for the application of sanctions, but it does mean that Article XV, which in effect says " a dispute likely to lead to rupture which has not been submitted to arbitration or judicial settlement having arisen," certainly does apply to the present condition of affairs.

Lansbury said that he did not want to cause ill-feeling either in

Japan or China, and did not want to act as a judge. He added later, that if a way could not be found " by persuasive means," " we ought to say to whichever of these Governments refuses to honour the obligations of the League that for us there cannot be the same sort of relationship as has existed before. That is a matter which I suppose ought to come later."

Two members asked questions about sanctions on November 30th, 1931.' From the Labour benches, Colonel Wedgwood (afterwards Lord Wedgwood) enquired, " in connection with the Manchurian trouble," whether the Foreign Secretary " would bear in mind the supreme interest of this country in avoiding all sanctions or other warlike commitments, whether in Asia or Europe, both now and hereafter, and take no isolated action ? " Sir John Simon's reply was that the Government was as anxious as Colonel Wedgwood to avoid recourse to sanctions in any dispute, and was concentrating, along with the other Council members, on finding a solution by conciliation. The other questioner raised the matter from a different angle. D. M. Mason (Liberal) asked whether, in view of the action of Japan in disregarding Articles XII, XIII and XV of the Covenant . . . by proceeding with hostilities against China, thus constituting, according to Article XVI, an act of war against all members of the League, H.M. Government intended to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military force the members of the League should severally contribute to be used to protect the Covenants of the League. The answer given was that the dispute was being dealt with under Article XI of the Covenant and no question of Article XVI had arisen. On December 9th, Mr. Mander was referred to this answer when he asked whether any consideration had been given to the matter of sanctions.

No other allusion to sanctions appears to have been made in the House of Commons during the first phase. It may be noted, however, that Lansbury, in a question on November 29th, suggested that the Government should propose to the League Council an agreement by the members of the League " to refrain from supplying munitions to the parties in the present dispute," and referred in a supplementary to " very strong feeling in the country " against supplying munitions to either party. On December 11th, another Labour member, William Lunn, suggested in a question that the Government should refuse " all licences to export arms to China and Japan, pending the

settlement of the dispute in Manchuria." But those suggestions, of course, did not come into the category of sanctions against a Covenant-breaker.

3. "Horror" in the Press

The contrast is again striking when one turns to the Press. Yet the first impression of a marked divergence between Parliamentary and Press opinion is not confirmed on closer examination. The *Times* ignored the outburst of controversy in which a few newspapers were the leading and apparently almost the only participants; indeed, it hardly mentioned the word "sanctions." The *Daily Herald* stood aloof; editorially it did not discuss the sanctions issue at all, and in other respects its references to the matter were brief and non-committal. The *Morning Post* dismissed the issue summarily in a single sentence.[1] The *News Chronicle*, although it hovered on the edge of the controversy (and even at one point shaped up a little impulsively), certainly did not plunge into it. The chief protagonist on the one side, and the only one among the great dailies, was the *Manchester Guardian*. From its point of view, what happened in the first phase was summed up on January 9th, 1932:

> The mere suggestion that the League Council should take steps, however mild, to enforce Japan's observance of her obligations under the Covenant horrified all the enemies of the League and many of its warm admirers.

"Horrified" is, perhaps, too strong a word by which to describe the reactions of the *Daily Express*. True, on November 9th, it wrote that the "ugly word 'sanctions'" was being "muttered by the Geneva Diehards"; asserted—quite inaccurately—that Britain's resources were, under the Covenant, "at the call of Geneva"; and said that the situation was "fantastic" but "as threatening as it is absurd." It asserted the reality of the danger again on November 16th; but by the 20th it was completely confident that the common sense of the British and American peoples would reject without hesitation any suggestion of an "economic boycott" of Japan. It did not mention the *Manchester Guardian*, which, anyhow,

[1] "... there cannot, of course, be the slightest question of their employing 'sanctions' in any form against recalcitrance on the part of either of the disputants." (October 13th, 1931.)

had never specifically advocated such a boycott; its remarks were provoked by reports from Paris, which were shown on the very next day to be unfounded. The *Express* did not refer to the matter again during the first phase of the crisis.

The *Daily Mail*, certainly not an avowed enemy of the League, also raised the matter on November 9th, in connection with what it called the "vague suggestions" of "well-meaning busybodies" on the League Council. It did not seem unduly disturbed. It said it was "merely prudent to let it be known well in advance" of the Paris meeting that the British people would never tolerate such proposals; but it was "quite certain" that the British and French Governments would veto anything of the kind. On November 14th, two days before the Paris meeting, this paper was rather more excited but hardly "horrified." Quoting (without mentioning the source) from Mr. Mander's speech in the House of Commons on the 11th, it declared emphatically: "The people of this country are not going to war with their old friend and ally Japan for the benefit of Chinese war-lords and Soviet incendiaries." It was "sheer humbug" to suggest that they had any such intention. Mr. Mander, of course, had made no such suggestion, and, indeed, had gone on to say that physical force would not be required. No further comment was made by the *Mail* during the rest of the year.

"Horror," however, would not be an altogether inappropriate description of the feeling of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Observer*, though neither—and certainly not the latter—was regarded by the *Guardian* as an enemy of the League. These two papers were the chief protagonists on the other side in this first phase "sanctions" controversy. As for "the warm admirers" of the League who were also "horrified," some attention will be given to them later.

But were strong feelings, whatever their precise nature, aroused simply by "the mere suggestion" even of the mildest steps against Japan? Were the steps suggested "mild"? The *Express*, as we have seen, dealt with suggestions for "a boycott." The *Mail* wrote about a suggestion of "war." So did the *Telegraph* and the *Observer*, the latter at considerable length; and they did so with direct reference to the suggestions of the *Guardian*. They employed many significant epithets, such as "firebrands" and "violent Leaguers," and a resourceful variety of adjectives with which to qualify these "pacifists," e.g. "curious," "jumping," "fire-eating" and "fanatical."

4. "MANCHESTER GUARDIAN" *v.* "TELEGRAPH"

When the columns of the *Manchester Guardian* are consulted, this vituperation may at first well seem puzzling. For that paper never, in so many words, demanded "sanctions" against Japan during the 1931 phase, even "sanctions" of the "mildest" kind. Once or twice, however, it came very near doing so.

Although, at the outset (September 23rd), the *Guardian* expressed the view that the League Council could only hope to succeed by persuasion, by the next day it had decided that the method of conciliation was ineffective when applied to the Japanese Army. If the Japanese peace party did not get the upper hand, then, it was said, the League would either have to admit the Covenant to be unworkable or attempt to apply "the dangerous weapon of 'sanctions'." The choice—"failure or sanctions"—was constantly to be propounded by the *Guardian*. That sanctions *should* be applied was the legitimate inference, but it was not said.

In the event of Japan taking no convincing steps within a fortnight to withdraw her forces, it was urged on October 1st, then it was Lord Reading's duty "to press for active intervention"—the nature of the intervention was not specified. On October 7th, as already noted, "action" was said to be called for "with or without success." Two days later, however, the opinion was voiced that a report under Article XV of the Covenant, the application of which was conditionally advocated, might "prevent the worst from happening." On October 20th came the suggestion that Japan feared the co-operation of the United States with the League in applying economic "sanctions," since "a general boycott of Japanese goods," the United States participating, "would quickly reduce Japan to economic ruin." On October 24th, the *Guardian* maintained that "Japan would be quickly brought to heel" if the League's "last weapon," an "economic boycott," were used; but, it was added, "no one can say whether the League would have the courage to recommend such a drastic step, or whether its individual members would have the loyalty to carry it out."

After the Council's Resolution of that same day, this paper was for the time being content: "The League has done all it can for the moment." But when the Council reassembled, "further and stronger action may be considered." On November 4th, it was urged that the League would have "to take measures" to make the

Japanese Government fulfil its obligations under the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact. The League's emphatic disapproval could only be effective if it took "some practical action." What sort of practical action? The *Guardian* itself asked a question: "Can the League, by means of an economic boycott, force Japan to withdraw her troops to the railway zone?" An answer to that question, it was said, might have to be given on November 16th, and much would depend on the answer. The paper's Correspondent at Geneva said (November 7th) that in some quarters there it was thought that, as a result of joint action by the League Council and the United States, diplomatic representatives might be recalled from Tokyo as "the first step before economic and financial sanctions are adopted." It may be noted that in the *Observer* next day a report from its Tokyo Correspondent said that if the League attempted to apply economic sanctions, it was considered possible that Japan might enter into a pact with the Soviet, seize strategic points in China, for the purpose of ensuring the sources of supply, and defy the League; and that the temper of the people was clearly rising. No doubt, it was the talk about "sanctions" in "League circles at Geneva" which provoked the leaders in the *Express* and the *Mail* on November 9th.

What provoked the *Daily Telegraph*, however, was the leading article in the *Manchester Guardian* on Armistice Day, which declared that no room was left for dodging the issue:

> The Council of the League have requested Japan to withdraw her forces on or before Monday. If Japan still refuses, those Powers which are members of the League—our own country among them—must either climb down and let the League fail utterly, or they must take such action as is needed to enforce their request. It may be to withdraw diplomatic representatives from Japan. It may be to sever economic relations. It may be, in the last resort, war. But if no action is taken, if the Council of the League climbs down, if Japan is allowed to overrun Manchuria at will, and to dictate terms at the bayonet's point, then the League has failed. We cannot let that come to pass.

The reader of those words now may well be forgiven for regarding them as a plain demand for sanctions, diplomatic or economic, and, if necessary, military. The reader at that time must surely be forgiven for doing so. That Japan would not withdraw her forces before November 16th was generally realised. Although the *Guardian* had presented the familiar alternatives, failure or sanctions,

it had this time, it seemed perfectly clear, declared emphatically against the former. It had, indeed, gone on to say that the League's failure would be Great Britain's failure, and that to withdraw our backing of the Council in sustaining the Covenant " would be to betray the work of the men whose lives made the peace possible."

Next day the *Telegraph* launched its attack on " The Firebrands" :

Those whose " advanced " outlook on affairs is in advance of nothing so much as of simple fact and common fairness have been clamouring for the League to take sides actively in what is described as a dispute between Japan and China. But it was reserved for the *Manchester Guardian* to seize the occasion of Armistice Day for the most exaggerated attack on Japan that has so far been published in a reputable newspaper, and for making the suggestion that this country should be prepared to join in the taking of action against Japan even to the extent of making war upon that Power.

After quoting from the offending newspaper, the leader proceeded :

If the statesmen composing the Council were ever so mad as to suggest the possibility of coercion being applied to Japan in this case, there would instantly be a general reaction of opinion—and not in this country alone—such as would shake the League to its foundations and imperil all its future.

The article ended with the already quoted assertion that the equity and good sense of the Manchurian question were on the side of the Japanese Government, and the statement that " a League war," if it were ever to appear a tolerable thing, would not be so in this instance.

The *Guardian* replied on the following day (November 13th). It appeared that the editorial of the 11th had been misunderstood by the *Telegraph*. The *Guardian* had only been reciting the particular things the League States *could* do, in conformity with the Covenant :

We cited the withdrawal of diplomatic representatives, the severance of economic relations, or " in the last resort, war." The *Daily Telegraph* is very severe with us for this " suggestion that this country should be prepared to join in the taking of action against Japan even to the extent of making war upon that Power." *It is not our suggestion.* It is the ultimate sanction, embodied in Article 16 of the Covenant of the League. *We neither wish nor expect to fight the Japanese.* In this, as in all other cases likely to arise, the other means at the League's disposal should be adequate. *Nor, as a matter of practical politics, is there the least likelihood, in the present stage of the world's development, that a sufficient degree of unanimity among the Great Powers could be obtained to make so drastic a step as a " League war " a possible*

expedient. But the Covenant is there. This country has signed it, and pledged her support to it. Why should the *Daily Telegraph* so resent a reminder on Armistice Day of the obligations incurred by this country, along with nearly all other countries, to preserve the world's peace? The *Daily Telegraph* says that if the Council were "ever so mad as to suggest the possibility of coercion" they would shake the League to its foundations. It is not the Council but the text of the Covenant which "suggests the possibility of coercion" and to tear up the Covenant would do more than "shake the foundations" of the League. It would shatter them.[1]

This re-interpretation was lacking neither in skill nor audacity. The *Guardian* safeguarded its position. True, it now declared such a step as war to be impracticable; but "the other means" should be adequate, and it was still the duty of every League member to see that the League did not fail. "War" had been mentioned only because it was in the Covenant. None the less, the *Guardian* had made a mistake in mentioning it. Mr. Mander, when he had spoken that evening in the House, had been much more cautious: he had not gone farther than a "blockade" for which no "physical force" was required.

5. Garvin and "A League War"

At the first attack the *Guardian* had beaten a hasty retreat to safer ground, but that did not prevent Garvin's heavy guns, effectively destructive if rather noisy, from being brought quickly into action. The British people must awaken thoroughly, he declared on November 15th, to the meaning of the Far Eastern question:

> According to some curious pacifists, it might righteously drag them into another Great War! Another—and then? Whatever the chances of a fearful grapple, the nature of the struggle would lead with certainty to further wars. . . . The causes of peace and disarmament would be doomed for centuries. It must not and it shall not be. Not this time.

It was the solemn duty of statesmanship, Garvin urged, to approach the deeply difficult and confused issues in a new temper altogether, "to appease inflamed feeling by the fullest consideration of both sides."

> During the last few weeks jumping pacifists have talked of "bringing Japan to heel." Conceive the incendiary effect of phrases like this upon a proud, sensitive and formidable people. They will abide by reason if this tangled business receives the patient handling it requires, but they

[1] Author's italics.

will never yield to fear. Rather than that, they would face a world in arms, and even then they would give a good account of themselves. For their defensive position is one of enormous strength. If crushed for a time, sooner or later they would fight again.

Yet the fire-eating sect of Leaguers would like a short-term ultimatum to Japan. They rave about "Sanctions"—meaning naval blockade with the British fleet in the forefront. This, of course, would be War, with America muddled into it as well as Europe and Asia. The violent Leaguers, in fact, do not shrink from speaking specifically of "War"—just as in the Corfu trouble they demanded the general bombardment of Italy.

From to-morrow at Paris statesmanship must see to it that League jingoism, pacifism seeing red, and the whole crazy perversion, shall be swept out of the world.

Garvin held that the League could not endure as a coercive institution, but only as "a supreme reconciling agency."

On the following day, the *Manchester Guardian* again reminded its readers of the Covenant's provisions for its own enforcement, speaking more tactfully of "economic as well as diplomatic" pressure, and more accurately "(in the last resort the Council of the League may even recommend the use of armed force)." It asked a question and expressed a hope. Was the League to accept the Japanese position in the matter or "to make some attempt, within the terms of the Covenant, to force the Japanese Government" to carry out its obligations? The *Guardian* hoped the Council would do "everything in its power" to obtain the withdrawal of the Japanese troops. Three days later it went no farther than to urge "an effective protest against Japanese aggression in Manchuria," adding, "and how forlorn a hope that now is!"

6. The Danger Over

On the following day, November 20th, the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* was "in a position to state that any serious danger of this country being dragged into a 'League war' against Japan, or into participation in military, naval, or economic 'sanctions,' which might lead to such a war," was now past. America would not commit herself to participation, and advocated conciliatory methods only: nor would the necessary unanimity be forthcoming on the League Council. The editorial asserted that there was complete agreement between America, France, Germany

and this country that in any event it would be ridiculous to talk of applying economic or military sanctions to the Manchurian affair.

It was on November 26th that the *Times* made its only direct reference to the sanctions issue during this phase :

> The League is of course empowered in certain cases to take the drastic action of imposing an economic blockade upon a country which has offended against its principles ; but in order that such action may have any chance of being effective there must be no doubt that the offender is fundamentally in the wrong, and that the juridical infringement of the Covenant has no sort of justification. That is frankly not the case in the Manchurian dispute.

Although the *Manchester Guardian* was silent about sanctions from the third week in November onwards, concentrating upon criticism of the League Council, the Conservative Press and the League of Nations Union, a few voices on the same side of the controversy were still to be heard as the month expired. Mr. Wickham Steed, doubtfully on that side, had a letter in the *Times*, on November 23rd, advocating "firmness," but without explaining what he meant by it.[1] The *Economist*, which on October 3rd had referred to "an idea in some quarters that the way to handle the matter is to bounce the Japanese representative round the Council Chamber—a strange notion as regards any State, least of all a Great Asiatic Power," and had not been altogether happy about the October 24th Resolution despite its "justice" and "courage," had discussed, hypothetically, the sanctions of Article XVI on November 14th, and a week later spoke of the obligation under it to impose "an economic boycott." The *Economist* thought it clear that the League must "assert itself forthwith in some immediately effective way" or contemplate complete collapse. It admitted "some uncertainty" about how far the United States would be prepared to go along the road of coercion with the League. It was aware that the American

[1] When he asserted three months later that "firmness" ought to have been displayed in September 1931 he was challenged on this point, and replied (*Times*, February 26th, 1932) that the League Council should have avoided taking sides, and at once called upon both parties to cease fighting under warning that otherwise they would incur "the ban" of the other League members ; it should then have sent an impartial Commission of Inquiry to Manchuria, and remained in session pending its report. At the same time the British Government should have informed the public of the gravity of the issues, and should "publicly have urged the Press to withhold support from the Japanese or Chinese thesis and to uphold the principle that, whatever the rights or wrongs of a dispute may be, war shall not be the means of settling it." If this had been done, Mr. Wickham Steed went on, "the Manchurian case would have been manageable. Civilian opinion in Japan would have been strengthened and encouraged. There would have been no war in Shanghai."

Government urged that only peaceful means should be employed, but it was not sure whether that phrase covered either the withdrawal of Ambassadors from Tokyo or the stronger step of an economic boycott. The article terminated with these words :

No doubt one cannot " bell the cat " without a risk of scratches. But if it is a choice—as it certainly is a choice—between risking scratches now and courting destruction in another world war hereafter, who can doubt which is the right course for the Council of the League and the Government of the United States to follow ?

After that article on November 21st, the *Economist* dropped the subject of sanctions for the rest of the year.

Only Mr. H. N. Brailsford, in the *New Leader* on November 27th, seems to have made a direct reply to Garvin. No one, he said, had proposed any armed action whatever. The first step was to invoke one of the Articles of the Covenant action under which would not require Japan's assent. The next step, he suggested, might be the recall of diplomatic representatives from Tokyo, which would be " a strong moral censure—nothing more." Only if that failed would the League resort to a boycott. That did not mean a blockade of the Japanese coasts, but only prohibition of sailing of cargoes from the ports of League members. " The League, with American co-operation, is strong enough to isolate Japan without firing a pistol or moving a gunboat."

Garvin himself held an inquest on " sanctions " on December 20th. The danger " created three months ago " by the extreme advocates of sanctions, he averred, was eliminated almost as soon as it appeared. Discussion could be confined now to " a hypothetical case " which had become " almost astronomically remote from the region of probability." The conception of the League as depending in the last resort upon sanctions—a system not shrinking from " War to Enforce Peace "—was to attempt " to cast out devils by Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils." " The whole soul and hope of peace depend upon abhorrence of organised human bloodshed as a method. . . . War is the same as a method, whether employed in the name of righteousness or without that name."

Let us think it out, " War in the name of the League ! " You either mean it in full earnest or you do not. If you do not, the theory is impotent and the empty threat provocative of defiance. But if you do believe in Sanctions, executed at need by means of organised bloodshed to vindicate the articles of the Covenant, how can you rationally suppose that one

bloody experiment in "authorised hostilities" would be the end of it; or that a hundred or a thousand experiments of the kind would be the end of it? Garvin examined what he called "the concrete realities" of the "recent case." Not a single one of the fifty-odd members of the League would have been effectively available for the purposes of any kind of sanctions against Japan.

So far as the League was concerned, the dogma of Sanctions in the Manchurian question depended upon the assumption that the British people would go to war with the Japanese people 10,000 miles away; and that this island would ruin itself by bearing far more of the human tragedy and the financial cost than all the other members of the League put together. No British Government capable of suggesting that proposition to Parliament can be imagined. Were the proposition conceivable the Government making it would perish in a day.

Garvin maintained that "until the last extremity of compulsion" the British people would not plunge again into international hostilities, and that all reckoning upon armed Sanctions—"that is, upon the everlastingly fatal theory of righteous bloodshed"—depended upon the supposed participation of Great Britain.

7. The League's "Warm Admirers"

That the effect of Garvin's article, to which the quotations given do scant justice, was considerable is plain from subsequent references to it in the Press. Particularly interesting in this connection is the following passage from the reply made by the Editor of the *Manchester Guardian* to a letter from one of its distinguished readers:

We have, probably, as little faith as Mr. Rowntree in the possibility (in the present state of the world's development) of coercing a Great Power by the joint military forces of disinterested Powers. Our objections to the Geneva Protocol of 1924 were based largely on that belief. The failure of the League Council in the present instance, in our view, not only confirms those objections but demonstrates the general inability of the Council in such a case to exercise even those "moral and spiritual influences" to which Mr. Rowntree refers. Without any risk of starting another "war to end war," the Council could have registered a formal protest against the invasion of one State by another, or have insisted upon an unfettered inquiry into the reasons for and methods of the occupation. We do not recommend threats, but we should not on principle object to any measure of moral or material coercion applied to a recalcitrant Power of which the League Council was in fact capable.[1]

[1] December 28th, 1931.

" Formal protest "—" unfettered inquiry "—" no threats " !

When " A Student of the League " published his criticism of the League Council, towards the end of the following January, his view —endorsed editorially—of the action the Council ought to have taken was that it should have " denounced Japan as a treaty-breaker and aggressor, and advised all civilised States to withdraw the heads of their diplomatic missions from Tokyo as a sign of moral disapproval." " No country," he held, " least of all a country so sensitive to world opinion and in such a shaky economic and financial condition as Japan, with so much genuine liberal and pacific feeling, could long withstand the cumulative effects of complete moral isolation and the risk of further complications." [1]

Those " warm admirers " of the League who were pacifists in the strict sense naturally found any suggestion of a " League war " wholly repugnant. The majority who were not absolute pacifists were perhaps even more shocked by " reminders " of those provisions in the Covenant which they had never liked and had done their best to forget—or to treat as safeguards expedient to have on paper but most unlikely ever to be brought into operation. Doubtless they, too, misunderstood the ambiguous language of the *Guardian* and of others who expressed their emotions in similar terms. And when it appeared that, after all, appeals and exhortations might not be enough, and the Covenant might actually have to be enforced, they shrank back in alarm. For the time being they seemed completely at a loss. Anyhow, it is difficult to trace any demand for coercive measures. Seldom were any of those who considered themselves to be the more devoted friends of the League prepared to go beyond " peaceful means," and that phrase, as interpreted at the time, meant protests and (in many cases) withdrawal of diplomatic representatives (although a ban on the export of arms to the Far East had considerable support). Indeed, this seems to have been the real position of the *Manchester Guardian* itself. It was willing enough to wound, but feared to strike any harder. It is also most important to remember that the whole of the self-styled " peace movement " was eagerly awaiting the World Disarmament Conference, due to assemble early in the New Year. The fighting in Manchuria was bad enough ; a League failure to secure a settlement there was bound to prejudice the prospects of the Conference ; but a " League war " against Japan seemed certain to put paid to it.

[1] The *Manchester Guardian*, January 22nd, 1932.

No demand for coercion came from the divided League of Nations Union. Professor Gilbert Murray, writing on "Manchuria; the Moral" in *The Headway* for January 1932, used language which suggested rejection in practice of all economic and military sanctions:

> We ought all to realise that, though the League does contemplate, and must contemplate in the last resort, the forcible coercion of the refractory war-maker, such use of force, whether economic or military, is always deeply regrettable. Morally, it is an admission that reason and co-operation have failed and that force still rules the world. Materially, it is likely to produce widespread misery, and it almost inevitably transforms an unsatisfactory colleague into an avowed enemy. For an individual nation under the pre-League system that was a very serious thing; for the League, it would be disastrous.

Like others, Professor Murray thought that, in so far as there had been a degree of failure, the trouble was in the state of public opinion. Sir Arthur Salter, judging from a reported speech on November 24th, urged only the mobilisation of "all the moral forces of the world." At any rate, "it was very undesirable that there should be any hectoring or school-mastering attitude towards either side."

The *News Chronicle* undoubtedly qualified as "a warm admirer" of the League. Its Foreign Affairs Correspondent drew attention to Article XVI on October 12th, and referred to discussions "in certain capitals" about the possibility of a situation developing "in which the Powers might consider the withdrawal of their representatives from Tokyo." On October 19th, Mr. Wilson Harris wrote of the League's "great" powers, and thought the time had come for discussing openly the possibility of using "one of the least provocative and the most impressive" of them, the withdrawal of Ambassadors from Tokyo. Next day there was editorial comment to the effect that, if Japan maintained her attitude, the League Council would very soon have to decide for itself what action it would take, since the other nations could not afford to proclaim themselves helpless. The question did not come up again until November 11th. The *News Chronicle* had apparently been satisfied with the Resolution of October 24th, concerning which it reported Lord Reading to have said that "there never had been such an unparalleled expression of world condemnation." But, on Armistice Day, editorial reference was made to the apparent impotence of the League, and it was declared that the League was not without

weapons and that the situation could be met "at once and decisively" if the Powers were united. The League could invite the Powers to withdraw their Ambassadors from Tokyo and break off diplomatic intercourse. "That alone would probably be sufficient," and could be done under Article XI without "the unanimity required for further steps." "These further steps (which would certainly be decisive) would be the embargo on trade with Japan which might be instituted under Article XV," and there was said to be "no serious doubt that the United States would act in this matter with the European Powers."

On November 16th, when the Council met in Paris, the *News Chronicle* contemplated the possibility of an appeal by China under Article XV, and, therefore, of the bringing into operation of Article XVI. Although there might be difficulties in the interpretation of these Articles, it was said, there was no doubt that they gave the League ample power, and it was vitally important that it should show that it had the courage "to use any power" that might be necessary to maintain the peace. Similarly, Mr. Wilson Harris wrote that day that "the spread of the Manchurian trouble must be prevented at almost any cost." But, having got so far, the *News Chronicle* drew back. There was a reference to the League Council's "timidity"; an "effective" but undefined League policy was still wanted on November 23rd; the United States was blamed for the Council's abandonment of any attempt to take "strong action"; and Mr. Wilson Harris regretted on December 11th that there had been no public condemnation of Japan. Otherwise there was no further discussion of the sanctions issue, direct or indirect. The *News Chronicle*, indeed, appeared to be more interested in the disarmament campaign.

The *Daily Herald* certainly was. And, throughout this 1931 phase, it made no demand or suggestion for the application of sanctions. Nor did any come from the organised Labour movement, which did, however, launch a great disarmament campaign in December. Moreover, the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Herald* appears to have recognised, during the October Council meeting, that there was no likelihood of "an economic boycott," while on November 9th its Geneva Correspondent reported that rumours of a possible withdrawal of Ambassadors from Japan if that country persisted in its defiance of the League were not taken seriously in well-informed circles.

The *New Statesman*, in mid-October, was still in favour of "conciliation rather than threats." There were "practical difficulties" in trying to press the Covenant against Japan. Though it approved the October 24th Resolution, this weekly declared on the 31st that it was too soon to discuss the application of sanctions, though, if Japan did not change her mind by November 16th, the Council "must be firm and be firmly supported." On November 7th it said that if Japan persisted the Powers would have to decide between abandoning China, Covenant and Pact and coercing the peace-breaker. A week later, the *New Statesman* discussed possible courses of action. The Council, it declared, could not give way on the main point: "Japan must honour her signature, or incur the penalties of the aggressor." Great Britain might be asked to join in denouncing Japan and in breaking off diplomatic relations with her. The withdrawal of Ambassadors was "a grave step"—even the threat of it might strengthen the more moderate elements in Japan. If it failed, the possibility remained of "action under Article XVI, which enjoins the application of economic sanctions." "To that extreme," the article went on, "we still trust that it will not be necessary to go. But it is part of the Covenant . . . and Great Britain is bound to uphold the Covenant." War would not be avoided by the League consenting to a dishonourable peace imposed by Japanese violence. The *New Statesman*, it will be noted, had come to much the same position as the *Manchester Guardian*. On November 28th it described the League as an instrument designed to meet just such a case of aggression as the Japanese case; one "which avoids the necessity of war." "Few nations to-day are likely to stand against the threat of moral and diplomatic isolation: none could run the risk of an economic boycott." If the League were to fail, the fault would be that of its dominant members. The *New Statesman* devoted the second half of this article to support of the disarmament campaign. The two issues were linked together:

> If Japan is permitted to pursue her course unchecked, other aggressive nations have their precedent. If we do not begin the process of disarmament soon, we may look forward with assurance to bankruptcy, European chaos and an early death from bombs or poison gas.

This article seems clearly to imply that in the view of the *New Statesman* coercive measures should be taken by the League States. But one is compelled to doubt whether this weekly was, in fact, prepared to go beyond "moral and diplomatic isolation." That

doubt is strengthened by its line on December 19th, when, declaring that the League had failed, it said, "there seems nothing we can do about it." Certainly, it proposed no coercive action. Yet it did make a proposal. There was "one small measure which we should like to see carried out by this country." That measure was to refuse to export armaments to belligerent countries. The *New Statesman* found it inexplicable that the League of Nations Union hesitated to press the Government on the subject:

> This country cannot make other countries keep their hands clean, but —speaking, at least, for those of us who have no shares in armaments— we would prefer that Great Britain had no further share in shedding this blood.

8. A Foretaste

The discussion about sanctions during this phase provides a foretaste of much subsequent controversy. One side, as soon as they were challenged, disclaimed any idea of resorting to war. They maintained that their actual suggestions were all, so to speak, "short of war"—in this particular case, "far short of war." "Criticus," on behalf of one group within the League of Nations Union, expressed their views as accurately as perhaps they possibly could be, in the January *Headway*:

> Mr. Garvin appears to think that most of the Council's critics were anxious for this country to declare war against Japan. That class of critic I have not yet met. But there were many who desired that some signal demonstration of the Council's disapproval should be given, whether in the shape of an agreement by Council States to withdraw their Ambassadors from Tokyo, or even by serious consideration of some kind of economic boycott, a form of pressure to which Japan is, perhaps, more vulnerable than any country in the world.

The view that "economic sanctions" were entirely "pacific," involving no real risk of war, had not at this time been popularised. It was only in process of formulation; and the opinions of Mr. Mander, of Mr. H. N. Brailsford in the *New Leader*, and of the *New Statesman*, quoted above, provide evidence of the process. But "economic boycott" and "economic blockade" were terms more specific and more alarming than "economic sanctions" or "economic pressure," the later favourites. As has been seen, they were used, even if the things they signified were not definitely demanded.

The other side in the controversy at once denounced advocacy of a " League War." " War " had been specifically mentioned. Even if it had not been, what was meant by " bringing Japan to heel," and " risking scratches " in " belling the cat," " enforcing " the Covenant, " compelling " Japan to fulfil her obligations? " Blockade," anyhow, meant war. So did " economic boycott." So, in all probability, did any form of " economic pressure." Even the much-favoured withdrawal of diplomatic representatives might well mean war. As for " firm action " in the form of " vigorous protests " and " formal condemnations," it was assuredly not likely to promote a pacific settlement. On this side of the controversy, it was also held that unless the merits of the dispute were taken into consideration there was no prospect of success by the methods of persuasion and conciliation. Refusal to discuss the substance of the dispute had strengthened the aggressive military elements in Japan.

PART TWO

THE SECOND PHASE

(JANUARY—MARCH 1932)

CHAPTER THREE

ANGLO-AMERICAN CO-OPERATION

1. The Shanghai Period

WITH the year 1932 we enter upon a still more complicated phase of the Sino-Japanese crisis. From the closing days of January until the end of March public attention was largely concentrated upon events at Shanghai. Manchuria passed into the background. It has sometimes been suggested that had it not been for the Shanghai episode the whole question of Manchuria would have dropped from the public mind. That might well have happened. It was the Japanese action at Shanghai which roused public interest, during the month of February and the first fortnight of March, to a pitch unparalleled at any other stage of the crisis. It was Shanghai which, in very large measure, alienated sympathies from Japan ; and it was Shanghai also which led to a reopening of the discussion about " sanctions." Moreover, during the greater part of the rest of 1932 Manchuria did almost drop from the minds of the great mass of the British people.

Yet, in later years, the Shanghai affair played a minor part in controversy about British policy. Controversy, it is true, centred largely on this second phase of the crisis in the first three months of 1932 ; but it related primarily, not to the handling of the Shanghai problem but to the question of Anglo-American co-operation in the Far Eastern crisis as a whole. At the time, while that question attracted much attention, it aroused relatively little criticism.

Because of this important contrast between the distribution of interest at the time and that in the later years, and because of the wide scope of disputation about the relations between the British and American Governments, it is necessary to give this controversy separate attention so far as it may be feasible to do so. And, since the series of events in dispute began before the hostilities at Shanghai, it seems appropriate to give priority to the subject of Anglo-American co-operation.

2. The Popular Criticism

The case made against the British Government in this particular connection may perhaps be regarded as the key to the whole of the main case against them. The popular criticism is that the British Government ought to have resorted to coercive action against Japan. But, at the time of the Manchurian crisis (and often afterwards), as will be seen, critics who then or later voiced that opinion invariably made any such action conditional upon the co-operation of the United States of America. If, however, it can be shown that the British Government was responsible for any failure to secure joint co-operation in coercive action, the case against them may still hold good. And the charge is that they were so responsible.

It is based upon the British Government's attitude towards two events: (1) the Note addressed by Mr. Henry L. Stimson, the United States Secretary of State, to China and Japan on January 7th, 1932; and (2) Mr. Stimson's open letter to Senator Borah of February 23rd, 1932.

Study of this part of our subject reveals much that is at first sight puzzling. When the House of Commons had its first major debate on the Far Eastern crisis on March 22nd, 1932, Mr. Anthony Eden (then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs) was able to say in his concluding speech—and, as we shall see, with full justification—that the debate had revealed "a very wide measure, perhaps an unexpectedly wide measure, of support for the policy pursued by the Government." "The only suggestion of criticism," he added, "had been that in the pursuit of that policy the Government might perhaps have shown itself a little more vigorous." Yet the events had occurred which provide what basis there is for the main charge subsequently levelled at the British Government. There had been criticisms outside Parliament in relation to them. And, strange as it may at first seem, those criticisms had been voiced in the House of Commons, both before and during the debate, by one Opposition member, Mr. Seymour Cocks, who, none the less, congratulated Sir John Simon, the Foreign Secretary, upon his efforts at Geneva!

The explanantion is that, despite criticisms of the Government's conduct at earlier stages, their later actions had met with approval, and the particular issues raised by the events in question had been disposed of to the satisfaction of the critics. The odd thing is that the criticisms were not only occasionally repeated in the later phases

of the crisis itself but were subsequently revived and used as a foundation for the charge that the Government had rejected American offers of co-operation in resistance to Japan or even in the application of " sanctions " against Japan.

In various forms, this charge was given extensive currency on both sides of the Atlantic. It had attained considerable popularity before Mr. Stimson, in 1936, published his book, *The Far Eastern Crisis.* That book was drawn upon to strengthen it. Indeed, the view that Mr. Stimson both confirmed and established the charge is still widely held ; it has survived even the publication, in 1949, of *On Active Service in Peace and War*, by Mr. Stimson and Mr. McGeorge Bundy. For the student of politics the whole story of the development and propagation of the various myths involved is fascinating and instructive.

3. Sir Norman Angell's Version

From the innumerable versions of the case presented against the British Government, the one selected for purposes of illustration is that set out by Sir Norman Angell in 1937, in his book *The Defence of the Empire.* It has been chosen precisely because this distinguished and influential publicist is so deservedly respected for his intellectual honesty and for his fairness in controversy. His argument reveals all the more strikingly how strong feeling so frequently leads highly intelligent and honourable men to deceive themselves and others.

Sir Norman wrote (p. 91) that the fact which stands out most prominently in the story of the Far Eastern " retreat," as he called it, " is the curious rejection by Britain of *an insistent American offer to co-operate in resistance* as an alternative to submission." He described it as the first of two occasions upon which " we were offered American co-operation, and *rejected* it, *preferring retreat* to resistance in common with the United States." When, in the Far Eastern crisis, " the United States not only offered their co-operation and support but urgently begged us to make common cause with her *in resistance to Japan*, we rejected the plea . . . so casually, so curtly, as gravely to offend an American administration which was more than usually well-disposed to us." Later on, Sir Norman applied the adjective " crude " to this alleged refusal to co-operate. Mr. Stimson was brought forward as the chief witness :

In his book, Mr. Stimson points out that not only was America

prepared to co-operate with Britain and other States in resistance to Japan, but that *again and again* the United States took the lead in initiating *policies of resistance, going far beyond League proposals.* Not only (Mr. Stimson makes it clear) would League States have had nothing to fear from the United States in measures designated to restrain Japan, but could count upon active co-operation.[1]

What is the impression conveyed to the reader? Is it not that the United States of America was ready and eager to take action in resistance to Japan, and was deterred only by the attitude of the British Government? "Resistance," of course, may take many forms. What kind of "resistance" did the United States Government propose? By what methods did that Government suggest that Japan should be "restrained"? What were the proposals which went "far beyond" the League's proposals? The reader of Sir Norman Angell's book reads on in vain for information on these points. The one American policy mentioned, though it is introduced by the word "particularly," is "'the Stimson doctrine' of non-recognition—the notification to Japan that no change brought about by military force in violation of treaties would be recognised by the other signatories to those treaties." That is the little mouse that emerges from Sir Norman's mountain.

His readers might well have been forgiven for thinking that the United States Government must, at least, have proposed economic sanctions against Japan. That, indeed, is the impression that was sedulously fostered in the years after the crisis, and anyone engaged upon educational work in this sphere has constantly encountered, and still encounters, the belief that the American Government proposed economic sanctions or would have done so if it had not been for British reluctance.

Yet all that Sir Norman Angell actually produced was, in his own words, a "diplomatic sanction," namely, the application of the doctrine of non-recognition. Nothing else, indeed, could be produced, save another diplomatic move—the procedure of "invoking the Nine Power Pact." Doubtless, the more careful of Sir Norman's readers would have been puzzled by this anti-climax, had it not been for that introductory word "particularly," and for Sir Norman's immediate explanation that:

> Whatever other effects that "diplomatic sanction" might have had, it would have had this: to commit America to much closer general

[1] Author's italics.

co-operation with ourselves in common resistance to aggression ; to make the Kellogg Pact a political reality ; to secure from the United States acquiescence in the British view of sea rights whenever naval action was invoked on behalf of treaties like the Kellogg Pact.

But Sir Norman Angell entirely overlooked one vital point. After all, the " diplomatic sanction " *was* adopted and applied by Great Britain and the other League States. Sir Norman did not mention that. He dealt, at some length, with Mr. Stimson's Note of January 7th, 1932, describing it, in Mr. Stimson's words, as the American Government's " most signal effort." He then asserted that " the British Government turned the whole thing down—coldly, curtly, *refusing, in effect, further co-operation.*"[1] Whether or not that is an accurate version of the British Government's response at the time to the Note in question is a matter for consideration. But Sir Norman Angell's conclusions were inconsistent with the facts on public record, facts, moreover, referred to in Mr. Stimson's book. For the moment it will suffice to point out that :

(1) On February 16th, 1932, the twelve neutral members of the League Council, including Great Britain, addressed a Note to Japan endorsing the doctrine of non-recognition ;

(2) From the closing days of January 1932, onwards, there was close co-operation between the United States and British Governments in regard to the situation at Shanghai ; and

(3) On March 7th, 1932, the British Government proposed a resolution in the Assembly of the League of Nations laying down the principle of non-recognition, and this resolution was passed unanimously on March 11th.

Sir Norman Angell, one would have thought, would have been well aware of these facts, even if, which seems incredible, he failed to note Mr. Stimson's references to them. Had he taken due account of them, his argument would have had to take a different and much modified form. His charge against the British Government would have had to be drastically reduced to one of delay in adopting the Stimson policy of non-recognition of changes brought about by aggression. Sir Norman rightly urged that everyone should read Mr. Stimson's book. It is a pity that so few appear to have followed his advice. Mr. Stimson himself was to complain, before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (January 29th,

[1] Author's italics.

1941), that "Great Britain has so many times been mistakenly criticised with my apparent authority by people who had not read my book." It must be assumed, of course, that Sir Norman Angell had carefully read the whole book himself. One is tempted to say that nobody who has done so would get that impression from Sir Norman's treatment of the subject; but, as Sir John Pratt has pointed out, earnest and intelligent people did read the book and yet remained convinced that Mr. Stimson had said exactly the opposite of what he did say. That was not Mr. Stimson's fault. This most remarkable and important phenomenon is repeatedly encountered in such matters. Sir John Pratt has rightly said that "there can hardly have been any period in history when men so obstinately refused to see facts which they did not wish to see, or so persistently credited obvious shams and falsehoods because they fitted conveniently into the general pattern of their beliefs." [1]

4. Difficulties of Co-operation

Study fails to reveal the slightest ground for the view that either the British Government or the United States Government was lukewarm in its desire for co-operation. On the one side, British Governments, inevitably, have made co-operation with the United States one of the cardinal objects of their foreign policy, particularly since 1929, and the "National" Governments which were in office during the Manchurian crisis were no exception. Their head, MacDonald, was a keen advocate of the closest possible collaboration with the United States, and he had met with considerable success in promoting such collaboration, even at the cost, as it may be argued, of incurring some risks to British security.[2] In the Far East, Great Britain was clearly dependent upon American co-operation,

[1] *War and Politics in China*, pp. 208-9.

[2] Mr. Stimson had met MacDonald in October 1929. In *On Active Service in Peace and War*, the following passage occurs, p. 29: "MacDonald's gentle sincerity, and his instinctive eloquence and charm, made him the ideal ambassador of a reconstructed friendship. . . . Stimson found himself strongly drawn to this Scotsman, so friendly and understanding, so patently one who loved peace and good will to all men, and his friendship with MacDonald grew stronger with every later meeting. Not a year passed in the seven before MacDonald's death that the two men did not meet, at first mainly on business, and, after Stimson left office, as old friends and joint lovers of the Scottish moors." In a *Daily Herald* article on February 6th, 1932, Professor H. J. Laski wrote that Mr. Stimson "was not the kind of man to get on with Mr. MacDonald. He likes people to emerge from detail; detail irritates the Prime Minister. He is unhappy unless a decision is clear and exact; the Prime Minister hates decisions as such, and, if they are to be made, likes them left ill-defined and capable of variation. He does not enjoy 'small talk,' which is the Prime Minister's speciality."

although this obvious fact was often ignored by the British Government's critics. On the other side, Mr. Stimson's desire for close collaboration will not be questioned by anyone who has read his book.

But the keenest desire for co-operation on the part of the two Governments was not enough, and the co-operation desired was not fully and continuously achieved. Anglo-American co-operation presented difficult problems. It still does. It is bound to continue to do so. People sometimes seem to think that co-operation with another Government means or implies uncritical acceptance of that Government's policy, and even prompt endorsement of its independent actions. That, of course, is not the case. The Governments of the United States and Great Britain, moreover, are responsible to their respective peoples, and, therefore, much influenced by public opinion. " Isolationist " sentiment in the United States was far stronger at the time of the Manchurian crisis than it was ten years later. And there was the special complication of the League of Nations. Great Britain was a Member State of the League, and the League at once took action in regard to the Manchurian dispute. United States co-operation with Great Britain involved United States co-operation with the League. Not only was the United States outside the League, but a large body of American opinion was hostile to the League and highly suspicious of any form of association with it. Mr. Stimson emphasised these facts in his book (p. 153), adding : " Furthermore, to a great many of our people Manchuria was an unknown part of the earth and they wondered what we had to do with any controversy there at all." Mr. Stimson could not act without reference to the state of American public opinion. He pointed out that " even the most normal and rational steps which might be taken by an American Secretary of State in such a situation were certain to be the subject of critical scrutiny and possible attack from some of his countrymen."

The United States Government, it is true, was free to co-operate with its fellow-signatories of the Pact of Paris (the Kellogg Pact), and of the Nine Power Treaty relating to the Far East ; but neither treaty provided any machinery for such co-operation. American policy, moreover, was based strictly on these treaties. It was kept, in Mr. Stimson's words, " sharply distinct " from the Covenant of the League.

At the very beginning of the Sino-Japanese dispute, the League

Council sounded the United States Government about sending a representative to sit jointly with them. Mr. Stimson has described his hesitation about this proposal. " The risk of a hostile reaction at home had been so manifest." American acceptance of the Council's formal invitation, given after so much difficulty on October 16th, 1931, was subject to important conditions. The United States representative, Mr. Gilbert, was instructed to participate in the Council's discussions when they related to the possible application of the Kellogg Pact, but otherwise he was to be only an observer and auditor. In taking his place Mr. Gilbert told the Council :

> My Government does not seek to intrude with respect to such measures as you may propose under the Covenant of the League of Nations ; and is not in a position to participate with the members of the Council in the formulation of any action envisaged under that instrument for the composing of differences existing between two of its members. . . . In your deliberations as to the application of the machinery of the Covenant of the League of Nations, I repeat, we can take no part.

This procedure was applied. According to Mr. Stimson, after the invocation of the Kellogg Pact had been concluded, he " directed Mr. Gilbert to retire on October 24th from his temporary seat at the table of the Council and to resume the normal position which he had always occupied in the Council room as one of the observers."

At Paris, in the following month, no American representative appeared either at the Council table or in the Council room. General Charles G. Dawes was sent to Paris to be available for consultation, but " it was left entirely to his discretion as to whether and when he should attend in person the actual meetings of the Council." [1] Lord Cecil has asserted that the members of the Council had given Mr. Gilbert a " tactlessly warm welcome," " with the result that the Isolationists in America secured a discontinuance of the experiment." [2]

An American critic, Mr. Felix Morley, writing in 1932, described United States co-operation with the League as " fitful and uncertain." Mr. A. J. Toynbee, who will certainly not be accused of any undue tenderness towards the British Government, used almost the same adjectives. American inclination to co-operation, he wrote, was " fitful and precarious." Mr. Stimson himself has

[1] *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 75. See also Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis*, pp. 156-69.

[2] *The Great Experiment*, p. 225.

written of " the complex and fluctuating course of American co-operation with the League during the autumn of 1931." The policy of the United States Government was one of co-operation from outside, " independent co-operation." Such a policy was not easy to apply. Sometimes the independence was more conspicuous than the co-operation.

The fact was that there were two separate procedures : that of the United States and that of the League. Effective co-ordination between them was not always secured. There was no machinery for co-ordination, and American policy precluded its development.[1] While, in the 1931 phase, the independent actions of the United States Government were, on the whole, subordinated to the requirements of the desired collaboration with the League, in the early weeks of 1932 that Government made an important departure in policy on its own initiative. In doing so, it twice suggested or proposed that Great Britain should act independently of the League. Mr. Stimson's criticisms of the British Government relate primarily to those two incidents, the Note of January 7th, and the proposed invocation of the Nine Power Treaty which preceded the Letter to Senator Borah on February 23rd.

As will be seen, Mr. Stimson was not unaware of the difficulties which his suggestions raised for the British Government. In this country there were several Ministerial references to the problem.[2] Mr. Eden, for example, explained Britain's position on February 29th, 1932, in these terms :

> Great Britain has a double duty ; as a signatory of the Nine Power Treaty, and also as a member of the League. And British policy has been to collaborate with both the League and the United States of America, and the Government would continue to seek for that dual co-operation.

Nor did the difficulty of Britain's situation escape attention in the British Press at the time of the Note of January 7th. Later critics of the British Government in this country were, in general, strongly opposed to any action being taken independently of the League ;

[1] On January 31st, 1932, at the outset of the Shanghai crisis, the *Observer* said that Britain and America ought long before to have arrived at a common constructive policy regarding China and Manchuria, but that America had rejected the only method which could meet the case. " That method means, as between the United States and other countries, normal, regular co-operation, instead of intermittent contacts compelled by emergencies and dangers which a more foresighted procedure would have prevented."

[2] See the speeches of Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden, in the House of Commons, March 22nd, 1932, quoted below, p. 615.

and on the one or two occasions when such action could be alleged were in some instances bitterly condemnatory.

Independent action taken either by the United States Government or by the League of Nations naturally caused some annoyance to the other party. Such irritation may have impeded further co-operation, but there is little evidence of it. More important was the evidence such incidents themselves provided of divided counsels and lack of effective collaboration. Even so, the resulting ill effects appear in a later perspective to have been greatly exaggerated. The general policies of the United States of America, on the one hand, and of Great Britain and other major League Powers, on the other hand, were essentially the same, whatever differences of motive there may have been, and although there were differences from time to time about the methods to be adopted, more particularly about their timing. On the question of coercive action against Japan the attitude of both sides was the same. And it is highly improbable that either the Japanese or the Chinese failed to realise that that was so.

That there should have been criticism of one collaborator by the other is no matter for surprise. Nor was it confined to one side. That has already been made clear by the references above to British Press criticism of American policy in the 1931 phase. Mr. Stimson's criticisms in his 1936 book have largely obscured that fact, owing to the position he held during the crisis and to the propagandist exploitation of his views. But it is fully recognised in his subsequent pronouncements—particularly in his reconsideration of the case in *On Active Service in Peace and War*. Indeed, what he wrote there, in relation to the 1931 phase, might well be applied to the crisis as a whole. There was " misunderstanding and error on both sides," but " in spite of these minor difficulties the American effort to co-operate with the League was in general successful, for the major League Powers fully shared the American view that every effort should be made to achieve a settlement by conciliatory methods but without surrendering the obvious rights of China." [1] It will be seen that the major difficulty arose when the United States Government decided that it was useless to persist any longer in efforts at conciliation.

p. 72.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STIMSON NOTE

IN considering the two incidents: (1) that of the Note of January 7th; and (2) that of the proposed invocation of the Nine Power Washington Treaty in the following February, the information provided in later years by Mr. Stimson and others will be utilised. In the case of Mr. Stimson that is requisite, if only because statements made by or attributed to him have been the chief basis of criticism since the publication of his book in 1936. But, of course, constant reference will be made to the information available to the British public at the time.

1. THE NOTE OF JANUARY 7TH, 1932

Mr. Stimson's Note to China and Japan of January 7th, 1932, stated:

> . . . the American Government deems it to be its duty to notify both the Imperial Japanese Government and the Government of the Chinese Republic that it cannot admit the legality of any situation *de facto* nor does it intend to recognise any treaty or agreement entered into between those Governments, or agents thereof, which may impair the treaty rights of the United States or its citizens in China, including those which relate to the sovereignty, the independence, or the territorial and administrative integrity of the Republic of China, or to the international policy relative to China, commonly known as the open door policy; and that it does not intend to recognise any situation, treaty, or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Pact of Paris of August 27th, 1928, to which Treaty both China and Japan, as well as the United States, are parties.

The first point about this Note is that it represented a decision taken independently by the United States Government without consultation with any other Government. According to Mr. Stimson, he saw the British and French Ambassadors separately two days before the Note was published; read to them a draft of the Note; told them of his intention to send it; and pointed out that his action "would be assisted and made more effective if other countries like Great Britain and France who were in a similar position to us

took similar steps." Mr. Stimson told the Ambassadors that he was sending the Note " promptly within a day or two." He asked them to communicate his intention to their respective Governments. He did not ask for any reply : he " waited for results," to use his own expression in his more recent book. The Ambassadors did not receive copies of the Note for transmission to their Governments until it had been delivered to the Chinese and Japanese representatives on January 7th. Such was the " offer of co-operation " referred to by Sir Norman Angell and by so many others.

That there had been no consultation with the British or any other Government was known at the time. Mr. Stimson's account only confirmed in this respect the reports then published in the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*.[1] The first news of the Note from Washington in the former newspaper on January 8th gave an official American interpretation of it as " technically an invocation of the rights of the United States and its citizens under the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact. The machinery of the Nine Power Treaty calling for consultation among the Powers, however, has not been invoked." The *Times* referred to the provision in that treaty for " full and frank communication " between the interested Powers whenever a situation arose to which the treaty was applicable.[2] The absence of consultation was plainly resented by the *Times*, notably in its editorial on January 11th. The reports in that and some other British newspapers also showed that Mr. Stimson, when handing copies of the Note on the 7th to the diplomatic representatives of the other six Washington Treaty Powers, and in his previous interviews with the two Ambassadors, had not actually invited the Governments concerned to take similar action, but had let it be known that such action would be welcomed.[3]

The next point is that Mr. Stimson, in his book, explained clearly

[1] In reference to a report from Washington that there had been consultation, the *Times* set out the facts on January 9th and showed that there could have been no question of " consulting " the representatives of other Powers : " . . . if the United States Government had intended to consult the signatories of the Nine Power Treaty it would have given them more time to study the terms of the Note."

[2] The editorial in the *Morning Post* on January 9th said : " . . . it would be erroneous reading of their Note to suppose that they were invoking, or intending to invoke, the Washington Treaty, or proposed consultation with its signatories."

[3] The Washington Correspondent of the *Times* considered this " tantamount to an invitation to these Powers to take independent and similar action." (January 9th.) See the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Telegraph*, and the *Daily Express* editorial on January 8th ; also the *Daily Mail*, Washington (Central News) : " Mr. Stimson, however, it is said, will in no way indicate that he desires to solicit this support." (January 9th.) ; and the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Morning Post*. (January 11th.)

how the Note came to be sent, and what its purpose was ; so clearly, indeed, as to make " misunderstanding " a totally inadequate word by which to account for the behaviour of those who used his book as a basis for criticism of the British Government. The Note's primary purpose, said Mr. Stimson, was " to record the final decision of an influential Government. . . ." (p. 97). It was intended " to close an episode and terminate discussion " (p. 133). It was to wind up discussion " with a snap " (p. 92), and " by a final notice of our rights " (p. 93). Mr. Stimson stated that as early as November 9th, 1931, he and his assistants had begun to discuss the use of a notice of non-recognition as an " ultimate possible weapon " (p. 93). Such a notice, he had considered, would be a possible " substitute " for economic sanctions, and one " which would at least carry the force and implication of a moral condemnation " (p. 92). The United States Government had come to the conclusion that conciliation had failed, and had decided to terminate in this way the efforts it had been making. It was precisely for this reason that any previous discussion of the Note with other Governments with a view to joint action was ruled out.[1]

2. The British Press and the Note

The question arises : How far was the nature and purpose of the Note understood in this country at the time ? It is not possible to say to what extent Mr. Stimson attempted to convey, or succeeded in conveying, his Government's " purposes and intentions " to the British Ambassador, who, after his interview with Mr. Stimson on January 5th, had promptly informed the Foreign Office. So far as the Press is concerned, the *Daily Telegraph*, in its editorial of January 9th, gave a remarkably accurate interpretation :

> It is extremely important that the exact bearing of the American Note should be correctly understood. It is in no sense an American " intervention." It is not even a formal protest, for no charge is made directly, or indirectly, of any actual violation of American rights. It may be described rather as a pointed reaffirmation of those rights and a declaration in advance, formal and precise, that the United States will

[1] " The purpose and character of such a Note obviously precluded a preliminary general conference in respect to it with other nations." The additional reason was given that " Any attempt to discuss such a Note with a view to joint action by the entire group of signatories of the Nine Power Treaty or of the Pact of Paris would inevitably have produced hesitation, delays and leaks to the Press. These would have impaired, if they had not destroyed, the psychological effect of the Note." (pp. 97-8.)

not acknowledge their impairment by the events which are now taking place in Manchuria. Washington, in legal parlance, has entered a caveat—a caveat against the existence of her rights being forgotten or ignored. . . . Washington, in fact, sharply recalls to the memory and attention of Japan both the Nine Power Treaty of 1921 and the Kellogg Pact.[1]

It was certainly not fully realised that the American Government had abandoned a policy of conciliation for one of "moral condemnation," of "obtaining and maintaining a world judgment against Japan."[2] And, after all, Mr. Stimson had not made that plain. For reasons which he was to explain many years later, and which will receive attention, he refrained from making it clear that the "moral weapon" of non-recognition was intended to be a "substitute" for "sanctions." The Note of January 7th contained an "implied threat."[3] Yet, on the whole, the British Press did not attach much importance to that threat. Nor, for that matter, did anyone else. The Note was not taken as a first step towards coercive measures.

The *Times*, for the moment, was reserved : it did not comment editorially until January 11th. The *Morning Post* went no farther than to speak of the American Government having entered "a caveat" (January 9th). The *Daily Mail*, on the same day, dismissed its first impression that the Note was "a definite challenge to the whole Japanese position," and took the opportunity, in reference to the "jingo pacifists" in this country, "to state quite frankly and quite categorically that in no circumstances could the British people allow themselves to become embroiled in a war against Japan." It appended its conviction that the "good sense of the American people would just as strongly condemn any such course." On January 8th, the *Daily Express* seemed alarmed, the step taken by the United States Government might be "fraught with grave consequences ;" but on the next day it was confidently reassuring : "The world can calm itself. America has always had great faith in the value of a Note. It commits the nation to nothing and sustains the national self-respect." Mr. Wickham Steed, in the *Sunday Times* on the 10th, interpreted the Note as telling Japan and China, more

[1] On the previous day, a Reuter message from Washington had said : "The apparent purpose was to marshal world indignation against any breakdown of the treaty structure protecting China. Talk of immediate drastic action, including the rupture of diplomatic relations, found no echo in official circles." (The *Daily Telegraph*, January 8th, 1932.)

[2] *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 97.

[3] *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 96.

particularly Japan, " to mind what they are about," while the *Observer* did not consider the Note alarming, for there was " no threat of active intervention by America in the Far East."

On the Left, " the point and purpose of the move " were " not very apparent " to the *Daily Herald* on January 9th, for " nobody imagines that the United States will do anything about it —or that the other Powers will do anything—or that the League will do anything." The *News Chronicle* that same day did not allude to the possibility of any further action on the part of the United States. Nor did the *Manchester Guardian*: indeed, it seemed to suggest that those in this country who had been called " sentimental busybodies " had only suggested that the League Council should take " a similar stand in defence of the Covenant " to that Mr. Stimson had taken in defence of the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact. When it came to deal with the matter on January 16th, the *New Statesman* wrote that the Note appeared to have caused more annoyance than alarm in Tokyo, " for the Japanese do not suppose, any more than anybody else, that the United States is threatening war."

The real significance of the Note appeared to be grasped by the *Economist* (January 16th), for it suggested that in the Japanese view " Mr. Stimson's Note is assuredly a substitute for action and not a prelude to it. In the picturesque language of a Chinese observer, who is as much disgruntled as the Japanese are self-satisfied, ' the Note has the head of a dragon and the tail of a rat.' " This Chinese comment had been reported in the *Guardian* on the 11th by its Peking Correspondent, who added that the view there was that the American Government's step was unlikely to produce any appreciable modification of Japanese policy. A similar report, also from Peking, appeared on the same day in the *Times*: " The local Kuomintang organ expresses a widely held opinion when it describes Mr. Stimson's action as tantamount to ' locking the door after the thief walked off with the jewels.' "

3. The Press and Non-Recognition

In view of subsequent controversy, it is particularly interesting to note the initial reactions in the British Press to the non-recognition policy. In the Stimson Note itself, the intention to apply such a policy in relation to any breach of the Kellogg Pact took second place. It

was related primarily to any impairment of "the treaty rights of the United States or its citizens in China," although in this connection reference was made to Chinese sovereignty, independence and territorial and administrative integrity as well as to the Open Door policy. In such circumstances, it is not altogether surprising that the prevalent interpretation in this country was that the Note's primary object was the protection of American trading and other interests. On the whole, relatively little importance was attached to the general policy of non-recognition of changes brought about by armed force.

The attitude of the *Times* demands special attention later. In the *Daily Telegraph*, the emphasis was placed upon "American rights," although its Washington Correspondent immediately drew attention to the importance attached "by experts" there to the final part of the Note relative to the Kellogg Pact. The *Morning Post*, in its editorial of the 9th, attributed the Note to a quite natural anxiety on the part of the United States "to maintain the rights of their subjects and of the Open Door in China." Nothing was said of the non-recognition doctrine. The Washington Correspondent of this paper, however, after reporting that the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Castle, had explained that the Note was "a mere statement of American rights," and discussing the Open Door, added that the non-recognition statement in regard to the Kellogg Pact was a second feature which was "regarded as of great importance." An Exchange report on the same day said that the State Department had received a flood of protests from American firms in Manchuria against Japanese interference with their business. The *Daily Mail*, after a closer study of the Note, came to the view that in reality it "was meant to do nothing more than assert the right of United States citizens and trade to the maintenance of the 'open door.'" It did not mention non-recognition. The *Express* mentioned it only in connection with the rights of American citizens and the policy of the Open Door. The non-recognition policy attracted no attention in the *Sunday Times* on January 10th. The *Observer*, however, said, without discussing the matter further, that the Note initiated "one new principle of capital importance for the future of international law—the principle that territorial aggrandisement as the result of arbitrary force employed by any single nation in disregard of the rest cannot be recognised by the United States."

In the Press of the Left, the *Manchester Guardian* dealt with the Note in its editorial of the 9th under " the question of trade." The feature of the Nine Power Treaty to which it called attention was the pledge to maintain the Open Door policy, and this was the fact of which, it said, Mr. Stimson had " vigorously if belatedly " reminded the Japanese and Chinese. The *Guardian* limited its reference to the non-recognition declaration to any change that " at all conflicted with the ' open door ' policy," which was " as good as saying that the United States will not tolerate any extension of Japanese influence in Manchuria." Mr. W. N. Ewer, the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, said (January 9th) that the Note meant nothing when it reminded Japan of the Kellogg Pact and of the promise to respect China's integrity and independence ; but that it did mean something when it reminded her that the Washington Treaty assured to all the Powers " equality of opportunity " for their commerce and industry. United States trading interests, he added, had been getting a little nervous. Mr. Ewer had more to say about the Open Door, but nothing about " non-recognition " ; nor was there any editorial reference to the latter subject. To the *News Chronicle* on the 9th the important feature of the Note was a blunt declaration that the Open Door policy in China, as guaranteed in the Nine Power Treaty, must be respected. The Nine Power Treaty, it was said, as all concerned had known all the time, had been impudently violated by Japan " in every possible way both in spirit and in letter." The British Government had continued " to fumble feebly with an issue which it dare not face " ; the United States Government had taken " a singularly long time to act " ; while the British Government and the League ought themselves to have taken such action long before. Presumably, this " action " was the " blunt declaration " that the Open Door policy must be respected. In this paper, again, there was no mention of the non-recognition principle. Nor was there in the *New Statesman*. That weekly described the Note " as an announcement that America would not recognise any action or arrangement that violated the 'open door ' policy as laid down in the Nine Power Treaty of 1922, and a pretty plain suggestion that Japan, in the eyes of Washington, was preparing to close the door." On the other hand, the *Economist* had a good deal to say about the matter of non-recognition on January 16th.[1]

[1] See pp. 85-6, below.

4. A British Response?

On the subject of a response by the British Government to the suggestion that it should take similar action, the *Times* said nothing. The *Telegraph*, however, immediately raised the question of Great Britain's position as a member of the League. Its Diplomatic Correspondent said on the 9th that if any move was made by Great Britain it could not be in terms identical with the American Note, since Britain's attitude had hitherto been governed by the League Covenant rather than by the Kellogg Pact or the Nine Power Treaty. Editorially, on the same day, it was pointed out that "whatever step the British Government might be disposed to take in that direction is hampered by the fact that Great Britain is already committed to procedure through the League of Nations."

The *Morning Post*, confining its attention to the "open door" question, also contended that Great Britain was in a different position, on the ground that she and the other League Powers had already received assurances on the subject from the Japanese delegate at the League Council, whereas the United States, being absent, had not, "which explains their individual protest." This paper thought there was some confusion between the sovereignty or integrity of China and the Open Door, "which is a question of access." As to sovereignty, "it is in vain to prop up a system of government which cannot maintain order in its own territories." Britain and America had both had similar experiences to those of Japan in Manchuria: "these things happen in Nicaragua and elsewhere, rather as part of the upward course of nature than from any design of 'wicked Imperialism.'" China, the paper declared, had the remedy in her own hands.

Neither the *Mail* nor the *Express* discussed the matter. The *Herald* did not expect anything to be done about it. The *News Chronicle* and the *Guardian*, on the other hand, plainly implied that similar action ought to have been taken by Great Britain and the League Powers long before, yet they did not even discuss the question whether or not Great Britain ought to take such action independently of the League either with or without the co-operation of the other signatories of the Nine Power Treaty.

5. The Foreign Office Communiqué

In the course of Saturday, January 9th, the British Foreign Office issued the following communiqué:

His Majesty's Government stand by the policy of the open door for international trade in Manchuria, which was guaranteed by the Nine Power Treaty at Washington.

Since the recent events in Manchuria, the Japanese representatives at the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva stated on the 13th October that Japan was the champion in Manchuria of the principle of equal opportunity and the open door for the economic activities of all nations. Further, on the 28th December, the Japanese Prime Minister stated that Japan would adhere to the Open Door policy and would welcome participation and co-operation in Manchurian enterprise.

In view of these statements, His Majesty's Government have not considered it necessary to address any formal Note to the Japanese Government on the lines of the American Government's Note, but the Japanese Ambassador in London has been requested to obtain confirmation of these assurances from his Government.

This statement is the real basis of the accusation that the British Government rejected an American " offer to co-operate in resistance to Japan." It provides, perhaps, the only point of substance upon which such a charge could be formulated. We have seen that there was, in fact, no American " offer." There was not even a formal request. But there was a suggestion ; and the Foreign Office communiqué was, or appeared to be, the British Government's response to that suggestion. As such, it has been severely criticised. It has loomed large in subsequent controversy. At the time, however, it received relatively little attention. There had been no demand in this country for an affirmative response from the British Government to the specific suggestion made (or, rather, to the hope expressed) by the American Secretary of State. When the communiqué was issued, there was some criticism, but for the most part either approval or indifference.

6. The Press on the Communiqué

On the next day (January 10th), the *Sunday Times* published the statement without comment. The Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Observer* explained from official information the " delicate situation " in which the American Note had placed the British Government, whose attitude to the Far Eastern problem had been announced by Sir John Simon in the House of Commons. " The problem is regarded as one of an unusual complexity, both because of the lack of an effective Chinese Government and because of the

former injustices suffered by legitimate Japanese interests in Manchuria." The Correspondent referred to the specific undertakings about the Open Door given by the Japanese, and to the fact that no corresponding undertaking had been given to Washington. It was considered by London, he said, that confirmation of the assurances was all that would be necessary, so far as London was concerned, to " satisfy the anxiety that prompted the step taken by the United States."

On January 11th, the *Times* alone among the prominent dailies made any editorial comment on the communiqué. It approved the decision of the British Government in terms which will be discussed later. The *Telegraph* published the bare substance of the communiqué in nine lines of small print and without comment. The *Morning Post* gave the text, its Diplomatic Correspondent adding the reminder that the United States Government had not invited the British or any other Government to participate in its action. The *Express* devoted eleven lines to the communiqué without comment, while the *Mail* apparently published nothing at all about it. The *Herald* printed three brief paragraphs giving the gist of the statement but without comment of any kind. None of these five newspapers ever discussed the communiqué editorially at all.

The *News Chronicle* and the *Manchester Guardian* reported the communiqué on the 11th (the former briefly, the latter in full), but neither made any comment until the following day. The *News Chronicle* then took the line that it would have been far better for the Foreign Secretary to have said nothing at all. " The American Note at least referred to the fact that Japan's action was a flagrant and obvious breach of the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact " (which, incidentally, was not true), and that action was also, of course, a blunt defiance of the League Covenant. The inference drawn from the Foreign Office statement by the *News Chronicle* was that these things were of no importance to us so long as our trade interests were secure, which, incidentally, it said, they were not. The United States had had " the courage to call Japan's buccaneering expedition by the right name " (it had not, in fact, called it anything), and we had allowed America " to pose before the world as the one true friend of China." Once again, it may be noted, no reference was made by this newspaper to the non-recognition policy ; nor was any criticism directed at the British Government on the ground of failure to co-operate with the United States.

That is also true of the *Guardian*, which criticised the decision " not to support this American protest." This newspaper found the " satisfaction " with which the Government's statement had been received difficult to understand, " unless it is that the timidity of public opinion is willing to support any decision to do nothing." The main point in a rather brief editorial dealt with the argument in " certain sections of the Press " to the effect that China's administrative integrity did not exist and had not existed when the treaty was drawn up in 1922. " This argument," it was said, " driven to its logical conclusion, would appear to mean that the treaty intended to preserve the integrity of China in fact authorises its piecemeal destruction." In all probability the allusion was primarily to the editorial in the *Times* on the previous day (January 11th). In subsequent controversy, that editorial was to play a most important part, and, indeed, almost to overshadow the communiqué itself; but, for the time being, it aroused little comment in this country. And, until the outbreak of hostilities at Shanghai towards the end of the month, the Stimson Note and the Foreign Office communiqué were only very occasionally mentioned outside the columns of the *Guardian*.

The *New Statesman* treated the matter briefly and somewhat casually on the 16th. It was " not quite so sure " as the British Government that Japanese assurances about the Open Door would prove reliable, though it would " continue to hope "— " if only because there was nothing else to be done now that Japan has defied covenants and pacts "—adding, however, that the Stimson Note might prove a useful reminder later on. The *New Leader* was completely silent about the whole matter, Mr. H. N. Brailsford writing on the 15th about War Debts. The article in the *Economist* that week (January 16th) has, however, considerable interest, because it criticised the Foreign Office communiqué on grounds which were in substance to be presented several years later by Mr. Stimson himself:

> In this British official communiquè the exclusive reference to the Open Door makes the other subject of the Washington Nine Power Treaty—that is, " the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial and administrative integrity of China "—conspicuous by the very silence in which it was passed over. It is almost as though the Foreign Office had " tipped the wink " to the Japanese Government that Japan could do what she liked about China's integrity and independence as far as Great Britain was concerned.

In this article, all the emphasis was put on the non-recognition policy. The *Economist*, as already noted, did not interpret the Stimson Note as a threat of or a prelude to coercive action. But it " ventured to prophesy " that it would work " like a piece of radium, which appears to be lying inert in a box, while all the time it is emitting a penetrating and destructive and unceasing radiation." The British Government was described as " following the dictates of a statesman-like cynicism."

This criticism of the Foreign Office communiqué was developed in a letter in the *Manchester Guardian* on January 18th from " Observer "—one of those anonymous contributors who, in remarkably similar styles and in the same spirit, but under different labels, intervened in its columns from time to time. It was said that it looked as though the Government was actually aiding and abetting the Japanese Government in its policy of conquering Manchuria. The communiqué, " ingenious " but " infamous," purported to explain " why the Government have not seen fit to associate themselves with the American Note warning Japan that the United States would not recognise any arrangement concluded between China and Japan that was not in conformity with the Covenant or the Nine Power Treaty." (In fact, the communiqué did not mention the matter of non-recognition.)

> This precious document takes the view that the Washington Nine Power Treaty gives full licence to Japan or any other Power to steal Chinese territory provided it lets other countries have a share in the spoils. Is that really the way our Government interprets its treaty obligations? If not, what does this communiqué mean, and what is Great Britain's reason for not joining with America in refusing to recognise any arrangements Japan may seek to impose on China in defiance of her and our treaty obligations?

Sir John Simon and the Foreign Office, it was suggested, had made a " ghastly mess " of the business, and it was high time MacDonald intervened personally before we became estranged from America and before the Disarmament Conference was irremediably compromised.

Editorially, however, the *Guardian* did not appear to be much impressed by the non-recognition policy. On the same day it said that the British Government had " refused to be a party to such diplomatic bad form," and on the 25th it spoke of America having registered " a strong protest." This paper apparently thought, or

hoped, that the Stimson Note might be a prelude to " firmer action," for it added, " it would be out of keeping with all her past policy if she were prepared to tolerate, as we are apparently prepared to tolerate, Japan's virtual repudiation of the ' open door ' policy and of the Kellogg Pact."

7. Later Information

It is important to remember, in regard to this matter of the British Government's response to the Note of January 7th, that no official statement was issued to the public other than the Foreign Office communiqué. Further information became available in later years. When Mr. Stimson's book was published in 1936 it appeared that the British Government had sent a reply to the Government of the United States on January 9th.

In a footnote (p. 101), Mr. Stimson mentioned a " courteous memorandum," which was, he said, delivered at the State Department on the 11th, not reaching him until the 12th. Mr. Stimson's adjective is reassuring, although it appears to have escaped Sir Norman Angell's attention ; the memorandum was " courteous," not " crude," " curt," " cold " or " casual." As to its contents, Mr. Stimson merely said that it contained " substantially the same information " as that made public in the Foreign Office communiqué. Sir John Pratt, however, has stated that the reply explained that Great Britain's position as a member of the League precluded her from sending a Note on the lines suggested.[1] The importance of this point lies in the fact that it bears directly upon the matters excluded from the Foreign Office communiqué. It is odd that Mr. Stimson did not mention it. But, in dealing with this particular incident, he at no time made any reference to the difficulty in the way of separate action by Great Britain arising from her membership of the League and from the efforts at conciliation then still being made by the League ; a difficulty of which he was fully aware, if not conceivably at the time of his suggestion, certainly shortly afterwards. It is odd also that his reference to the " courteous memorandum " should have been relegated to the final paragraph of a footnote.

[1] Letter to the *Times*, November 30th, 1938. Sir John Pratt was Adviser on Far Eastern Affairs in the Foreign Office, 1925-38.

8. Mr. Stimson's Criticisms

In his book, Mr. Stimson complained, not because the British Government decided not to send a similar Note but because of the manner in which the decision was announced. It is clear that he had thought such a decision possible, and that he would not have interpreted it, by itself, as indicating any lack of sympathy on the part of the British Government with the position he had taken up. He wrote: "We had no reason to anticipate that it would not view our action sympathetically even if it felt unable for any reason to follow us" (p. 100). Mr. Stimson had expected "a sympathetic understanding" and "possible co-operation in the subsequent steps that might make more effective our policy" (p. 99). He was "disappointed," therefore, by the communiqué.

It has since been customary to say that Mr. Stimson described the communiqué as a "rebuff" to the United States. What he actually wrote was:

> The contents of this communiqué were such as to be taken by most readers, including—what was most important—the Japanese Government, as a rebuff to the United States.

He did not say whether or not he was one of the readers who so interpreted the Foreign Office statement.[1] What he did say, however, made it plausible to assume that he was.

Mr. Stimson's disappointment arose from the fact that the communiqué "dealt solely with the single problem of continuing trade relations with Manchuria" (p. 102). Its omissions, he said, were its most important feature. It was entirely silent on the matters to which the United States Government attached most importance, viz.: "The preservation of the sovereignty, independence and integrity of China, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and the assertion of the principle of the non-recognition of the fruits of unlawful aggression" (p. 101).

The omissions, however, being so conspicuous, should have made it clear that the Foreign Office communiqué was not a complete answer and was not intended to be. The terms of the official British communication to Mr. Stimson, if Sir John Pratt's version of them

[1] In *On Active Service in Peace and War*, however, it is called "a plain rebuff," p. 82. None the less, a recent American comment remains true: "As a matter of fact, it has not been Mr. Stimson who complained so much as some of our self-appointed interpreters, journalists and radio commentators, who have lost no opportunity to play up British failure to co-operate at this point until it is the one thing the vast majority of Americans remember about the whole affair." (Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis*, p. 240.)

be accurate, should have provided a clue to the reasons for the omissions, since the matters excluded were precisely those which raised the problem of Great Britain's relations with the League of Nations. That problem, as we have seen, had been stressed by at least one prominent British newspaper before the publication of the communiqué ; and, judging from a report in the *Manchester Guardian*, it had also been the subject of comment in France.[1]

It may well be that the British Government did not at any time attach the same importance to the non-recognition policy as did the American Government. If so, there is much to be said for its view. It is even more likely that the British Government did not attach equal importance to it at the time of the Stimson Note. We have seen that, with very few exceptions, the newspapers in this country either ignored it or treated it as of secondary significance. In all probability, the British Government did not at first fully appreciate the degree of importance attached to the non-recognition policy by Mr. Stimson. That is certainly true of the Press. Moreover, the British Government was engaged, with the other League States, in pursuing a policy of conciliation under the terms of the League Covenant ; and the implications as well as the effects of a non-recognition declaration had to be considered. The real importance of the non-recognition policy was derived from the mere fact of its adoption by the United States Government. That gave it a significance which, on its merits, it would not have had, either for the British Government or for that Government's critics at home.

In all the circumstances, an assumption that the American Government was more immediately, if not primarily, concerned with the question of trade relations with Manchuria—with the Open Door—was not unnatural. It appears to have been the general assumption in this country. Sir John Pratt has written that in the Foreign Office the American Note " was interpreted as an attempt to circumscribe any advantage that Japan might gain by a breach of the treaties named, but only in so far as those advantages might trespass on America's interests." The Note, he added, " had not at that time become invested with the significance which, by its subsequent history, became attached to it." [2]

On the basis of that interpretation, a communiqué restricted to the question of the Open Door was apparently considered

[1] Reuter's Paris Correspondent, the *Manchester Guardian*, January 9th, 1932.
[2] Letter to the *Times*, November 30th, 1938.

desirable as well as justifiable. But a public response on that limited basis was bound to lend itself to misinterpretation, and the result was that a statement issued on the assumption that the American Government was primarily interested in trade matters was taken in some quarters as evidence that the British Government was itself interested only in such matters. In his post-war book, Mr. Stimson has said that " apologists for British foreign policy in the Manchurian affair were never able to find any satisfactory explanation of this Foreign Office statement." That may or may not be so, but Mr. Stimson, in Sir John Pratt's view, had good grounds for complaint. Sir John has himself said that the Foreign Office has never attempted to defend " a bad blunder," and has explained that " the communiqué was drafted and approved in haste by the permanent officials at 1 o'clock on Saturday " (i.e. January 9th)—perhaps a modern instance of the occasionally deplorable effects of the week-end habit, which, incidentally, seems also to have accounted for the fact that Mr. Stimson did not receive the " courteous memorandum " sent him by the British Government that same day until the 12th. Only in a formal sense was the British Government responsible for the communiqué ; but, of course, that was not known at the time. And, if haste played a part, the further possibility cannot be excluded, as we shall see, that resentment of the American Government's action may also have influenced the Foreign Office. The British Government was suddenly confronted with another delicate task in its continuous effort to co-ordinate American and League policy. For one supposedly collaborating party to start off on a new line without prior consultation and calmly to expect the other parties to follow suit without delay was certainly bound to cause irritation ; a circumstance which Mr. Stimson did not allow for at the time and ignored subsequently. If he considered himself to have been rebuffed, he might well have asked himself if he had not invited a rebuff.

9. Mr. Stimson and " The Times "

The criticisms made by Mr. Stimson in his book were directed, however, not so much against the Foreign Office communiqué as against the editorial in the *Times* on January 11th. It is clear that the communiqué would have had less unfortunate repercussions in the State Department and elsewhere had it not been for that editorial. Mr. Stimson wrote that " the London *Times* confidently

undertook to supply affirmative interpretations" of the communiqué's omissions. It is also plain, from a careful reading, that Mr. Stimson himself on this occasion made the all-too-familiar assumption that the *Times* was expressing the views of the British Government. He said (p. 108) that he was "well acquainted with the attitude of mind towards China which had been reflected in the editorial of the London *Times*," and (p. 109), that it seemed to him "merely that the British Government had temporarily found it easy to follow the lead of those whose viewpoints were affected by commercial relations. Downing Street had temporarily yielded to the views of the 'City.'"

In dealing with this episode, and estimating its harmful results, Mr. Stimson devoted far more attention to the *Times* editorial than to the communiqué; and he was followed by the home critics of the British Government, who have so often found the *Times* useful for their purposes. The former Secretary of State quoted two long passages from the leading article.[1] He made two main criticisms. The first point was that "it tended to destroy at once" any belief on the part of Japan that the United States and the British Commonwealth of Nations would "see eye to eye and stand side by side." Mr. Stimson described this as "the chief evil result of these statements of the London *Times*." He asserted that "the protagonists of Japan were prompt to take advantage of this assurance of divided counsel which was thus offered them." We shall see how, in his view, they did so.

[1] The passages read as follows:

"In invoking its clauses (those of the Nine Power Treaty) the American Government may have been moved by the fear that the Japanese authorities would set up a virtually independent administration in Manchuria which would favour Japanese interests to the detriment of the commerce of other nations. It is clear that the Foreign Office does not share these apprehensions, and that, although the Nine Power Treaty provides for consultation between the interested Powers, it was not in fact consulted before the Note was communicated to Nanking and Tokyo.

"In the circumstances it was fully justified in limiting its action to a request for a confirmation of the assurances given by Mr. Yoshizawa to the League Council in October and by the new Japanese Prime Minister a fortnight ago, to the effect that Japan would adhere to the principle of the 'Open Door' which her Government claims to be defending in Manchuria.

. . . . .

"Nor does it seem to be the immediate business of the Foreign Office to defend the 'administrative integrity' of China until that integrity is something more than an ideal. It did not exist in 1922 and it does not exist to-day. On no occasion since the Nine Power Treaty was signed has the Central Government of China exercised any real administrative authority over large and varying areas of its huge territory. To-day, its writ does not run in Yunnan and in other important provinces, and, while its sovereignty over Manchuria is not disputed, there is no evidence that it has exercised any real administration there since Nanking became the Chinese capital."

But surely the truth is that the Japanese exploited divided counsels from the beginning. They were offered the assurance of divided counsels by the fact that the United States was not a member of the League, and by the persistence of the United States Government in pursuing an "independent" policy of "co-operation" with the League. The point, as we have noted, had been made quite frequently in the British Press during the previous course of the dispute. In regard to the particular incident of the Note of January 7th, the responsibility for the revelation of divided counsels might well be held to rest primarily upon the Government which sent the Note independently, without prior consultation, hoping that the British Government would follow suit, but acting, as we now know through Mr. Stimson, in pursuance of a policy—that of terminating efforts at conciliation—which could not be adopted at that stage by Members of the League.

The charge made by Mr. Stimson against the *Times* (and, indirectly, against the British Government) had, in fact, been made against his own Government at the beginning of the crisis in regard, particularly, to the proposed Commission of Inquiry. Mr. Stimson, of course, had strong grounds for his attitude at that stage of the dispute. None the less, the fact remains that a divergence between the United States and Great Britain (together with the other League Council members) had been disclosed. And it was contended, indeed, that the Japanese position immediately hardened on this sign of divided counsels.[1] As we have noted, some have considered that this was the crucial point in the whole affair.

The second of Mr. Stimson's points was that the Japanese "gladly accepted" and thenceforward continued to use "the argument offered by the London *Times* as to the lack of organised government in China." This was how they took advantage of "the assurance of divided counsel." The Japanese Government, in its reply on January 16th to the American Note, "made almost literal use of the London *Times's* argument."[2] Previously, wrote Mr.

[1] Felix Morley, *The Society of Nations*, p. 442.

[2] Mr. Stimson quoted the following paragraph: "It may be added that the treaties which relate to China must necessarily be applied with due regard to the state of affairs from time to time prevailing in that country, and that the present unsettled and distracted state of China is not what was in the contemplation of the high contracting parties at the time of the Treaty of Washington. It was certainly not satisfactory then; but it did not display that disunion and those antagonisms which it does to-day. This cannot affect the binding character of the stipulations of treaties; but it may in material respects modify their application, since they must necessarily be applied with reference to the state of facts as they exist."

Stimson, the Japanese " had not dared to argue that China's alleged lack of standing as an organised State operated to relieve them from the obligations of their covenants towards her in the Nine Power Treaty and elsewhere. . . . But now with this assurance offered them they were quickly emboldened to take this position." The argument was " thereafter regularly put forward by the Japanese Government in its diplomatic utterances."

In his comments on this point Mr. Stimson displayed a rather surprising naïveté. On January 11th, in the issue of the *Times* containing the offending editorial, there was a message from its Tokyo Correspondent, which said :

> Japanese officials are satisfied that Mr. Stimson's Note is not a prelude to action, but rather a reservation of American rights. . . . Mr. Stimson's implied references to the Nine Power Treaty arouse some concern, which finds expression in criticism of that treaty's language. " Administrative integrity," which the signatories are pledged to respect, is described as an example of nebulous phraseology which needs to be revised. *How, it is asked, can administrative integrity exist where administrative authority has never been exercised ?* [1]

The *Economist*, on the 16th, quoted the phrase about " nebulous phraseology," and thought it " significant " that Japanese officials should have been making such suggestions to foreign Press correspondents " the day after this communiqué was issued in London." The argument about " administrative integrity " was clearly not appropriated by the Japanese officials from the leader in the *Times* on January 11th ; it was being used by them the day before. And it would have been much more reasonable for Mr. Stimson to have suggested that the *Times* had promptly made use of a Japanese argument.[2]

The Japanese, it would seem, never at any time used the argument that conditions in China relieved them of their obligations, though that may have been the basis upon which they acted. They did not do so in the passage Mr. Stimson quoted from their Note. Their contention was that the treaties had to be applied in relation to the actual circumstances, and that these compelled modifications in practice. But, if Mr. Stimson's version of the Japanese thesis be accepted as accurate, then, as the Geneva Correspondent of the

[1] Author's italics.

[2] " In 1936, as he reconsidered this Note [i.e. the Japanese Note of January 16th,] Stimson found in it more than an echo of a leading editorial published by *The Times* of London on January 11th. . . ." (*On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 82.) It has to be remembered that Mr. Stimson wrote his book four years after these events. On this point his reconsideration was inadequate.

Manchester Guardian was to say (February 25th, 1932), "it has for years been held by the Japanese, nor are they alone in regarding the Chinese anarchy as a danger." That China was not an organised State was a familiar Japanese contention. In so far as Mr. Stimson implied that that particular argument had not been previously employed, it can only be assumed that he was speaking of official Japanese Government pronouncements during the dispute; even so, it had certainly been implied in the speeches made by Japanese representatives on the League Council. Moreover, it was also a familiar and widely held view in Great Britain, as we have seen. It was certainly not unknown in the United States of America. The *Times* itself, we have noted, had raised the point about the "administrative integrity" of China before its editorial of January 11th. It should not be concluded, of course, that the *Times* argued in that leader that the disorganisation in China relieved the Japanese of their obligations. The view expressed was that it did not "seem to be the immediate business of the Foreign Office to defend the 'administrative integrity' of China until that integrity is something more than an ideal."

What the *Times* went on to say about conditions in China, and about Manchuria in particular, was an indisputable statement of facts. Mr. Stimson may have been correct in saying that the Japanese argument that such facts relieved them of their obligations was "ultimately rejected as untrue and unsound by the unanimous report of the Lytton Commission." But the Lytton Commission did not and could not reject the facts themselves. It is true that in admitting them the Commission rather beat about the bush, and, in this connection, was mainly concerned to establish that Manchuria was an integral part of China. The *Times*, however, did not dispute Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria. The difficulty was that the Chinese Government had not exercised any real authority there; and the same thing was true of the greater part of the vast territories nominally under Chinese sovereignty.[1] That was why the

[1] "Five years ago the British Government was obliged to send an expeditionary force to Shanghai, which did not in fact violate, but might at any moment have been compelled to violate, the hypothetical 'administrative integrity' of China. Nor did the commanders of the American warships who co-operated with British warships and shelled Chinese troops at Nanking a few months later allow their nationals to be sacrificed in defence of the text of the Nine Power Pact.

"The fact is that the Chinese Government is not capable of protecting the important and, in the present case, the vital interests of foreign Governments in all its territories; and, so long as this state of affairs persists, respect for its administrative integrity on all occasions is manifestly impossible." (The *Times*, January 19th, 1932.)

establishment of an independent or semi-independent administration in any part of China had not been considered by itself to call for intervention under the treaties, even when a development of that kind had been promoted or assisted by a foreign Power. The *Times* leader suggested that the Foreign Office did not share the apprehensions apparently felt by the American Government concerning the Open Door in Manchuria.

There were other interesting points in the article. If, as Mr. Stimson seemed to conclude, the *Times* expressed the views of the Foreign Office, then it revealed the existence of resentment there. Mr. Stimson's quotation included the passage: "Although the Nine Power Treaty provides for consultation between the interested Powers, it was not, in fact, consulted before the Note was communicated to Nanking and Tokyo." Mr. Stimson made no comment on that; nor did he quote a further reference to the same point. The final passage of the editorial read as follows:

> It is at least doubtful, therefore, whether the American Note will have the effect which the State Department desires. Drafted without consultation with other Governments and influenced to some extent, it may be, by those considerations of domestic politics which are paramount in the States this year, it may yet conceivably clear the confused Manchurian situation. But, as our Washington Correspondent fears, it may equally cause confusion elsewhere by clouding the atmosphere in which Congress is to discuss naval questions; nor have the American Government perhaps reckoned with the risk that their action may encourage the new Chinese Government to continue to postpone the opening of direct negotiations with Japan. Indeed this uncertainty about the ultimate consequences of the Stimson Note is another practical justification of the refusal of the British Government to follow Washington in rather a speculative lead.

Mr. Stimson's omissions in dealing with this editorial were almost as striking as the omissions in the Foreign Office communiqué and in the editorial itself.[1]

10. The League Council and Non-Recognition

The importance of the Foreign Office communiqué, and still more of the *Times* editorial, has been much exaggerated in later controversy. Whatever ill effects these incidents in early January of 1932

[1] Mr. Stimson made no reference to another passage in which the *Times* said that "the principle of equal opportunity for foreign commerce and industry in China has been challenged by the Chinese Nationalists on several occasions since 1922, while the party which organised the boycotts, first of British and subsequently of Japanese commerce, is now in nominal control of China."

may have had, the facts remain : (1) That co-operation between the United States and the League, far from being terminated, or even weakened, was at least as satisfactory afterwards as it had been before ; (2) that Anglo-American collaboration became close and cordial before the month of January was out ; and (3) that, while declining to act independently in support of the American policy of non-recognition, the British Government successfully pursued the method of persuading the League States collectively to endorse that policy, and did so without any real delay.

Doubtless, there was an underlying divergence of view between the American and British Governments concerning Japanese " aggression " [1] in Manchuria, and, therefore, about the possibility of effecting a settlement by conciliation, though it did not extend to the question of taking coercive measures. Doubtless, also, there was disappointment and chagrin on the one side, and annoyance on the other. But agreement on the principle of non-recognition was possible. The American Government, after all, had only declared its intention to apply the principle.

It may well have been that realisation of the importance attached to the matter by the State Department, and a desire to minimise any harm that might have been done by the communiqué, stimulated the British Government to speedy action in this respect. It may have been that the more important stimulus was provided by the threatening situation at Shanghai and the American Government's approach on January 25th for co-operation on an agreed policy in order to meet that situation. Anyhow, the matter was taken up by the League Council, on Sir John Simon's suggestion, at its next meeting.

The Council met on January 25th. On the 28th, the Committee of Twelve (i.e. the members of the Council other than China and Japan) completed the draft of a declaration on the dispute which comprised a specific reference to the American Note of January 7th and stated that it would be impossible for the League to recognise any settlement secured by methods contrary to international obligations. Further proceedings, however, were interrupted by China's invocation, in consequence of events at Shanghai, of Articles X and XV of the Covenant. Before the Council began to consider

[1] In *On Active Service in Peace and War* (p. 101), Mr. Stimson and Mr. Bundy have a revealing remark. In an obvious allusion to Sir John Simon, they wrote of " a statesman undisturbed by the abstract noun *aggression*."

the new situation on January 29th, the President (Paul-Boncour) reported to it the terms of the declaration.[1]

This episode (relevant to the question of delay in adopting the non-recognition principle) was, unfortunately, obscured by the news from Shanghai. It has since almost always been overlooked. Mr. Stimson did not refer to it in his book. The *Times*, however, reported it on January 29th. And, on the previous day, the *News Chronicle* had a message from Mr. Wilson Harris at Geneva which dismissed the proposed declaration rather summarily. It might, he said, " in some small measure atone for the failure of the individual European Governments to follow America's lead," but it was " hardly likely to lead Japan to anticipate any serious opposition to her plans."

11. Shanghai Co-operation

The Shanghai situation was dealt with by the two Governments in close and harmonious co-operation between themselves and with the League Council and Assembly. Mr. Stimson had no complaints to make on that score.[2]

The British Press fully recognised and welcomed the fact of Anglo-American co-operation. The *Times*, on January 27th, referred to its absence at the time of the Stimson Note, but added that the United States Government made a sharp distinction between issues in Manchuria and those involved at Shanghai. On the 29th, it insisted that a common line of action could only be reached if the

[1] In the course of his remarks, after alluding to the reference in the declaration to the American Note, Paul-Boncour said : " We, from the League standpoint, asserted that a settlement of the difficulties between the two Governments, members of the League, must not be sought in arrangements inconsistent with international obligations, more especially those arising out of Article X of the Covenant, by which they have undertaken to respect the territorial independence and political integrity of all members of the League. We terminated our declaration by stating that it would be impossible for the League to endorse a settlement secured by methods at variance with the obligations mentioned above. I have made the declaration we drew up known, notwithstanding the new request which has been brought before us and which, while imposing other duties on the Council, places the question on a new plane (that of Article XV), because I consider . . . that the procedure mentioned in Article XV does not have the effect of suspending the efforts which are being made to reach a friendly settlement and to prevent hostilities and which it is for the League to pursue under Article XI."

[2] See *On Active Service*, p. 85 : ". . . by the last day in January both sides were congratulating themselves and each other that the great objective of a common front had been achieved ; in addition, the British particularly were working to keep this common front reinforced by the co-operation of other Western Powers. For the first time since September 18th the Japanese faced united diplomatic opposition. Although there were some minor difficulties, this front was successfully maintained throughout the Shanghai affair."

two Governments were agreed on the nature of the problem; next day it was able to announce that Anglo-American collaboration was "happily established." The *Daily Telegraph* was at first sceptical, but on February 4th it was saying that Washington was anxious that the initiative of laying the proposals for a settlement (*re* Shanghai) before the world should be assumed by Britain, adding: "Britain, in fact, throughout the Sino-Japanese dispute, has acted as the link between America and the League." The *Daily Express*, indeed, rejoiced in the existence and growth of an Anglo-American alliance, exemplified in the Far East, inevitable and indestructible.[1]

The *Manchester Guardian*, on February 3rd, recorded that Japan appeared, at last, to have provoked a unity of protest "which, under Anglo-American leadership, may still induce her to pause." Its Geneva Correspondent, characteristically, was worried because the real issue had been taken out of the hands of the League. "The mediation that has now begun is that of the Great Powers (except Russia) under Anglo-American leadership."[2]

The *Daily Herald* announced on January 30th that Anglo-American co-operation was now assured; and Sir Frederick Whyte, writing in that paper on February 4th, spoke of "the cordiality of their co-operation" as one of the few redeeming features in an entirely deplorable situation. To the *News Chronicle* on February 3rd there were two outstanding facts: (1) That this country and the United States had acted throughout these months in the closest co-operation; and (2) that it was through the League of Nations that the policy for which they had been patiently working had found its expression. That paper, clearly, was not perturbed by the effects of the Foreign Office communiqué and the *Times* editorial of January 11th.

[1] Editorial, February 10th, 1932: "... the proof is becoming increasingly evident that an Anglo-American alliance exists and grows stronger every day, although it is unrecorded by a document or a signature.... We rejoice that it is so. This is an alliance of temperament, of language, of ideals—an alliance of inevitability. There will be times when the machinations of international financiers and the distemper of economic distress will bring American and British interests into momentary conflict. Such moments will not last, and they will become fewer as the years go on. The Anglo-American alliance cannot be destroyed. It is of the spirit and is indestructible."

[2] This Correspondent proceeded: "England and America acted—and acted strongly—as soon as their interests were touched." But later in the same report he complained that there was a tendency in Geneva to expect everything from England and nothing from anyone else: "... then when she does act—as she has done now—she is accused of acting only for selfish reasons. The *Journal de Genève* is particularly pontifical in reproving and exhorting the British Government."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LETTER TO SENATOR BORAH

1. Mr. Stimson's Proposed Joint Démarche

WRITING of the position on February 11th, when he was discussing his next diplomatic move with Sir John Simon, Mr. Stimson said that " co-operation between our two Governments on all the steps being taken at Shanghai had been progressing with complete harmony " (p. 162). It apparently continued to do so, as will be seen ; but it is at this point that the incident of the Note of January 7th merges in that of Mr. Stimson's proposed démarche under the Nine Power Treaty which preceded his Letter to Senator Borah.

Mr. Stimson's idea was to " invoke " the treaty, and at the same time to give another notice of non-recognition. In view of the strange but widespread impression which later became prevalent that " invocation " implied something akin to " enforcement," it is perhaps desirable to point out again that the Nine Power Treaty contained no provisions for enforcement. Nor did Mr. Stimson propose any kind of coercive action. His object, in his own words, was " to clarify the thought and focus the moral support of the world " (p. 162). The method was " a joint reassertion of the Nine Power Treaty," a " clear protest " by its signatories.

Mr. Stimson raised the matter with President Hoover on February 8th, and secured his approval. Next day, he told the British Ambassador about it. On the 11th, he had a telephone conversation with Sir John Simon, who was at Geneva, and suggested a joint statement by the two Governments, together with any other signatories of the treaty who might be willing to follow them.

The proposal raised similar difficulties for the British Government to those which had been raised by the Note of January 7th ; and this time Mr. Stimson mentioned them in his book :

> There were complications, obvious to anyone, arising out of the fact that Great Britain was not only a signatory of the Nine Power Treaty, but a member of the League of Nations which was engaged in considering the same controversy.

Mr. Stimson recognised the need on the part of Great Britain " not to prejudge the question of responsibility for the present situation as between China and Japan which was pending for adjudication before the League of Nations." But he did not consider the obstacles insuperable.

On February 12th, there was a further telephone conversation, and, at Sir John Simon's request, Mr. Stimson telegraphed a draft of the proposed statement for his consideration. On the 13th and 15th, further telephonic conversations took place, Sir John Simon being then back in London. No record of these conversations exists, of course ; but Mr. Stimson stated in his book that

> while no explicit refusal to my suggestion was ever made, I finally became convinced from his (Sir John's) attitude in those conversations that for reasons satisfactory to it, and which I certainly had no desire to inquire into or criticise, the British Government felt reluctant to join in such a démarche. I therefore pressed it no further.
>
> The British nonjoinder obviously killed the possibility of any such démarche. The American Government, in the circumstances, could not act alone in sending such a communication to the other signatories of the Nine Power Treaty without inviting the danger of receiving replies from some of them of such a nature as to destroy the effect of the démarche. My plan was therefore blocked. I had intended to take the matter up at once with Monsieur Claudel, the French Ambassador, but on learning the British attitude gave it up.

For several days, Mr. Stimson went on to explain, he was " deeply discouraged." On February 21st a solution occurred to him, and on the 24th he publicly set out his Government's views on the Nine Power Treaty in the form of a letter addressed to Senator Borah.

2. Mr. Mander's Version

It was this incident upon which Mr. Mander concentrated in his references to the Far Eastern crisis in his 1941 book. His treatment of the matter is interesting as an example of controversial methods. While pointing out that Mr. Stimson's proposal for a joint démarche was a modest one, Mr. Mander utilised that very fact in an attempt to strengthen his case against the British Government. He wrote that Mr. Stimson " found it impossible to make any progress even with this modest suggestion." After quoting the two paragraphs

from Mr. Stimson's book which have just been given, Mr. Mander proceeded :

While it would not be true to say that Sir John Simon rejected an American proposal for the imposition of sanctions, for such was never made, it is true that he was unwilling even to be associated with the American Government in making a verbal protest, which is even worse.[1]

That is an excellent illustration of Mr. Mander's polemical gifts. He fully realised that the widely fostered impression that the United States Government did propose sanctions could not be justified, but he was unwilling to lose the opportunity of trying to justify it indirectly. It will be seen that what he said *was* true was just as untrue as what he admitted to be untrue while seeking to make it appear true.[2]

3. The League Council's Note of February 16th

One outstanding fact was difficult to reconcile with Mr. Stimson's version of what happened to his proposal. On February 16th, the day after his last telephonic conversation with Sir John Simon, the twelve members of the League Council (i.e. the Council minus the Chinese and Japanese representatives) addressed a Note to Japan.

This Note included the following passage :

5. The twelve members of the Council recall the terms of Article 10 of the Covenant, by which all the members of the League have undertaken to respect and preserve the territorial integrity and existing political independence of other members.

It is their friendly right to direct attention to this provision, particularly as it appears to them to follow that no infringement of the territorial integrity and no change in the political independence of any member of the League brought about in disregard of this article ought to be recognised as valid and effectual by the members of the League of Nations.

The Note proceeded to make a special reference to the Nine Power Treaty of 1922, " whereby the contracting Powers expressly agreed to respect the sovereignty, the independence and the territorial and administrative integrity of China."

[1] *We were* not *all Wrong*, pp. 27-8.

[2] In the House of Commons on July 19th, 1937, Mr. Dalton said : " As Mr. Stimson has told the world in his most interesting book, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, he twice endeavoured to secure effective Anglo-American co-operation in preserving peace and maintaining treaties in the Far East, and was twice rebuffed—' rebuffed ' is Mr. Stimson's word." " Effective " is effectively ambiguous. Mr. Stimson did not use the word " rebuffed " in regard to the second incident ; in the first, as we have seen, he came very near using it in Mr. Dalton's sense.

Mr. Stimson did not mention this Note in his account of the circumstances leading up to his Letter to Senator Borah, but he alluded to it later in the book (pp. 176-7), describing it as a " guarded appeal " which " was quite different from a positive declaration by the entire body of nations."

At the time, the Note itself attracted a great deal of attention in the British Press. Curiously, however, it was frequently overlooked in subsequent discussion of the non-recognition policy, even in the weeks immediately following. That may have been due in part to the fact that American opinion (certainly in so far as it was reflected here) was primarily directed to the question of British as distinct from League action, and to the tendency in certain quarters in this country (partly as a consequence) to discuss non-recognition from the same standpoint. It may also have been due in some degree to the predominating interest in the Shanghai situation at the time of the Note. Study of the Press shows that the Note was considered primarily in relation to the immediate situation in China, more particularly that at Shanghai, rather than in relation to the non-recognition policy. That, indeed, probably accounts for what seem to be contradictions in some of the newspaper references to the Note : much depends upon which feature of the Note was being discussed. And it has to be remembered that in no quarter in this country was there any marked enthusiasm for the non-recognition policy as such.

None the less, the non-recognition statement itself was given considerable prominence. The *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Herald* both specifically referred to it in their headlines on the 17th : " No recognition of territory seized by violence " : " No territorial gain will be recognised." The former paper linked the declaration with that already made by America ; and said that it represented an advance on anything the Council had done since the " time-limit " Resolution of October 24th, although it was still " only an appeal." Both papers emphasised the part played by Great Britain in regard to the Note. The *Herald's* Geneva Correspondent attributed the initiative to Great Britain. " Lord Londonderry, who is acting as British representative until Sir John Simon returns, submitted a draft to his colleagues this morning." This Correspondent understood that " the draft had been prepared after consultation between the Foreign Office and the United States State Department."

The *Times* said that the terms of the Note were " known to be in close accordance with the views of the United States Government." The *Daily Telegraph* said that Washington was believed to approve of the Note, but was apparently not directly associating itself with it : " In other words, the United States is carefully confining herself in the matter of Notes to the protection of the interests of her own nationals." These two papers both referred to the non-recognition statement. The " most important clause," in the view of the *Times*, " was no more than an indication of the attitude which the world will take towards changes brought about by forcible action." Plainly, this newspaper did not rate the non-recognition policy highly. The *Daily Telegraph* was still less impressed by it. Quoting the passage, it asked, " How is it worth while saying . . . when there is so manifest a hesitation to say outright that no infringement and no change can or will be allowed ? "

According to the *Guardian*, the Note itself was a " strong " one, and to the *Herald*, " the stiffest Note that has been sent to Japan throughout all this business—and one of the stiffest ever sent to a Great Power." That was also the first reaction (February 17th) of the *Mail*—" the strongest Note Geneva has ever sent." But next day, after seeing the text, the editorial recognised that the Note was " couched in friendly terms " and was " rather an appeal than an expostulation," so that " *it can do little harm.*" The *Express* (which, like the *Mail*, made no reference to the non-recognition clause [1]) had front-page headlines on the 17th about a " Drastic Note to Japan " and about a " Britain overruled at heated Geneva meeting." This paper said that Lord Londonderry had " objected strongly to the dispatch of a drastic warning to Tokyo," but that Britain was " outnumbered and overruled " by smaller Powers with few interests in the Far East, who " clamoured for a sharply worded Note to placate China."

The Geneva Correspondent of the *Guardian*, on the other hand, after saying that the implication of the Note was that Japan was the aggressor, proceeded : " I understand that the British delegate on the Council (Lord Londonderry) was particularly firm in demanding that this important step should be taken." He attributed a suggestion that the Note should be sent to both disputants to the German

[1] The *Mail* may possibly have had the clause in mind when it wrote that the Note's " diplomatic defect is that it treats China as if she were a State with a responsible, effective Government, whereas everyone knows that the Government there is a sham and that a condition of complete anarchy prevails."

delegate, and wrote at some length about pressure brought to bear upon Germany by Japan. The *Telegraph's* Diplomatic Correspondent asserted that throughout the proceedings " the whole efforts of the British delegation were exerted in the direction of conciliatoriness," and, editorially, it was said that there was reason to believe that "the original wording of the Note was modified before it secured the adhesion of important members of the Council, including Great Britain herself." According to the *Herald's* Correspondent, " there was a certain reluctance among some of the Twelve, notably the German and Jugoslav representatives, both to the strong character of the draft and to the idea of sending a Note to Japan alone. They argued that such action might have the effect of stiffening the back of the Japanese Government." This Correspondent added that afterwards the German and Jugoslav delegates had expressed their regret to the Japanese at having had reluctantly to join in the action taken.

4. Mr. Stimson's Omissions

The reader will have noted the Press references to, or suggesting, prior consultation with the State Department. On February 19th, however, the *Times* published a Reuter message from Washington which said, concerning a statement by the Foreign Office in Tokyo, that, according to the State Department, " the United States had no knowledge whatever of the framing of the Note, and was not even aware that the Note was to be delivered."

After the publication of Mr. Stimson's book, critics of the British Government nearly always ignored the Note. Mr. Mander, for example, made no allusion whatever to it in his widely circulated book. Nor did he mention the important answer which had been given by Neville Chamberlain in the House of Commons to his own question about Mr. Stimson's statements. That, perhaps, is not surprising, for, in the first place, Mr. Mander's version of the statements on that occasion was extremely inaccurate, and, in the second place, the publication of Neville Chamberlain's answer would have refuted his (Mr. Mander's) assertions.

On November 5th, 1936, replying to Mr. Mander in debate, Chamberlain (who said he had not read Mr. Stimson's book), mentioned a letter which Mr. Stimson had written to Lord Lothian on March 15th, 1935. In this letter, the former Secretary of State

said that he was informed on February 16th, 1932, by Mr. Atherton, the American Chargé in London, that the British Government would not go with him in the proposed invocation of the Nine Power Pact, and that " whatever they could do in supporting any such movement on my part could be done only in conjunction with the signatories of the League Covenant and as a part of League action." It is strange that Mr. Stimson did not mention this in his book, where, as we have noted, he stated that no explicit refusal of his suggestion was ever made. Chamberlain went on to say :

> We were then able to show that the written answer which was handed to Mr. Atherton on the 16th February, 1932, for transmission to Mr. Stimson stated definitely that the British Government were most anxious to co-operate with America, and that it was hoped that those of the League Powers who were signatories of the Nine Power Treaty would also associate themselves with the American démarche. Subsequently to that, Mr. Stimson himself abandoned his proposal for the invocation of the Nine Power Treaty. . . .

It is another curious fact that Mr. Stimson's book was published many months after his letter to Lord Lothian and after what " we were then able to show."

An answer to Mr. Stimson's proposal, therefore, was given in writing on February 16th, 1932, the day following the last of his series of telephone conversations with Sir John Simon. It is extremely odd that Mr. Stimson should have omitted this fact from his account. With a written reply before him so quickly, why should he have relied upon a conviction formed as a result of telephone conversations ? True, Mr. Stimson stated in a footnote (p. 164) that two other things " tended strongly to confirm " his " diagnosis " of the British Government's attitude : the first a speech made by Sir John Simon in Geneva to the Anglo-American Press Association on February 12th, and the second Sir John's " reported replies " to questions in the House of Commons on February 18th. There is no record of the February 12th speech, and Sir John Pratt has stated that the occasion was strictly confidential, the guests having accepted the invitation on the assurance that nothing they might say would be repeated outside. As for the Foreign Secretary's replies to questions on the 18th, there was nothing whatever in them bearing upon the question under discussion ; they were confined to the situation, and certain incidents, at Shanghai. One wonders what the replies " reported " in the United States were.

It is possible, however, that Mr. Stimson may have had in mind Sir John Simon's answers to questions on the 17th. Two of the questions on that day were relevant to the issue. Mr. Seymour Cocks asked, in relation to " the proposal to form a new independent State in Manchuria," whether the Foreign Secretary would " inform the Japanese Government that this country will not recognise the new State, as it would be contrary to the Nine Power Treaty? " Sir John Simon replied: " I must, of course, first make sure as to the question of fact." The other question, asked by the Leader of the Opposition, was for information about the League Council's Note of the 16th, and Sir John Simon replied that the terms of the Note, then about to be published, would be printed in the Official Report that night. The only other answer given by the Foreign Secretary on the 17th which might conceivably be regarded as having a bearing on the matter was one in which he said that the Government would continue to act in close collaboration with the League Powers and " with the Government of the United States of America." It is noteworthy that Mr. Stimson should have thought it desirable to support his telephonic conviction by such dubious and flimsy evidence.

The information given by Neville Chamberlain has been amplified since by Sir John Pratt, whose conclusion is that Mr. Stimson's memory deceived him. Sir John Pratt has stated that, on receiving the draft of Mr. Stimson's proposed joint invocation, the Foreign Secretary telephoned to Geneva the text of a paragraph taken from the draft.[1] This paragraph was inserted, at Sir John Simon's request, in the Note to Japan sent by the twelve members of the League Council on February 16th. It was the passage asserting the non-recognition doctrine. In this respect, therefore, the League Council's " guarded appeal " was, in fact, based upon Mr. Stimson's own draft.

According to Sir John Pratt,[2] the written reply handed to the Counsellor of the American Embassy on February 16th by Sir John Simon contained the latter's criticisms and suggestions, for which Mr. Stimson had asked ; and the Foreign Secretary added :

> Sir John Simon has already told Mr. Stimson how keenly the British Government wishes to keep in close co-operation with America over the whole field of the Far Eastern crisis, and he is hopeful that the adherence of the Powers now at Geneva to the declaration proposed to be made by the Council of the League on Wednesday might predispose those of them

[1] Letter to the *Times*, November 10th, 1938.
[2] *War and Politics in China*, p. 228.

who are signatories of the Nine Power Treaty to associate themselves with the American démarche also.

The declaration—in the Note to Japan—was actually made late on the same day, Tuesday, February 16th.

Whatever Mr. Stimson's reasons may have been for abandoning his proposed joint démarche, it is admitted that the British Government did not reject the proposal. It is clear, moreover, not only that Mr. Stimson's draft was being considered but also that the British Government was actively engaged, and without the slightest delay,[1] in promoting the joint invocation, when Mr. Stimson gave it up and decided to adopt another method.

In so far as his decision was due to his " deep discouragement," it seems to have been hasty, and the discouragement itself hardly justified. That, however, does not necessarily imply that the decision was unwise. Sir John Pratt has expressed the view that the method of the Letter to Senator Borah was probably more effective than the method of the joint invocation would have been. At the time the device adopted was itself warmly approved in the United States. Sir John Pratt's suggested explanation of Mr. Stimson's decision to abandon his original proposal is interesting and, so far as it goes, convincing. He recalled the reasons given by Mr. Stimson himself for sending the Note of January 7th independently,[2] and considered that the decision not to proceed with the proposed joint invocation of the Nine Power Treaty may have been based upon similar grounds. As he has reminded us, " To obtain the concurrence of several Governments in a particular draft is . . . always a cumbersome and sometimes a lengthy process."

5. A Revised Stimson Version

In *On Active Service in Peace and War* there are some significant differences in the Stimson account of the proposed démarche. We

[1] In *The Manchurian Crisis*, p. 245, Sara R. Smith writes : " . . . granting that the action the British felt themselves able to take fell far short of what Mr. Stimson desired, there was certainly no delay in putting their decision into effect. Four days after Secretary Stimson had cabled his draft proposal to Hugh Wilson for delivery to Sir John Simon, the declaration of views and principles addressed to Japan alone was adopted by the Committee of Twelve. During those four days, February 12th to 16th, Sir John Simon had made the trip to London, presumably taking the draft with him, talked to Mr. Stimson from London on the thirteenth and again on the fifteenth, talked the matter over with the Prime Minister, drafted, either personally or through the permanent officials of his office, the paragraph on non-recognition, which was then telephoned to Geneva, where it was incorporated in the declaration of the sixteenth."

[2] See above, p. 77, and Note.

are told that the conversations were " friendly enough " and that Sir John Simon " approved of Stimson's plan in principle," but in practice held back. There were both good and " less good " (or " bad ") reasons for his reluctance. Among the good ones, it is said, " were Britain's membership in the League, *where measures indicating adherence to the non-recognition doctrine were pending* ; it was reasonable that the British should pace their actions to those of the League." [1] The bad ones specified were " Sir John's inability to take Chinese territorial and administrative integrity very seriously and his feeling that the question of Shanghai, as a direct threat to Western interests, should be considered separately from that of Manchuria, which he thought a dangerous subject in view of Japanese feelings."

A reference to the Note of February 16th followed. This, " although politely worded," is said to have " implied support of the non-recognition doctrine." Stimson " finally became convinced " in the days that followed that the British Government felt reluctant to join in his démarche. " He was not especially annoyed at this situation. For a time he considered abandoning the idea of a new American statement, since it would be dangerous to make an official appeal or representation to Japan and find that it went unsupported by other signatories to the same treaty." The decision on the Borah letter was taken on February 21st. Two motives are mentioned. First, a desire, because of a major Japanese attack on the previous day and the " new high " of public feeling at home and abroad, not to let the moment pass without an American statement ; and, secondly, a desire " to avoid or at least minimise diplomatic knifing " (p. 90).

6. The Stimson-Borah Letter

The Letter to Senator Borah of February 23rd stated that, " regardless of cause or responsibility," it was " clear beyond a peradventure " that a situation had developed which could not, " under any circumstances, be reconciled with the obligations of the covenants " of the Nine Power Treaty and the Pact of Paris. Mr. Stimson made the following statement about non-recognition :

On January 7th last, upon the instruction of the President, this Government formally notified Japan and China that it would not

[1] Author's italics.

recognise any situation, treaty or agreement entered into by those Governments in violation of the covenants of these treaties, which affected the rights of our Government or its citizens in China. If a similar decision should be reached and a similar position taken by the other Governments of the world, a caveat will be placed upon such action which, we believe, will effectively bar the legality hereafter of any title or right sought to be obtained by pressure or treaty violation, and which, as has been shown by history in the past, will eventually lead to the restoration to China of rights and titles of which she may have been deprived.

It is to be noted that, so far as the United States action was concerned, this statement did not go beyond the notice of intention not to recognise given in the Note of January 7th. No reference was made to the particular issue of any "independent" State that might be set up in Manchuria. A declaration of an independent State of Manchuria (including Jehol) had, in fact, been published in Mukden on February 18th.

7. The League Assembly and Non-Recognition

Over a week before the Stimson-Borah Letter was published, it must be reiterated, the twelve members of the League Council had expressed their support of the non-recognition policy, on the suggestion of the British Government. A fortnight after the Letter, the British Government again took the lead.

At the Assembly of the League of Nations on March 11th, 1932, a Resolution was passed unanimously (China and Japan not voting). The first part of this Resolution, after reciting the non-recognition declaration in the Note to Japan of the twelve Council members on February 16th, and recalling the terms of the Pact of Paris, declared

> that it is incumbent upon the members of the League of Nations not to recognise any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the Covenant of the League of Nations or to the Pact of Paris.

The Resolution was proposed by Sir John Simon. It was, in large measure, drafted by him. To him, in particular, was due the inclusion of the reference to the Pact of Paris. The wording, with necessary adaptation, was taken directly from the American Note of January 7th. In his book, Mr. Stimson mentioned the fact that the Resolution was proposed by the British Government. He also stated

that it was "substantially to the effect of our Note of January 7th," and quoted the text of the non-recognition declaration set out above. In his more recent book, it is said that "the initiative in this move came from Sir John Simon."

Mr. Stimson lost no time in expressing his satisfaction. On the next day, March 12th, he issued a statement to the Press in which he said:

> The nations of the League at Geneva have united in a common attitude and purpose towards the perilous disturbances in the Far East. ... This action will go far towards developing into terms of international law the principles of order and justice which underlie those treaties, and the Government of the United States has been glad to co-operate earnestly in this effort.

In a later speech (August 8th, 1932), Mr. Stimson assessed still more highly the action taken by the League of Nations on Great Britain's initiative. He said that the refusal of the United States

> to recognise the fruits of aggression might be of comparatively little moment to an aggressor. But when the entire group of civilised nations took their stand beside the position of the American Government, the situation was revealed in its true sense. Moral disapproval, when it becomes the disapproval of the whole world, takes on a significance hitherto unknown in international law. For never before has international opinion been so organised and mobilised.

The reader may well conclude that little is left in the charges levelled against the British Government of "rejecting co-operation with the United States" and of "refusal even to be associated with the American Government in making a verbal protest." Even had it been true that the British Government turned down the proposed joint invocation of the Nine Power Treaty, it would seem to follow from Mr. Stimson's argument that the collective action taken by the League was preferable from his own standpoint to action under the Nine Power Treaty.

But, if we are to ascertain why such charges were made, persisted in, and revived with so great a measure of success, it is requisite again to raise the question, How were these events viewed at the time of their occurrence?

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CHAPTER SIX

BRITISH OPINION ON THE BORAH LETTER

1. The Commons and Non-Recognition

As we have seen, the terms of the League Council's Note of February 16th were published and commented upon in the Press and elsewhere. The facts, as we now know them, about the proposed joint démarche under the Nine Power Treaty were not available at the time. How far were they inferred? What sort of reception did the Stimson-Borah Letter have in this country? How were the proceedings at the League Assembly regarded?

In the House of Commons, Mr. Seymour Cocks was a persistent questioner in regard to the newly proclaimed independent State of Manchuria.[1] On February 24th he and Mr. Mander asked almost identical questions suggesting that the British Government should send a Note to China and Japan in terms similar to those of the Stimson Note of January 7th. Mr. Eden replied:

> I do not think that *a further Note* on this subject would, even if it were addressed to both parties as suggested . . ., serve any useful purpose. His Majesty's Government have already made their position sufficiently clear and the Japanese Government have given definite assurances that they have no territorial ambitions and that they will uphold the principle of the Open Door.[2]

It will be noted that Mr. Cocks and Mr. Mander were asking that the British Government should send a Note independently of the League, and that Mr. Eden referred them to the League Council's Note to Japan of February 16th.

In reply to a later question from Mr. Cocks on the same day again suggesting that "steps" be taken about the new Manchurian

[1] He raised the point of non-recognition on February 17th, as has been noted, see p. 106. On the 22nd, he asked the Foreign Secretary whether, "seeing that the formation of such a State is an infringement of the Nine Power Treaty and the Covenant of the League of Nations," any steps were being taken in the matter: in a supplementary, Mr. Cocks spoke of "steps to protest." On that occasion, Sir John Simon replied that, according to information from H.M. Ambassador in Tokyo, "the Japanese Government was no more likely to recognise it than any other Government," and that his information did not enable him to confirm the assumption in Mr. Cocks's question.

[2] Author's italics.

State, Mr. Eden replied that since its proclamation had been made by the local Chinese authorities there did not appear to be any ground for action. To Mr. Cocks's supplementary assertion that the new State had obviously been formed by Japan, Mr. Eden answered :

> This is not the first State that has been set up in China as an independent State, nor is it the first State since the Nine Power Treaty set up under the auspices of another Government.

This point was to be elaborated by Mr. Eden on February 29th, when Mr. Cocks raised the subject in the course of a speech on the adjournment. The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs said :

> We should certainly not agree to seeing the terms of the Nine Power Treaty flouted, but in face of the assurance given by the Japanese Government I can see no justification for our assuming that anything of the kind is likely to take place. . . . The hon. Member stated that the action of setting up the independent State in Manchuria seemed to offer some grounds for independent action by our own Government. He criticised us and reminded us that inaction might be more harmful than action. I cannot agree that this particular action of the setting up of a Chinese Government in Manchuria would be in itself a reason for action by His Majesty's Government.
>
> This is not the first time independent Governments have been set up in China since the Washington Treaty. There have been many similar instances. As is to be expected in the disturbed conditions which have ruled in China in recent years, events such as this, the setting up of independent or quasi-independent Governments, of schismatic Governments claiming to be free from the central authority, have been of frequent occurrence. Hon. Members will recollect the setting up of such a Government at Canton not many years ago. As a further illustration of the consequences of the little control of the central authority in China for many years past, there has been the setting up of the present position in Outer Mongolia, which was described by one who, I am sure, will commend himself to the hon. Member—Mr. Henderson, the late Foreign Secretary—in these words :
>
> > " It has for many years enjoyed complete independence from its suzerain, China."
>
> Yet I do not remember Mr. Henderson making any representations about its independence, and I cannot even recollect the hon. Member rising in his place to suggest that such representations should be made.

Outer Mongolia stood then, as it stands to-day, in essentially the same relationship to Soviet Russia as that in which Manchukuo came to

stand to Japan.[1] In regard to Manchuria, the question turned on the nature of the relationship between any Chinese Administration set up there and Japan. In January 1932 that was a matter of speculation.

It was on the same occasion (February 29th) that Mr. Cocks first expressed in the House of Commons part of the criticism which in various forms was to become so popular. After quoting the Stimson Note of January 7th, he described the Foreign Office communiqué as regrettable. It gave, he said, a false impression that " we should tolerate an injustice if we could get a share of the spoils," and " undoubtedly gave encouragement to the militarist party in Japan." Mr. Cocks proceeded to quote the Stimson-Borah Letter, and trusted that the Government would " do their best to influence such other Powers as they can to adhere to the position adopted by the United States." He did not mention the League Council Note of February 16th. Nor did Mr. Eden in his reply. He was dealing with the proposal that independent action should be taken by the Government in regard to Manchuria ; and he gave as the chief reason for its refusal to do so the fact that the events there were " definitely *sub judice* by the League of Nations."

It would be wholly improper for the Government of this country, which is a member of the League of Nations, to express by action on its own account independent of the League its judgment upon a matter which is now under investigation.

Moreover, the Assembly of the League had been summoned to meet on March 3rd. Mr. Eden stressed " the double duty " which this country had, " unlike the United States." But he thought he could promise that success in the achievement of a solution of the problem of dual co-operation with the League and the United States was " definitely nearer than it was a few days ago."

2. American Criticisms

A hint or two of American criticisms of the British Government appeared in the Press here shortly before the publication of the

[1] The Soviet-Japanese Pact of Friendship and Neutrality of April 13th, 1941, was accompanied by a joint statement that each Power would respect the territorial integrity and inviolability of the other's puppet State, Manchukuo and Outer Mongolia. The first of the conditions set out in the secret Yalta Agreement of February 11th, 1945, and upon which the Soviet Government agreed to enter into the war against Japan, was that " the *status quo* in Outer Mongolia shall be preserved." Those who accepted Soviet Russia's acquisitions in Manchuria without a murmur of protest could hardly be expected to boggle about the fate of Outer Mongolia ; nor at the Soviet Union's quiet annexation of Tannu-Tuva, which had previously been in the same category as Outer Mongolia.

Stimson-Borah Letter.[1] After that event there were a number of references to American dissatisfaction.

The New York Correspondent of the *News Chronicle* (February 26th) wrote of " soreness " felt over " Britain's reluctance to co-operate with America in the Far East." The Letter to Senator Borah was interpreted as a challenge to Britain and France to support the Far Eastern treaties : " It is felt that Japan could not help respecting treaties if the American attitude were backed by Britain. There will be intense disapproval if such moral pressure is not brought to bear." The editorial comments are of interest. The *News Chronicle* emphasised how important to Anglo-American relations would be the reception given to the Stimson-Borah Letter here. Fortunately, it said, there was no reason to suppose that the relations between the British and American Governments were at the moment other than extremely cordial. But even friendly American opinion felt that American action in the Far East had been hampered with very unfortunate results by the caution and lukewarmness of the European Governments, not excepting our own ; an opinion which might be unfair, but which made it highly desirable that the impression of our lukewarmness should be removed as completely and as early as possible. The *News Chronicle* did not indicate how in its opinion this should be achieved ; nor did it discuss the nature of the " action " of the United States. There was no mention of the non-recognition policy.

On the next day (February 27th), this paper published a message from its New York Correspondent summarising the " regrets " of " Liberal circles " in the United States : (1) that the British Government did not support Mr. Stimson's Note of January 7th ; (2) that the Foreign Office spokesman in the House of Commons that week declined to pledge the Government not to recognise any settlements in the Far East achieved by force or in violation of existing agreements ; (3) that there had been apparent hesitancy and vacillation in the Government's attitude ; and (4) that there had been as yet no clear-cut expression of British policy. These could not be assumed to be the view of the Administration, it was said, but there was no doubt that opinion would be relieved if the British Government joined Mr. Stimson in adopting the non-recognition policy.

[1] See the *News Chronicle*, February 23rd, for a report of, and editorial comments upon, an article in the Scripps-Howard newspapers, which, among other things, held that, since the Stimson Note of January 7th, the European Powers had been more to blame than the United States for " the failure of international co-operation against Japan."

Here we have the substance of the charges made against the British Government at that stage of the dispute. The League Council's Note of February 16th, with its non-recognition declaration (included on the British Government's initiative), is ignored; and the nature of Mr. Eden's statements in the House of Commons on February 24th is completely misunderstood. There can be little doubt that the criticisms directed against the British Government in these matters were primarily American in origin.

3. On the Left

The subsequent treatment of the subject in the *News Chronicle* is illuminating. On February 29th Mr. Wilson Harris (whose previous attitude on the matter has been noted) again raised the question of the American Note of January 7th. It had been hoped and believed in the United States (he wrote), that Great Britain would take the same stand, but the Foreign Office had preferred to issue its communiqué. Yet, later in his article, Mr. Harris referred at some length to the League Council's Note of February 16th, and to the fact that the British representative, Lord Londonderry, "took an active and altogether creditable part in framing that Note." The implication appears to have been that the British Government ought to have acted independently of the League in adopting the non-recognition principle.

On March 7th, Mr. Wilson Harris again referred to the topic. Mr. Stimson, he said, had twice defined America's attitude unequivocally. Great Britain had been "lamentably slow and deplorably hesitant in endorsing it, but we did take the same ground fairly definitely, in common with other League Council members, in the Note of February 16th to Tokyo."

With Mr. A. J. Cummings as the Special Correspondent of the paper at the League Assembly general criticism of the British Government took on a sharper note; but "the only serious criticism" which the *News Chronicle* had to make of the Assembly's Resolution of March 11th was that it was "so long overdue." In the editorial view (March 12th) it asserted "with sufficient firmness the fundamental principles at stake." No mention was made of the non-recognition declaration as such, and, therefore, no mention of the part played by Sir John Simon. Mr. Cummings, however, reported the pleasure of the United States at the League's decision (March 15th).

When on April 11th Mr. Wilson Harris again raised the " rather forgotten " issue of Manchuria, he pointed out that the League States, including this country, had accepted the Stimson non-recognition doctrine without reserve. Five months later (September 12th), in an article the main theme of which was the need for complete Anglo-American understanding on " the two great issues of the day," the Hoover disarmament plan and the Sino-Japanese dispute, Mr. Wilson Harris said that divergence between London and Washington had appeared as long before as January, when the Foreign Office communiqué had been the response to Mr. Stimson's non-recognition Note. Divergence had, in fact, appeared long before January, as Mr. Harris himself had noted, and his remarks in January (and later) had not indicated that he attached much importance to the non-recognition policy. He proceeded :

> Some months later, but only some months later, we did accept the American doctrine unreservedly in common with all other members of the League of Nations. But the psychological value of prompt agreement with Washington had been long lost by then.

On his own basis, the period of delay was almost exactly *two* months ; but that reckoning overlooked the League Council's Note of February 16th, with which, as we have seen, Mr. Wilson Harris was familiar ; and it also overlooked the League Council's draft declaration towards the end of January, which he had then somewhat contemptuously dismissed.[1]

The *Manchester Guardian's* New York Correspondent said (February 25th) that the Stimson-Borah Letter was interpreted there to be a strong invitation to the European Powers and Great Britain to take up the same position in regard to non-recognition. He gave a further suggested explanation of the reasons for Mr. Stimson's action.

> Washington observers believe that in the recent past the American Government has been waiting for the League of Nations to take a strong line, and has now abandoned the hope of this being done, and is seeking to assume leadership in an effort to put moral pressure upon Japan.

An editorial on the 26th asserted that, unlike other Powers, America had *from the beginning* had a consistent policy, viz.: that expressed in the Stimson-Borah Letter ; and that the American non-recognition

[1] See above, p. 97.

declaration " ought to have created a firm basis for co-operation between the United States and the League." The *Guardian* had quickly forgotten the criticisms of American policy which had appeared in its columns a month previously. On February 29th, the New York Correspondent's message said that " much disappointment " was being expressed that Mr. Stimson's non-recognition policy had not yet been endorsed by other Powers, and Great Britain in particular. In all these references, it must again be noted, the League Council's Note of February 16th was ignored.

The *New Statesman* discussed that Note on February 20th, but did not mention the non-recognition clause. On the 27th it said, in passing, that " our refusal to support the strong Stimson Note of January 7th was considered proof of our lack of sincerity " by American opinion. The *Economist*, which had made no comment on the non-recognition clause in the Note of February 16th, criticised Mr. Eden's answer of the 24th about action in regard to the new Manchurian State. This, it said, came " perilously near to British collusion with Japanese policy in Manchuria." Moreover, " it is the second occasion on which our Government has conspicuously dissociated itself from the action of the American Government when the application of the Nine Power Treaty has been in question *à propos* of Manchuria." The *Economist* did not explain itself further, and, indeed, it would have had great difficulty in explaining how the British Government could possibly have dissociated itself from an American action in regard to the new Manchurian State, for no action of any kind had been taken. On March 5th, this periodical urged that the League Assembly ought to make a non-recognition declaration " in identic terms " to those employed in the Stimson-Borah Letter. The United States Government, it said, strongly desired that it should do so, but it was apparent that the Americans feared British opposition—" a foreboding due to the fact that the British Government has hitherto refrained from associating itself with American declarations of this ' no recognition ' policy." Once more it will be noted that the League Council's declaration of February 16th, and the British Government's part in it, were completely overlooked by the *Economist* as well as by " the Americans."

4. On the Right

It was in the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* that the attitude of the United States Government was at the time most accurately

interpreted. The well-informed Washington Correspondent of the former newspaper wrote on February 26th :

It is a fair assumption that Mr. Stimson's letter to Mr. Borah means that the end has come to correspondence with the Japanese and Chinese Governments, but it may be well to note that this cessation should not be taken as the precursor of any form of action not related to the protection of American lives and property. . . . They have maintained what lawyers would call their juridical position ; they have appealed to the world to adopt this position ; and they now await the event.

On the same day, the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Telegraph* attempted to supply an explanation of why Mr. Stimson had written a letter to Senator Borah instead of a Note to Japan :

The most probable explanation should be sought in Washington's failure to persuade Great Britain, and possibly other leading Powers, to join America in presenting Tokyo with simultaneous diplomatic Notes conceived on much the same lines. In view of British and European aloofness, the American Secretary of State may have deemed it expedient to modify the procedure originally contemplated. The unusual course adopted by Mr. Stimson may have been designed as a warning which it was hoped that official Tokyo would outwardly ignore, but ponder inwardly.

As the leading article that day put it, " Letters . . . do not demand an answer from third parties."

Like other Correspondents, the Washington Correspondent of the *Telegraph* referred to comments in America concerning the " failure of the British Government to join in the American declaration refusing to recognise any settlement imposed by force " (February 25th). This paper, however, had little or nothing to say on the particular question of the non-recognition declaration. It was concerned primarily with the general question of the American attitude towards Manchuria, and from that standpoint it criticised the Stimson-Borah Letter. Its Diplomatic Correspondent spoke on the 27th of " some feeling in America over the disinclination of Great Britain to associate herself with the line of argument and action adopted by Mr. Stimson in his letter to Senator Borah," but added that British aloofness in that regard was " at least as natural as is America's refusal to co-operate with the League." He went on to suggest, quite accurately, that Mr. Stimson's letter assumed that Japan had violated both the Kellogg Pact and the Washington Nine Power Treaty ; whereas " such assumptions or

presumptions would be highly improper, as well as inopportune, on the part of Great Britain," a Member of the League. The editorial on the previous day (February 26th) said that Mr. Stimson had drawn no distinction between China proper and Manchuria ; had omitted any allusion to Japan's special privileges in the latter country ; and had referred to the time question in terms which would have commanded more general assent " if, during the last ten years, successive Chinese Governments had made a serious effort to set their house in order and had loyally carried out their treaty obligations." These omissions alone made it impossible for Great Britain, it was argued, to subscribe without careful qualification to Mr. Stimson's statement of the case.

On the other hand, the Geneva Correspondent of the *Times* reported (February 27th) that the British delegation did not disguise its satisfaction at the Stimson-Borah Letter. The Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Observer* (28th) also said that the Letter laid down " in a manner wholly agreeable to London " the lines upon which the diplomatic problem would have to be solved when faces had been saved and passions cooled. Editorially, the last-mentioned paper described the non-recognition principle contained in the Letter " for ultimate use " as a powerful one " to which we can all subscribe." The *Times* considered that the most reassuring element of the situation was that the other signatories of the Washington Treaties (i.e. those other than Japan) respected the territorial and administrative integrity of China, and would continue to help that country by all means in their power to acquire an effective and stable form of government.

Mr. Wickham Steed, in the *Sunday Times* of February 28th, mentioned the League Council Note of the 16th without referring to the non-recognition declaration. Mr. Stimson, he said, would like England to sing in tune with America ; but Britain and the other Governments happened to be deaf when Mr. Stimson had suggested they should follow his example in sending the non-recognition notification on January 7th. Mr. Wickham Steed then spoke of the Stimson-Borah Letter, adding " we have not yet heard whether England or France is still deaf." The Americans, he proceeded, could not understand why Great Britain and France had not stood up for peace and right in the Far East. On the following week (March 6th), Mr. Steed again made reference to the non-recognition declaration in the American Note of January 7th,

and said : " America, *again and again*, asked Great Britain to join her in giving the same warning to Japan and China. Hitherto Great Britain has not done so—why, nobody knows."[1] After all that, one might have expected to find Mr. Wickham Steed commenting with heartfelt approval on the March 11th Resolution of the League Assembly and on Great Britain's part in it ; but he was silent, at any rate in the *Sunday Times*.

5. Disarmament, not Non-Recognition

In his Letter to Senator Borah, Mr. Stimson had said that all the Washington treaties and agreements were interrelated and interdependent :

> No one of these treaties can be disregarded without disturbing the general understanding and equilibrium which were intended to be accomplished and effected by the group of agreements arrived at in their entirety.

The Washington Conference, Mr. Stimson continued, was essentially a disarmament conference :

> The willingness of the American Government to surrender its then commanding lead in battleship construction and to leave its positions at Guam and in the Philippines without further fortifications was predicated upon, among other things, the self-denying covenants contained in the Nine Power Treaties, which assured the nations of the world not only of equal opportunity for their Far Eastern trade but also against the military aggrandisement of any other Power at the expense of China.

This part of the Letter attracted at least as much attention at the time in the British Press as the reiteration of the non-recognition doctrine. It aroused alarms, fleeting it is true, about the Disarmament Conference, then entering upon its fourth week. Moreover, if the United States Government were to carry out the implied threat, Great Britain might have to follow suit.

The *News Chronicle*, on February 26th, considered that the essence of the Letter was that toleration of the violation of the Nine Power Treaty would, in the view of the United States Government, render automatically void all the other parts of the Washington settlement. The *Daily Herald*, in reporting the Stimson-Borah Letter (it made no comment),did so under the headlines : " U.S. warns Japan that she may alter her Pacific Naval Policy. Keeping ' Open Door ' in China. Condition of sacrificing her lead in Battleships."

[1] Author's italics.

The only comment of the Glasgow *Forward* on the Letter was that " the American Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, publicly threatens if the treaties and pacts are not to be observed to proceed at once to the fortification of the Philippines and the Island of Guam in the Landrones. A new naval base directly aimed at Japan. Operations at Singapore will be speeded up. If these things be permitted, they mean war, red war, and the ruin of us all." Its Editor, Mr. Thomas Johnston, then contesting the Dunbartonshire by-election as Labour candidate, made the point in his Address in a manner which must speak for itself :

> Already America has threatened to begin the creation of naval bases in the Philippines ; that, in turn, may lead to a world outbreak of competitive militarism and navalism, and inasmuch as our financial resources cannot bear even the present burdens of war—about 17s. 6d. out of every £1 of our national taxation goes for wars past, present and to come—it is madness and suicide not to back the League and the Covenant against mad-dog militarism in Japan or anywhere else.

Mr. Wickham Steed stressed the point in the *Sunday Times*.[1] Mr. Seymour Cocks dwelt upon it in the House of Commons (February 29th). The *Times*, in its editorial of February 26th, quoted the passage about battleship construction and Pacific fortifications as a statement that " affects us all." The *Daily Express* announced the Stimson-Borah Letter on its front page under the headlines : " Grave American Warning to Japan on China Policy. Veiled Threat by Stimson. Naval Treaty might be Denounced. Unless Japan Stops the War." It was a new and startling development, said this paper : Mr. Stimson had " virtually threatened denunciation of the Washington Naval Treaty unless Japan ceased aggressive action in China." Non-recognition was not mentioned, either then or afterwards ; nor did the startling development receive any further attention. The proceedings at the League Assembly went by without report or comment in that paper. Incidentally, the *Daily Mail*, though it had much to say about the Far Eastern crisis, as will be seen, apparently gave no report of the Stimson-Borah Letter, and made no subsequent references to it. Non-recognition and the League Assembly alike were unnoticed.

[1] " Mr. Stimson meant that, if Japan goes on attacking China in self-defence, America, also in self-defence, may have to fortify her possessions in the Pacific and to increase her Navy. Then the British Navy would have to be increased likewise. This is the accompaniment that statesmen are playing to the melodies of disarmament and peace which the Disarmament Conference is singing at Geneva. It sounds out of tune." (February 28th.)

The reaction described in this section throws a revealing light upon the real attitude in this country towards the question of taking coercive measures against Japan.

6. The Press and the League Assembly

Press opinion, during the League Assembly and after its Resolution of March 11th, presents some interesting contrasts. As usual, the most continuous commentaries were provided by the *Times* and the *Guardian*.

On March 5th, the latter paper was contending that this country should be at least as prompt as the United States in committing itself to non-recognition. On the 7th, it was delighted with the speeches made by representatives of the small nations, " some plain speaking at last," and it considered it still possible that Great Britain would follow " the American lead given in the Stimson Letter." The United States, the paper contended, had gone farther than any other Power during the Far Eastern conflict in demanding respect for international treaties.

Both papers commented upon Sir John Simon's speech at the Assembly on that day (they were almost the only ones to do so). The Geneva Correspondent of the *Times* dealt at length with Sir John's plea for a reaffirmation of principles, including a fresh non-recognition declaration, and a fresh reference to the Kellogg Pact. It was remarked in the lobbies, he said, that " the pointed reference to the Kellogg Pact and the general tone of the speech brought the British point of view much closer to the standpoint laid down in the Stimson-Borah Letter." The *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent quoted the proposed non-recognition declaration ; and announced that the British Foreign Secretary supported the principles expounded in so masterly a fashion by Mr. Stimson in his Letter. He went on to point out that " some approach " to these principles had been made on February 16th " before the Stimson letter was published," and quoted the non-recognition declaration in that Note of the League Council, adding that the words " were inserted in the appeal at the request of the British Government." Sir John Simon had now gone farther, he declared: " In other words, the gap between the principles of League policy and of American policy in the Far East has been closed." The editorial in the *Guardian* fully endorsed that view, and was particularly pleased with Sir John Simon's " blunt

statement," "brushing aside" the "sophistries" of Japan's defenders, "that respect for the territorial and political integrity of members of the League was not dependent on 'the merits of the controversy.'"

The *Economist* also referred to the Foreign Secretary's speech. It said on March 12th that such a declaration as Sir John Simon had suggested would bring the States Members of the League into line with the attitude of the United States, as set forth in the Stimson-Borah Letter. Indeed, it declared, "it is evident that Sir John Simon is now working in Geneva in close harmony with Washington." But, the *Economist* went on, "pious affirmations of principle *in vacuo* are obviously not enough." And the weekly's Geneva Correspondent wrote in the same issue that although Sir John's speech was supposed to be an approach to the policy laid down in the Stimson-Borah "Note," "it is difficult to discover it." If it was Sir John's intention "to repair the error of failing to support America's declaration" about non-recognition, "it is unfortunate that Sir John was not careful to make it plain." What, he asked, was "the objection to saying so as definitely as Mr. Stimson to China and Japan instead of wrapping it up in a declaration (not yet drafted) on the general principles of the Covenant which are not disputed?" This argument, again, seems to be based upon the view that the British Government ought to have acted independently of the League, although, if so, it is unfortunate that the Correspondent was not careful to make that plain.

The *Times* had a report from its Geneva Correspondent on March 10th giving the terms of the draft non-recognition declaration submitted by Sir John Simon. On the 11th, dealing with the draft Resolution, the editorial in that paper said that the non-recognition declaration brought the League States "into approximate agreement with the fundamental contention of the American Government that it will not recognise any situation created in violation of treaties." And next day, the adoption of the Resolution was said to be regarded "in all quarters" as "eminently satisfactory," it being incidentally pointed out that Sir John Simon had successfully appealed for the restoration to the text of the specific reference to the Pact of Paris.

The *Manchester Guardian*, on the 11th, described "Sir John Simon's draft Resolution" as "from many points of view a very satisfactory document," though it said that the non-recognition

undertaking " should have been understood from the beginning," and, later, that non-recognition was a new instrument in the armoury of the League the efficacy of which remained to be tested. The Geneva Correspondent of the paper was unqualifiedly enthusiastic. The principle of non-recognition was embodied in " clear, unambiguous terms." It was entirely in accord with American policy as expressed in the Stimson-Borah Letter. It covered Manchuria as well as Shanghai. The Resolution, he declared " which is mainly the work of Sir John Simon," seemed to be " wholly admirable," and it fulfilled " almost all the wishes that were expressed so forcibly by the small nations in the Assembly."

When the *Economist* came to deal with the Assembly's Resolution on March 19th, it agreed that the crucial non-recognition passage had brought the League of Nations into line with the position of the United States, and noted that Mr. Stimson had publicly expressed his satisfaction. Its Geneva Correspondent on the same day also referred to the quick American endorsement. America, he wrote, " seems satisfied with the Assembly's assertion of the principle of non-recognition," though, he added, " it is to be noted that it is not an undertaking not to recognise : it is an assertion that ' it is incumbent ' on States not to recognise." Anyhow, he said, it had " done something to correct the bad impression made in official American circles by our Foreign Office's refusal to say this until the Assembly met." The last sentence requires no comment ; but it is of some importance to note that, on March 14th, the Washington Correspondent of the *Times*, after speaking of the profound satisfaction of the American Government, said that :

> There is not the slightest intention to draw fine distinctions between the sort of moral obligation upon members of the League set up by the word " incumbent " and the more vigorous declaration of the United States . . . that " it does not intend to recognise . . . "

According to the Correspondent, opinion within the American Administration

> takes account of the fact that the Assembly is a constitutional body, and, as such, is forced to the observance of certain limitations.

He added that Mr. Stimson was " particularly gratified " by the specific reference to the Kellogg Pact.

In regard to the *Economist*, it is convenient to note at this point that on May 7th, 1932, while admitting that the League Assembly

had endorsed the Stimson non-recognition doctrine, it asserted that " both in January and February, the Government of the United Kingdom, of all Governments, almost ostentatiously dissociated itself from the non-recognition policy when Mr. Stimson put forward this policy in public."

The reader will have noticed that the *Economist*, in its comments on the March 11th Resolution, made no reference to Sir John Simon's contribution. Nor, as we have already seen, did the *News Chronicle*. The *New Statesman* had been as lukewarm about non-recognition as the last-mentioned newspaper ; but on March 12th, in a note written before the Assembly's Resolution, it considered it possible that a non-recognition declaration might bring Japan to reason. On the following week, the terms of the Resolution were said to be " not merely pious phrases." The League had " come into line, *despite efforts in London and Paris to prevent it*, with America, and the united front which Mr. Stimson's Note called for two months or more ago is at length presented to Tokyo." [1] No other paper or periodical appears to have gone as far as that at the time. But, except in the papers already dealt with, and the possible but curious case of the *Daily Herald*, there seems to have been very little interest in the League Assembly's Resolution, to say nothing of the British Government's part in it. The contrast is rather striking, and provides further confirmation that, at the time, the non-recognition doctrine made little appeal to the British public, even to those sections of it which were later on to be so critical of the British Government on that score.

During this period, the *Daily Herald* had no editorial comment after March 1st, when it had some brief remarks on the reported cessation of hostilities at Shanghai. Its Geneva Correspondent, Mr. W. N. Ewer, wrote hopefully about the prospects on the 5th. On the 8th, however, he was suggesting that the Great Powers wanted to get rid of the Assembly after allowing it to pass a pious Resolution. Two days later the purpose of the British delegation was said to have been " to get rid of the Assembly after the voting of a mere declaration of principle and of a phrase about ' non-recognition.' " The editorial on the 11th was devoted to the Disarmament Conference. On the 12th, the only information given

[1] Author's italics.

about the Assembly's Resolution was that it had been passed; nothing was said about its terms; there was no editorial about it; and Mr. Ewer's report, given little prominence, was headed, "South Africa kept off Peace Council"—it consisted of an attack upon Sir John Simon because South Africa had been defeated in the election of the members of the Committee of Nineteen set up under the terms of the Resolution—"defeated by the lack of one vote—and that the vote of the British."

The *New Leader* was silent on the Stimson-Borah Letter and the League Assembly alike. The Glasgow *Forward* had no comment on the Assembly's proceedings. Mr. Wickham Steed was silent. There was nothing at all for the readers of the *Express* and the *Mail*. Much more surprising, neither the *Daily Telegraph* nor the *Observer* commented upon the Assembly's Resolution, while the editorial in the *Sunday Times*, in commenting upon it, made no mention of the non-recognition declaration.

7. The Debate of March 22nd, 1932

When the House of Commons came to debate the Far Eastern crisis on March 22nd, non-recognition received considerable attention. It had figured on several occasions at question time in the previous weeks. On March 2nd, when Colonel Wedgwood asked what action was being taken in regard to the Stimson-Borah Letter's declaration on the matter, Mr. Eden said that the Government had already made its own attitude clear, and he reminded his questioner of the League Council Note of February 16th, adding that no further action was at present contemplated. On March 10th, when Mr. Neil Maclean asked what action was proposed in regard to the non-recognition statement in the American Note of January 7th, Mr. Eden referred his questioner to his reply of March 2nd, and drew attention to Sir John Simon's speech at the League Assembly on March 7th. On March 16th, in reply to a request from Mr. Cocks for information about Manchuria, Sir John Simon referred to the installation of Mr. H. P'u as Chief Executive of the new Government of Manchuria on March 9th and to the proclamation of the Nanking Government on March 12th refusing to recognise the new Government. The Foreign Secretary added that it would be premature to decide on the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards these events.

In his opening speech in the debate on March 22nd, the Leader of the Opposition asserted that it was indisputable that the new Government in Manchuria could not last for twenty-four hours if it were not for the military support of Japan. Lansbury quoted the non-recognition declaration in the Assembly Resolution of March 11th, saying that Sir John Simon had had something to do with it—he had just previously congratulated the Foreign Secretary on what he had done in regard to the Shanghai situation. He could not understand how any question could arise as to the recognition of the Government set up by Japan in Manchuria, or how it could be premature to give a decision. Quoting the " caveat " passage in the Stimson-Borah Letter, Lansbury wanted to know whether Sir John Simon agreed with it " and with the statement made by the League of Nations Council." He said he asked that because there was a general feeling outside the House that the British Government was not averse to what was happening in Manchuria, and " that we are a little half-hearted in the matter." The Opposition Leader added :

I want the right hon. Gentleman to believe that I do not think that he himself would give any countenance to the idea that a Government set up in the manner in which the Government in question has been set up should be recognised by this country or by any other of the Treaty Powers.

In the course of his reply, Sir John Simon said that, whereas some weeks before he had read " many criticisms suggesting that British policy had failed to keep step with the United States," there was nothing from which the House of Commons as a whole could take more satisfaction than the official communication of the United States Government expressing their gratification at the League Assembly's Resolution, " for the carrying of which this country was in a large measure responsible."

I have the best reason for saying that now, after what I know has seemed to some an unhappily long period, we have reached a point in this matter where we are able to say that the United States are joining with ourselves and other Great Powers in the Far East in endeavouring to promote the essential purposes which belong to the League of Nations and the Pact of Paris.

Sir John quoted from the American Government's statement a

passage in regard to future American co-operation with the League at Shanghai.[1]

The Foreign Secretary also quoted the non-recognition declaration and other passages from the Assembly's Resolution—he was "most grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for what he very kindly said about my part in it."

Sir John dealt at some length with the new Government in Manchuria and the question of its recognition. Lansbury, he said, appeared to assume that the new authority was simply one set up by and under the support of Japan; it might be so, but no one was entitled to say so as an accepted fact, except on the principle that one is at liberty to pronounce judgment without waiting for an inquiry and in the face of the denial of one of the parties. The Foreign Secretary said that Lansbury might "rest perfectly assured that this alleged new Administration in Manchuria is not an Administration which I should think any country is likely prematurely to recognise."

We should need to be quite certain, as a matter of fact, that you had a responsible Government, that you had a Government which would really administer the territory, that you had a Government which would really enter into relations with foreign States, and that you had a Government which really was the genuine expression of the decisions of the neighbourhood to which you refer. In our case we are parties to the Nine Power Treaty, and it is a matter of the greatest importance that we, as well as every other party to that Treaty, should see to it that we do not encourage or countenance what might be a disregard or a violation of Chinese territorial administration. At the same time, there is no law, and there is no common sense in saying, that in no conceivable circumstance can there ever be a sub-division of an enormous area like China, for as a matter of fact the rising up, in this province or that, of an Administration claiming to have a certain amount of independence is by this time a commonplace in Chinese matters; and I have never heard the matter challenged before.

It is of interest to note that Mr. Seymour Cocks, who followed Sir John Simon in the debate, did not press for any step to be taken in regard to the new Manchurian Government. He considered the

[1] On March 1st, a report of the Geneva Correspondent of the *Times* described how, at an emergency League Council meeting about Shanghai on the previous evening, Sir John Simon announced that he was authorised to communicate to the Council the assurance of the United States that it was prepared to co-operate in carrying out the proposals then under consideration. The *Times*, in its editorial, wrote of Sir John having had "the exceptional satisfaction of being able to expound the views of the United States at the Council table, and to show the absolute solidarity between British and American views during the present crisis."

latter " a Japanese puppet State," and thought that the British Government, " acting, of course, in conjunction with the League of Nations and the United States of America," should refuse to recognise it " at any time and in any circumstances."

Mr. Cocks repeated the criticisms he had made on February 29th. He regretted that this country had not " supported " the American Note of January 7th because he felt that encouragement had been given to the extreme military party in Japan ; and contended that if the Note had been supported [by which he ought to have meant if this country had independently sent a similar Note], then the new State in Manchuria might not have been proclaimed and Shanghai might not have been " invaded." No one else made any criticisms of the kind, and Mr. Cocks himself, after making his, said :

I would now like to say that I congratulate the Foreign Secretary upon his efforts in carrying the Resolution which was eventually adopted by the Assembly. I believe that he had a good deal to do with the form actually taken by that Resolution, which brought the League of Nations into line with the position taken up by the United States.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SANCTIONS LEGEND

1. Later Versions

NOTWITHSTANDING the facts known at the time, and the views then expressed, the British Government was subjected to a growing volume of criticism, on both sides of the Atlantic, based upon one or the other or both of the two incidents we have been discussing. In regard to the second of them, pride of place must surely go to Mr. Konni Zilliacus (later to be M.P. for Gateshead), one of the most active Left critics of the British Government, whose *Inquest on Peace* (published under the pen-name " Vigilantes ") was written for the General Election of 1935. His account of the Sino-Japanese dispute, chronologically muddled, and full of inaccuracies and unsubstantiated assertions, contained the following remarkable passage :

> Sir John Simon *successfully prevented* the Assembly in March 1932 adopting a Resolution which would have definitely associated the League with the American policy, adopted in the previous January, of *non-recognition of Japan's puppet State* ; this policy had been warmly urged on the League delegates by Mr. Stimson, the United States Secretary of State, *who was present in Geneva at the time*, ostensibly in connection with the Disarmament Conference. But our Foreign Secretary *could not prevent* the Assembly laying down the general principle of non-recognition of territorial changes brought about by aggression and treaty-breaking.[1]

No reader of *Inquest on Peace* (and there were very many) would have gathered that Sir John Simon was primarily responsible for the Assembly's Resolution, that he proposed it, and was credited with the chief part in securing its unanimous adoption. The American Note of January made no reference to " Japan's puppet State," which had not then been proclaimed. The American Government had not subsequently made any announcement refusing to recognise any such State, projected or actual. The League could not have associated itself with an undeclared policy, and no Resolution of the kind said to have been successfully prevented by Sir John Simon

[1] Author's italics.

could have been proposed. Mr. Stimson was not in Geneva at the time ; he only sailed from America on April 8th, a month later, and his statement on March 12th welcoming the League Assembly's Resolution was issued from Washington.

Mr. Zilliacus, however, was only reproducing in substance a criticism presented in the *Manchester Guardian* on October 1st, 1932, by " A Special Correspondent."[1] This writer had made the same erroneous statement about Mr. Stimson being at Geneva : indeed, had talked about the " discreet and rather vague manner " in which the Secretary of State had " encouraged the members of the League to stick to their obligations under the Covenant." He had written that the smaller Powers were " very much disgusted at the frank admission by the British delegation in private conversations that Great Britain was not observing, and did not propose to observe, the Covenant in this dispute." Sir John Simon was said to have striven hard " to prevent any action except a vague declaration of principles," being " insistent on getting a resolution that Japan could accept." The Assembly Resolution " formally asserting the principle " of non-recognition was referred to without any allusion to the part played by Sir John Simon in its adoption. And the writer proceeded : " Some of the smaller Powers wished to apply this principle explicitly to the Manchurian situation as the United States had done in the Stimson-Borah letter, but this was defeated by Sir John Simon." In fact, the principle was applied as explicitly to the Manchurian situation in the one case as in the other.

The incidents of January and February 1932 were invested, as time went on, with a much wider significance than the facts warranted. In many different ways, directly and indirectly, and long before Mr. Stimson's book was published in 1936, it was suggested that the United States Government would have taken positive measures against Japan if only the British Government had been willing to co-operate. Even statesmen of the calibre of the Earl of Lytton and the Marquess of Lothian conveyed that impression. At the University of Manchester (May 17th, 1934) Lord Lytton declared that :

> The United States have made overtures which have not been reciprocated, and the failure of our Government to back up Mr. Stimson is perhaps the most regrettable of all its shortcomings.

[1] There is, of course, the possibility that " A Special Correspondent " may have been Mr. Zilliacus, but on that point we have no information.

Similarly, Lord Lothian said at Chatham House (December 12th, 1934) :

I have always thought that the mistake of British policy at that time was . . . its rejection of Mr. Stimson's offer to reverse the isolationist decision of 1920 and to act with us in support of the collective system in the Pacific. This failure on our part to live up to the spirit and the letter of the Washington Treaties early in 1932 drove the United States back into isolation.

The vagueness which characterised the remarks of the two noble Lords no less than those of lesser critics obscured the central fact that the American " overtures " and " offer " related exclusively to Mr. Stimson's non-recognition policy. Lord Lothian undoubtedly learned in due course that it was not possible, anyhow, for an American Secretary of State or even an American President to reverse an isolationist or any other policy without the backing of the United States Congress and people. But what he does not seem to have realised is that the state of American opinion early in 1932 (including the opinion of the President) was such as effectively to prevent Mr. Stimson going beyond a policy of " moral condemnation " and " non-recognition." The United States was not driven back into " isolationism " : it had never got out of it. If Lord Lothian did not understand that in the first months of 1932, he was very far from being alone.

We shall see that, in spite of the evidence to the contrary—and there was plenty of it—many people constantly deluded themselves into believing that the United States was prepared to take coercive measures against Japan. Lord Grey put the matter in its true proportions in his Albert Hall speech on March 7th, 1932, when he said :

We have to remember that the United States has carefully abstained from associating itself with the League because of its fear of being drawn into complications. I am delighted that the United States has joined with the League as much as it has in this conflict. We have all been anxious that our Government and the League should show itself ready to co-operate with the United States Government in the pacific policy which that Government is advocating. But I do not believe for a moment that the United States Government has been so bashful that it has been anxious to do much more and has only been waiting to be invited to do so. That is certainly not true of the United States. If the United States had itself been prepared for stronger action and the British Government and the League of Nations had refused to go so far as the United States wished to

go, then there would have been ground for criticism. But so far as I am aware the British Government and the League have shown no backwardness in supporting anything which the United States Government proposed. To have proposed more than the United States Government was ready to co-operate in would not have been effective and would not have been wise.

2. The Legend

It has been shown that there was relatively little interest in the non-recognition policy in Great Britain at the time. Why was such a fuss made about it later? Plainly, the answer is not to be found in any actual influence its adoption by the United States and by the League of Nations may have had—not discernible—upon Japanese behaviour. Nor is it to be found in its anticipated effects, despite faith in the efficacy of "the public opinion of the world." That faith, widespread in 1932, had certainly diminished by 1934, though it was still prevalent in many quarters. The answer is that Mr. Stimson's adoption of the non-recognition policy provided a basis, however flimsy, for the belief (or the suggestion) that the United States had been prepared at the time to take some kind of coercive action against Japan. It was the only basis that existed. No evidence could be produced. Indeed, the evidence at the time—to say nothing of United States policy in the subsequent years—pointed plainly in the contrary direction.

Mr. Stimson and Mr. Bundy have recently written

> in the years after 1933 there had grown up among many Americans a legend that if he had not been blocked by the wicked British Stimson would easily have brought the wicked Japanese to terms by bold and energetic action in 1932. It was not as simple as that.[1]

It certainly was nothing like so simple as that. And what did those many Americans mean by "bold and energetic action"? The legend, anyhow, was not confined to Americans. It grew widely popular here. Those who created or adopted it, those who circulated it and still circulate it, have relied, for the most part, upon Mr. Stimson's 1936 book, which is supposed to have confirmed their previously formulated charges against British policy. Save, perhaps, for one sentence expressing a very modest hope, that book did precisely the opposite.

[1] *On Active Service in Peace and War*, pp. 69-70.

Just as Sir Norman Angell, asserting that the United States made repeated offers of co-operation " in resistance " to Japanese aggression, was only able to produce the doctrine and policy of non-recognition, so little else emerges from a reading of Mr. Stimson's book, and that little falls entirely within the sphere of diplomatic action or " moral sanctions." Now and again that has been pointed out in this country. The late Major-General A. C. Temperley wrote :

I have read and re-read what Mr. Stimson has written, but nowhere can I find a reference to any form of co-operation beyond joint diplomatic pressure.[1]

Mr. Henry Strauss said, in the House of Commons, October 21st, 1937,

there is no evidence whatever, from the beginning to the end of that book, that the American Government was ever prepared to join in the application of force.

Mr. Strauss wondered how many of those who were making the charges against the British Government had even read Mr. Stimson's book. But many, apparently, convinced themselves that they had found in the book what they wanted to find but which was not there at all.

3. Mr. Stimson and Sanctions

The references in Mr. Stimson's book to the question of sanctions (i.e. economic and military sanctions) are as follows :[2]

1. (p. 56). In the face of such a situation certain basic facts had to be faced. The group of interrelated treaties entered into at the Washington Conference in 1922, under which America and Britain reduced the size of their respective navies in relation to that of Japan and agreed to leave their possessions in the Far East without further fortification, had been intended to make and *had made it physically impossible for any single Western nation successfully to intervene by military force* in such a matter as the Manchurian dispute even if it should desire to do so. Quite apart from such limitations, no fact was more clear to any observer than that at this period of the great depression *none of the nations in Europe or America, even if able, had the slightest desire to go to war in such a controversy.* These facts had evidently reduced the area of *possible* action before us to :

[1] *The Whispering Gallery of Europe* (April 1938), p. 322.
[2] Author's italics throughout.

(1) some form of collective economic sanctions against Japan, or in default of that

(2) by the exercise of diplomatic pressure and the power of world public opinion, to try to get as fair play as possible for the weaker Power, China, in the eventual negotiated settlement, and

(3) by a vigorous judgment against Japan backed by the public opinion of the world, to save as much respect as possible for the great treaties which had been publicly flouted by Japan's action.

These, in substance, were the objectives which one after another were *discussed by us at the State Department* during the autumn weeks while the proceedings of the League were taking their course at Geneva and Paris.

That passage only tells us : (1) That the State Department discussed the possibility of collective economic sanctions during the closing months of 1931 ; (2) that, in Mr. Stimson's view, the United States could no more intervene successfully by military force than could Great Britain or any other Western nation ; and (3) that neither in the United States nor in Great Britain was there any willingness to resort to war. On the last point, none of the critics of the British Government in this country ever demanded war ; on the contrary, they were strongly averse to it, and were placed in difficulties by the likelihood that economic sanctions might lead to war.

Mr. Stimson's second reference occurred when he was still dealing with the position in the late autumn of 1931. After pointing out that China had made her appeal under the authority of Article XI of the Covenant, he went on :

2. (p. 58). The League's efforts under Article XI were thus strictly limited to attempts to reach a solution of the dispute by conciliation and agreement of both disputants. Action under Article XI would not lead automatically to sanctions, either military or economic, against an aggressor nation. No effort thus far had been made by China to invoke any such action and, so far as I know, no suggestion of the invocation of such sanctions had thus far been made by anyone, at least to us. On the contrary, as early as September 26th it had been reported to us informally that Geneva was opposed to using sanctions. Furthermore, it must be remembered that China's appeal to the League was made within two days of the original clash ; and at that time, while it was known that a very serious situation had been created, Japan was taking the position that she had acted solely for defensive purposes and that as soon as that defence should no longer be necessary her troops would be withdrawn.

There is here no criticism of the League's attitude, and, as Mr.

Stimson wrote (p. 59), "The United States continued its policy of endeavouring to support the persuasions of the Council by representations through diplomatic channels."

3. (p. 76). November 19th, when the news came of the Japanese defeat of General Ma and the capture of Tsitsihar, was a day of excitement in Paris. Dr. Sze was reported as being anxious on behalf of China to invoke Article XV of the Covenant with a view to leading ultimately up to the imposition of sanctions. Members of the League were reported to have inquired from Mr. Dawes what our attitude would be in case they should proceed on that line. They were anxious to obtain commitments from us before they even discussed such action themselves. *On our part we manifestly could give no such commitment.* Our Congress was not in session and *there was no statutory authority under which the Executive could impose economic sanctions.* Furthermore, *it was quite unlikely that any such authority would be granted by the Congress.* In the public discussions in America a decade before as to joining the League much opposition had been manifested against the provisions for either military or economic sanctions expressed in the League Covenant. In the treaties to which it had afterwards become a party, viz. the Pact of Paris and the Nine Power Treaty, the American Government had confined itself to a reliance upon the sanctions of public opinion alone. Under such circumstances manifestly we could not commit ourselves to the imposition of sanctions. On the other hand, if the League of Nations desired to proceed under Articles XV and XVI of the Covenant and themselves to impose such sanctions, we were anxious not to discourage them or to put any obstacles or dangers in their path. With the authority of the President, after a conference with him on that day—November 19th—I informed Mr. Dawes to that effect and authorised him in his discretion to make our whole position absolutely clear to M. Briand. The following morning he reported to me that he had done so and that M. Briand was perfectly satisfied with our attitude.

Mr. Stimson added that Mr. Dawes was very much opposed to attending the League Council publicly, as it had been suggested he should do, "at this particular time on account of the patent danger which would be involved of having his presence at such a meeting misinterpreted as a commitment by our Government on the subject of sanctions which might there be discussed. In this I fully concurred with him."

That is surely plain enough. The United States could not participate in the imposition of economic sanctions; and, of course, did not urge any such step. It was afraid lest its representative, by participating in or even attending a meeting of the League

Council, should become involved in a discussion of the matter. If the League should impose economic sanctions, however, the United States would not obstruct. Mr. Stimson did not even express the view that the imposition of sanctions by the League was desirable.[1] On the contrary, in his next reference to the subject, he said that without the United States such a step would be ineffective :

4. (p. 83). Some critics have blamed the nations for not at once setting in motion stronger machinery of compulsion against Japan ; for not having at once invoked the pressure of economic sanctions. These critics disregard the limitations of man in international action. True, the power to invoke such measures existed within the League Covenant ; but it had never been used. Mankind does not at once jump into the skillful use of new international machinery. The road to progress is much slower and is usually strewn with the wrecks of previous unsuccessful efforts. In this case the League turned first to the machinery with which it was most familiar and had had the best success in the past. And in that effort the League had for the first time the co-operation of the United States to an extent entirely lacking in previous efforts. For the reasons already pointed out, *it could not have had during those early months the same American co-operation in the use of sanctions. Without the United States the League's use of sanctions would have been incomplete and comparatively ineffective*—less effective than it could have been in the case of Italy versus Ethiopia. Roughly speaking, the United States possessed one-third of the world's trade with Japan ; all the other nations combined, two-thirds. Although the League was assured of our moral sympathy and that we would interpose no obstacles to its economic sanctions, it took no step to invoke sanctions and even China, the party most concerned, did not insist upon them—did not even discuss them until near the end of November. In short, the League leadership was not ready to attempt sanctions in the autumn of 1931 in relation to Manchuria, and the Government of the United States in its efforts at co-operation with the League under Article XI *had gone to the limit of its legal authority and at least to the limit of its popular support.*

The United States could offer " moral sympathy " only. That was " the limit." Could anything be plainer ? The phrase " during those early months " might seem to have a possible importance ;

[1] Mr. Stimson's account makes it clear that the question was not raised by his Government but by " members of the League." According to Ambassador Dawes, Briand (then President of the League Council) inquired on November 14th, 1931, as to the probable attitude of the United States. " My reply was that I had been informed that the United States would not join in the consideration of the question of sanctions or in the enforcing of them if hereafter imposed by the League acting under Articles XV and XVI." (Quoted by Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis*, p. 145.)

but the position afterwards remained unchanged. Mr. Stimson's next reference relates to the changed conditions after the fall of the Minseito Government in Japan, in December 1931.

5. (p. 92). Finally, conciliation having failed, it was most important to find some way of formally expressing *the moral disapproval of the world* against the breach of the peace in Manchuria and, if possible, to put behind that expression a sanction which would bring pressure upon the party responsible to make amends. We had reason to believe that economic sanctions would not be invoked. The League from the beginning had been hesitant and reluctant to turn to the machinery for such sanctions which it had ready. We had no such machinery ready, and very evident difficulties lay in the path of its creation. If possible, *some substitute* upon which all nations could agree should be found which would at least carry the force and implication of *a moral condemnation.*

The "substitute" was found in the policy of non-recognition. But, when dealing with the circumstances which led him to propose the joint invocation of the Nine Power Treaty, Mr. Stimson said :

6. (p. 161). The possible use of economic sanctions against Japan was being more discussed in America since the Shanghai attack than it had been during the preceding autumn. It had become much more of a practical possibility. Petitions looking to such use were now being circulated, assisted by such influential men as President Lowell of Harvard and Mr. Newton D. Baker. Congress was now in session and several bills to give the President power to impose such action had been introduced in the Congress by various members. If a situation should ultimately arise when the American Government felt it necessary to recommend the imposition, in co-operation with the rest of the world, of an embargo upon Japanese goods, I believed that such a measure would have more chance of being adopted by Congress if it were recommended following the invocation of the Nine Power Treaty than if it had been recommended solely by the League of Nations.

It is this passage only which could provide any sort of foundation for the optimistic or partisan interpretations of the British Government's critics. Even so, the foundation was slender in the extreme. Mr. Stimson merely hoped that the invocation of the Nine Power Treaty might give a better chance of getting Congress to approve an embargo on Japanese goods should the Government ultimately propose it. That was in early February 1932. Mr. Stimson's book carried his survey of the Far Eastern crisis down to March 27th, 1933. At no point in his discussion of the later stages of the dispute did he mention again the possibility of the United States Government

proposing an embargo ; there is no indication that it was even considered. The book was written in the early months of 1936 ; and in his last chapter Mr. Stimson gave his views on the general problem of sanctions :

7. (p. 251). Whether an attempt to enforce sanctions will lead to an irrepressible war depends as much upon the nature of other factors as it does upon the nature of the sanctions. Upon the justice of the controversy, for example, will depend the strength of the united front against the recalcitrant nation. And a front perfectly united behind a just cause will in all probability carry further with very mild sanctions than a weak or vacillating front trying to apply the strongest sanctions. . . .

. . . In any system of sanctions much will depend upon the wisdom and vigor of leadership with which the first international tests of the system are carried through to completion. Ultimate success will greatly be facilitated by momentum. Almost any form of collective action, provided it has been shown to command the faith of its members and to have been capable of being carried through to a beneficent and successful conclusion, would be accepted in a world which is looking anxiously for a solution of the problem of putting restraint on war. The influence of success would not be confined to the League of Nations itself. It would be very potent, I believe, in America. My observation of public opinion in America, while the League was proceeding unfalteringly with its programme of sanctions during the autumn of 1935, confirmed me in this view. Co-operation between the United States and a League which had shown itself steadfast and successful in carrying through to the end its organised machinery of war prevention, I believe would be a comparatively easy matter.

This last passage made no direct allusion to the Manchurian dispute ; but Mr. Stimson made it clear that only when the League of Nations had successfully applied sanctions would United States co-operation become a " comparatively easy matter." In such circumstances, of course, American co-operation would have become " comparatively " unimportant. But, as we have seen, Mr. Stimson had already contended that without the United States economic sanctions against Japan would have been " comparatively ineffective."

4. Mr. Stimson's Defence of American Policy

The evidence provided by Mr. Stimson's specific references to sanctions is fully confirmed by his clear exposition and defence of

American policy. During the first three months of the dispute, that policy was based, in Mr. Stimson's words, " on the hope of action from within Japan " (p. 88). It was based upon the hope that the Japanese civil Government (the Minseito party Government of Mr. Wakatsuki and Baron Shidehara), might effectively assert its authority and check the Japanese militarists.

The American Government held the Minseito Government in high esteem. For ten years, wrote Mr. Stimson, it had had " an exceptional record of good citizenship in the life of the international world " (p. 36). That applied particularly to the Foreign Minister, Baron Shidehara. " We knew he had been laboring hard for moderation against the pressure of the army leaders in Manchuria. We had reached the conclusion that those leaders had engineered this outbreak probably without his knowledge and certainly against his will." Mr. Stimson's guiding principle, therefore, was that " no steps should be taken which would make his task more difficult " (p. 36).[1]

The wise course, in Mr. Stimson's judgment, was to give Shidehara and the Foreign Office " an opportunity, *free from anything approaching a threat or even public criticism*, to get control of the situation (p. 34, author's italics). Mr. Stimson emphasised that " the danger of a false reaction from foreign interference was particularly great " in the case of the Japanese. " Great caution " was necessary. He recalled the Soviet Government's reaction two years previously when, Russian forces having crossed the border into Manchuria after Chang Hsueh-liang's seizure of control of the Chinese Eastern Railway, the American Government had " promptly taken the lead in mobilising a very general expression of world opinion cautioning those two nations against a breach of that Pact "—the Pact of Paris. A similar mistake must be avoided.

For these reasons, the United States Government concentrated upon diplomatic pressure through the usual channels. It was " wise to avoid action which might excite nationalistic feeling in Japan in support of the military and against Shidehara." That was why Mr. Stimson opposed the proposal to send a League Commission of Inquiry to Manchuria " over and against the objection of Japan." He was " gravely concerned " as to the likely effect upon the Japanese

[1] See *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 74. " My problem is to let the Japanese know that we are watching them and at the same time to do it in a way which will help Shidehara, who is on the right side, and not play into the hands of any nationalist agitators." (Mr. Stimson's Diary, September 23rd, 1931.)

people. And he argued, in his book, that had the Commission been sent it would have hastened the downfall of the Minseito Cabinet; whereas the latter was able eventually to agree to the sending of a Commission of Inquiry just before its resignation on December 11th, 1931.

Similarly, it was "the risk of adverse reaction on the part of Japan," as well as "the risk of a hostile reaction at home," which explained the American Government's hesitations before participating in the proceedings of the League Council in October 1931, and its prompt termination of that participation as soon as the invocation of the Pact of Paris was concluded. In his book, Mr. Stimson was silent about his reactions to the League Council's "time-limit" Resolution of October 24th, merely referring to the Memorandum sent by him to Japan on November 5th, but the omission in that document of any mention of a specific date for the withdrawal of Japanese troops to the railway zone was based upon the same considerations.[1]

But before then (by October 19th, according to his book), Mr. Stimson had come to the conclusion that "the Japanese Government which we have been dealing with is no longer in control."[2] The last lingering hope that it might be able to re-assert its authority was destroyed with its resignation on December 11th; and thus, wrote Mr. Stimson, "our attempt to solve the Manchurian problem by discussion and conciliation had failed." Mr. Stimson decided that for the time being all hope of a solution by conciliation had ended. He explained in his book that his subsequent policy had three objectives: (1) To educate the American people about the importance of their obligations to China; (2) to put an end "to the interchange of unsatisfactory argument" with Japan, and to do so "with a snap"; and (3) to find a substitute for economic sanctions. Hence the adoption of the non-recognition policy, the Note of January 7th, 1932, and the proposed joint invocation of the

[1] In a telegram to the American Ambassador in Japan, published many years later, Mr. Stimson explained that the terms of the League Resolution "have not received unqualified endorsement on my part, and as for the date, I have deliberately refrained from mentioning one."

[2] See *On Active Service*, p. 75: "... each new report of Japanese advances in Manchuria, and each new evidence of a stiff tone in official Foreign Office papers, showed that they were fighting a losing battle. The harrowing fact remained that there was nothing their friends in other countries could do to help them. Any attack by foreigners —and particularly by Americans—on Japanese militarism would merely 'play into the hands of any nationalist agitators.'"

Nine Power Treaty, which was transformed into the Letter to Senator Borah of February 23rd, 1932.[1]

It was a policy of mobilising world opinion in protest and condemnation. Judging from his book, Mr. Stimson appeared to believe that in the long run the pressure of public opinion upon Japan would be effective. His policy was not devised as a stage towards the application of economic sanctions; it was avowedly a "substitute" for sanctions. Even his hope later on that invocation of the Nine Power Treaty might improve the prospects of getting the support of Congress should any proposal be made for an embargo on Japanese goods was not one of the chief reasons for the proposed invocation. Mr. Stimson wrote that he had had two motives: (1) More effectively to explain his Government's policy to the American people, and (2) to re-assure China that the signatories of the Treaty still intended to respect their obligations thereunder. He added, however, that possibly the invocation might induce Japan to attend a conference of the signatories should one be proposed; and then, last of all, came the passage expressing the hope. In it, Mr. Stimson referred to certain proposals which had been introduced in Congress. He did not describe their fate.

The evidence of Mr. Stimson's book is overwhelming. In the first stage, American policy was one of extreme caution in conciliation. In the second stage, conciliation was abandoned, and a policy of protest and non-recognition of accomplished facts took its place. Whatever hopes Mr. Stimson may have entertained about its longer-run efficacy, it was essentially a negative policy. As Mr. Denys Smith has said: "It gave the appearance of firmness without entailing any of the risks. . . . It was not a doctrine to prevent aggression, but a definition of the attitude which would be taken when aggression was successful."[2] Mr. William Castle, Under-Secretary of State, described it in these words:

It is a powerful sanction without the use of force. It puts teeth into the Pact, but involves no war to prevent war, no danger of war arising

[1] See *On Active Service*, p. 79: "Non-recognition was a moral weapon, a moral sanction. It was designed originally less as a method of bringing the Japanese to reason than as a method of reasserting the American conviction that no good whatever could come from the breach of treaties. In so far as it was designed to serve American interests in the Far East, it was aimed rather more at China than at Japan. . . . The United States might not be able to prevent aggression against China, but she must certainly make her opinion of it clear."

[2] *America and the Axis War*, p. 54.

out of boycotts. It keeps this country clear of entanglements, while at the same time it proves our willingness to co-operate.[1]

Mr. Stimson also seemed to regard the policy of non-recognition as a potent moral "sanction." Not only did he appear to rely upon the moral force of world opinion, as expressed in that policy, but, even in 1936 when he wrote his book, he was still far from holding the opinion that it was futile :

> The history of the Sino-Japanese controversy of 1931 is the record of the arraignment, the trial and the condemnation of a great power for the violation of certain new standards of conduct aimed at preventing international aggression. This was the first time in man's history that such an attempt had been made. These standards of conduct which the trial enforced had been in existence for less than a dozen years. Nevertheless, the proceeding was carried through with dignity and firmness to the final step of condemnation by the forty-two nations sitting in the Assembly of the League, and their verdict was unanimous. Following the example set by the January 7th note of the American Government, this verdict was also re-enforced by the concurrent agreement of these forty-two nations not to recognise "Manchukuo."
>
> The co-operative action of the nations very possibly prevented a declaration of war in the Far East, a blockade of China's coast, and a direct annexation of Manchuria by Japan. For a time it even restricted and slowed up some of the movements of the Japanese army. . . . But it failed to halt Japan's aggression against China. . . . Yet, as I write these lines, the bond of non-recognition of "Manchukuo" which helped to hold together the former united front still stands loyally adhered to by practically all the nations which entered into it. Hence that covenant may still serve to promote an ultimate just settlement of the Sino-Japanese controversy. We are too prone to be unduly influenced and discouraged by the shadow of events which are near at hand. Measured by the ordinary progress of human evolution in international conduct, the achievement of the League of Nations in the Manchurian controversy was a signal and momentous event marking a great step forward from previous conditions. (p. 242.)

That, of course, was not the verdict given by critics of the British Government who drew upon Mr. Stimson's book for campaign ammunition.

5. The Shattering of the Legend

The whole legend about the United States and "sanctions,"

[1] Quoted by Mr. Denys Smith, *ibid*, p. 59.

developed on the rickety structure of the non-recognition policy, ought to be finally shattered by the publication of *On Active Service in Peace and War.* This book not only confirms what any careful reader of the 1936 book would have concluded : it also supplies fresh and decisive evidence. Of particular interest and importance is the evidence about the American Government's attitude towards sanctions at the time of the Shanghai episode and of the Letter to Senator Borah.

In regard to the earlier period and the origin of the non-recognition doctrine, it is said :

> The treaties to which the American Government was a party, unlike the Covenant of the League, were treaties without teeth. More important still, since the basic requirement of policy is that it must be supported by public approval and executive leadership, the American Government was without teeth. Mr. Hoover was a profoundly peaceable man. Outraged as he was by Japanese aggression, he was opposed, in every fibre of his being, to any action which might lead to American participation in the struggles of the Far East. In this view he had the support of the American people.
>
> Stimson could not deny that anything more than verbal action to check Japanese aggression might well lead to war. He was himself at first opposed to any American use of economic sanctions on exactly that ground, and on November 19th, 1931, he so instructed Ambassador Dawes when the question was raised in the League. The American Government would be delighted if the League would impose sanctions, and would do nothing to interfere with such action, but it would not impose sanctions of its own. . . . If it would not condone the tearing up of the treaties, and if it would not take any economic or military action to defend them, what *would* the American Government do ? It was this question which produced the famous non-recognition doctrine as the only available answer. (pp. 78-9.)

Hence the Note of January 7th. With its publication,

> the United States, with Stimson as its spokesman, stepped to the forefront of the nations opposing aggression, and from this time onward, until his retirement from office fourteen months later, Stimson was the outstanding advocate of collective condemnation of Japan. (p. 80.)

This talk of being in " the forefront " in opposition to aggression—on the basis of verbal condemnation and non-recognition—is somewhat nauseating ; it contrasts most unfavourably with Sir John Simon's refusal to take up " a sort of position of priority or special virtue."

With the outbreak of hostilities at Shanghai, the American Government re-examined its position ; and an account is given of the important Cabinet discussions on January 26th and 29th, 1932. The President is said to have given " a categorical negative " to forcible action in defence of China's integrity. On the other hand he believed that the Kellogg Pact could become a great moral force against aggression.

Since Mr. Hoover was President, and since he believed that any policy of embargo or sanctions might lead to war, his position effectively blocked any governmental support for economic sanctions. . . . In taking this position, Mr. Hoover was squarely in line with the whole tradition of American foreign policy in the Far East.[1]

In these circumstances, " debarred from any advocacy of sanctions," Mr. Stimson was " driven to a double course : *a bluff of force and a strong re-statement of principles.*"[2] The bluff " was not a very good one." Mr. Hoover " did not like the notion of even unspoken threats of war." He was " frequently eager to make it perfectly clear that no economic or warlike measures would be taken by his administration against Japan." He held back only in deference to Mr. Stimson's " urgent pleading." But the bluff was one " that could not be expressed."

The American Government could not intimate by word or deed that

[1] Mr. Stimson did not mention in either of his books a memorandum in which President Hoover had clearly set out his views. This document appears to have been drawn up at some time in the autumn of 1931. It is given in R. L. Wilbur and A. M. Hyde, *The Hoover Policies* (New York, 1937) and quoted by Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis*, to whom we are indebted for the information. The key passages are as follows :

" The United States has never set out to preserve peace among other nations by force and so far as this part is concerned we shall confine ourselves to friendly counsel."

" This part " was the controversy between China and Japan.

" Second, our whole policy in connection with controversies is to exhaust the processes of peaceful negotiation. But contemplating these we must make up our minds whether we consider war as the ultimate if these efforts fail. Neither our obligations to China nor our own interest, nor our dignity, require us to go to war over these questions.

" These acts do not imperil the freedom of the American people, the economic or moral future of our people. I do not propose ever to sacrifice American life for anything short of this. If that were not enough reason, to go to war means a long struggle at a time when civilisation is already weak enough. To win such a war is not solely a naval operation. We must arm and train Chinese. We would find ourselves involved in China in a fashion that would excite the suspicions of the world.

" Third, we have a moral obligation to use every influence short of war to have the treaties upheld or terminated by mutual agreement. We should co-operate with the rest of the world, we should do so as long as that co-operation remains in the field of moral pressures. As the League of Nations has already taken up the subject we should co-operate with them in every field of negotiation and conciliation. But that is the limit. We will not go along on any of the sanctions, either economic or military, for these are roads to war."

[2] *On Active Service*, p. 87. (Author's italics.)

it favoured sanctions : any such intimation was barred by Mr. Hoover's position. Stimson even felt it necessary to deny reports circulated privately in Geneva that the American Government was coming round in support of sanctions. All that was possible was to keep silent on future intentions, and the silence was not very impressive. And when friendly Governments attempted to sound out the American position, the bluff became still weaker.

The policy of bluff followed in the winter of 1932 was certainly more effective than any public announcement that the United States was opposed to sanctions, but that is about all that can be said for it, and it may be doubted whether Japanese leaders were much surprised when in May Mr. Hoover insisted on a public statement opposing sanctions by the then Acting Secretary of State. (p. 88.)

For the rest of the crisis, as before, Mr. Stimson had " no choice as to what he should do next." The country was opposed to sanctions, and the President was opposed to sanctions. " Only the power of moral judgment remained."[1]

But, once again, how far was the truth about the American Government's position appreciated in this country at the time? Were many people " bluffed " here? Some may appear to have been. Indeed, one circumstance suggests that they may have been fairly numerous. Japanese military action at Shanghai revived discussion of sanctions, and suggestions of various kinds were made for the application of sanctions against Japan in certain contingencies. All such suggestions either assumed American participation or, as was usually the case, were made expressly conditional upon such participation. The controversy about " non-recognition " cannot, therefore, be fully understood without an examination of British opinion during the Shanghai episode and about the connected sanctions issue.

[1] On February 23rd, 1933, shortly before leaving office, President Hoover placed his views on record in another Memorandum. The document is quoted by Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis*, p. 152, as follows :

" As you are aware, I have long been inflexibly opposed to the imposition of any kind of sanctions except purely public opinion. The imposition of any kind of sanctions, military or economic, would in the present state of mind of the Japanese people provoke the spread of the conflagration already in progress and might involve the United States. As it is not our intention to ever engage in sanctions other than that of public opinion it would seem to me that some occasion should be taken to make it clear. It would certainly relax the tension to some extent. It would in no way undermine the importance of public opinion in this controversy, for under the non-recognition doctrine that would be continuous and will ultimately triumph."

CHAPTER EIGHT

SHANGHAI AND SANCTIONS—I

1. In the House of Commons

As in the 1931 phase, so in the first three months of 1932, the proceedings in the House of Commons relative to the Far East present superficially a striking contrast to the treatment of the matter in the Press. Whereas events at Shanghai were " front page news " for more than a fortnight, and editorial comments were frequent (almost daily in the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Times*), there was no major debate in the House of Commons devoted wholly to the Far East. But that way of putting it is rather misleading. When the House of Commons met on February 2nd, five days after the initial Japanese attack on Chapei, the Leader of the Opposition asked for a debate, which the Prime Minister urged would be most inopportune. At the close of questions, Lansbury attempted in vain to secure leave to adjourn the House under Standing Order No. 8. Although he then gave notice of his intention to raise the question on the adjournment of the House that night, he did not do so ; and the next day explained that he had refrained " in deference to a special request " made by the Prime Minister.[1]

The situation in the Far East, and particularly that at Shanghai, was, however, frequently the subject of parliamentary questions ; and on February 15th and the three following days took up a considerable proportion of question time. So much so that when on February 22nd Lansbury suggested that it would be more convenient to deal with the matter on the motion for the adjournment the Foreign Secretary readily agreed. The brief discussion on the adjournment that evening was confined, apart from a few words at

[1] The Leader of the Opposition handled the matter badly on February 2nd. He created a " scene " by saying that the Japanese Government had been engaged " in a piece of international piracy," and incurred a rebuke from the Speaker. His proposed motion did not conform to the requirements of the Standing Order. Its terms, however, have a certain interest. The matter he wished to raise was " the lack of a definite policy on the part of the Government to secure, by pacific means, the safety of British subjects in Shanghai, and a prompt settlement, through the League of Nations, of the Chino-Japanese dispute." After a conversation with the Prime Minister, Lansbury agreed not to press further for a debate.

the close from Sir Austen Chamberlain, to the Opposition Leader and Sir John Simon ; and there was no further pressure, apparently, for a debate.

In regard to " sanctions," the contrast between Parliament and Press is more real and of greater significance. Whereas outside Parliament, in the Press and elsewhere, that issue was now raised more widely than before and led to much controversy, in the House of Commons it played a relatively inconspicuous part. Occasionally, it is true, a remark might reflect feelings aroused by outside controversy.[1] One incident requires notice because it was to be frequently recalled in later years and given exaggerated significance.

In the course of a supplementary question on February 15th the Leader of the Opposition said :

> While we are questioning and giving answers in the House events go on. Is any time limit going to be put before action is taken either by the League or His Majesty's Government in co-operation with other Governments ?

At this point, the *Official Report* prints : " (Interruption). " According to the *Daily Herald,* the interruption took the form of cries of " War, war." Lansbury proceeded :

> I am not asking for war. I am asking for exactly what is provided in the Covenant of the League, to which Japan has put her signature.

On the 18th, the *Herald,* after saying that if Japan failed to honour her pledges, " the machinery for enforcing Article XVI of the Covenant should be brought into activity without delay," proceeded :

> Whenever Mr. Lansbury and others from the Opposition benches raise this issue in the Commons they are assailed with interjections about " War " from the Ministerial benches. Those who support League action have neither thought for nor desire for war. They ask for the exercise of peaceful sanctions.

Lansbury, however, had not " raised the issue " previously ; and his language on the particular occasion was vague and, apparently, unpremeditated. When he again " raised the issue," on February 22nd, he was more specific but at the same time much more guarded. He said that " a very large body of opinion " felt that the League of Nations should bring into operation some of the powers

[1] On February 10th, in a supplementary, Major-General Sir Alfred Knox urged that the Government " be careful not to be drawn into war in the Far East, led by our British pacifists." On the 17th, in a similar fashion, Lord Scone referred to " pseudo-pacifists on the Socialist Front Bench who are trying to plunge us into war with Japan."

which we believe rest in the Covenant of the League. I do not want to say which of the powers or what of the powers should be used ; nor am I going to say that I wish them to be used at this moment, but only that the British Government and the other Governments connected with the Council of the League must freely make up their minds whether they are ever going to consider taking some action, drastic action, in order to bring the conflict to an end ; whether by economic measures or by withdrawing Ambassadors is for the Government to consider.

It was a month later (March 22nd) when Lansbury again alluded to the subject in the following curious statement :

I have been told that if any action was taken on the lines laid down by the Covenant of the League, that is to say, that if any attempt was made to withdraw credits or to withdraw Ambassadors, Japan would in effect go to war with all the world. I cannot believe that. I cannot believe that it would have been possible for that to have happened. But were it to have happened, speaking as one who thinks that it is better to leave nations which want to run amok to do so, I should still have brought our troops, our ships and our nationals away.

Apart from these remarks by the Leader of the Opposition, the issue of sanctions was raised in the House of Commons only by Mr. Seymour Cocks and Mr. Mander (who was not, of course, at that time in Opposition).[1] Both asked questions about the matter on February 17th and Mr. Cocks again on the 22nd. Despite their form, these may perhaps be taken as suggestions. If so, Mr. Mander suggested that the Government should " consider proposing " that the League Council should apply Article XVI in the form of " the withdrawal of Ambassadors and Ministers and the establishment of an effective blockade." Mr. Cocks, on the same assumption, proposed that the Government should approach the Governments of the United States, France, Italy and Germany with a view to " issuing a strong protest to the Japanese Government followed, if necessary, by the withdrawal of Ambassadors and the severance of trade relations." On the second occasion, he wanted steps taken " to approach the United States of America and the Powers members of the League of Nations with a view to exerting diplomatic and economic pressure."

It is to be noted that these suggestions were made at the height

[1] Unless one includes Morgan Jones, who, on February 10th, asked " whether the League Council had considered the advisability of the application against Japan of the economic and financial sanctions laid down in Article XVI of the Covenant ? " Mr. Eden's answer was in the negative.

of the Shanghai crisis, and were not persisted in, still less transformed into actual demands for the imposition of sanctions. In his speeches on February 29th and March 22nd, Mr. Cocks made no allusion to the subject. Nor did any other Opposition speaker save Lansbury, whose remarks on the latter date, already quoted, seemed to refer to what might have been done, not to what might be done. By that time, hostilities at Shanghai had ceased. At no point during this period did the Opposition formally present any demand or even suggestion for the application of sanctions.

2. The Labour Movement

The fact that no demand for sanctions came from the Parliamentary Labour Party necessitates some discussion of the general attitude of the British Labour movement towards the Far Eastern crisis.

An interesting paragraph on the subject is to be found in *The Common People*, by Professor G. D. H. Cole and Mr. Raymond Postgate. Indeed, since this book was claimed by its publishers to be " the sole authentic history of the British people that has been written for the common reader since J. R. Green " it demands our attention.[1] Writing of the situation before Hitler came to power in Germany in January 1933, the authors say (pp. 598-9):

> Foreign policy had, until now, provided a subject upon which unity was greater than anywhere else. Except for the isolated group of Communists who still, though less assuredly, depicted the League of Nations, in Lenin's terms, as a conspiracy of bandits, all the working-class organisations and spokesmen agreed on a policy of strengthening the power and authority of the League, and reducing by general agreement the armaments of individual Powers. Whether this policy logically involved war against an aggressor was a question which was avoided by pointing out what was true enough at the time and for some few years to come—that the power already in League members' hands was so overwhelming that, if they resolutely supported the League, war would not occur. In 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria, attacking a fellow member of the League, a manifesto on the policy Britain should follow was signed with equal conviction by George Lansbury for the parliamentary party, John Bromley for the Trades Union Congress and George Lathan for the Labour Party. It asked the Government to arrange through the League for the calling home of all Ambassadors from Tokyo, and, should this have no

[1] Moreover, the book has had a very large sale, notably, we are told, in the Forces ; and we are assured that in the revised 1946 edition each passage was checked. It is much used in academic institutions, even those of the highest rank.

effect, for the application of " measures of financial and economic constraint " in agreement with the United States. (The Government, which had already put its foot on the road which led to Munich, declined to find time to receive a deputation to present this plan ; Mr. Amery issued a public defence of Japan ; what tentative approaches may have come from the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, were rebuffed.)

Taken as a whole, this passage is cautiously phrased. The authors made the valid and important point that the issue of " military sanctions," of " war against an aggressor," was evaded by the Labour movement in this country during the period under consideration—until (they say later) the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935 " forced the Labour movement to a decision." Whether or not the evasion was then terminated is highly questionable, but that point need not detain us. At the time of the Far Eastern crisis, the evasion may have been based upon the assumptions : (1) That the League States were overwhelmingly strong ; (2) that, consequently, no question of war would ever arise, and (3) that, therefore, " economic sanctions " could safely be applied if necessary. If so, the Labour movement was certainly slow in arriving at those assumptions. Professor Cole and Mr. Postgate apparently have no doubts even now that they were sound assumptions to have made during the period of the Manchurian dispute. But there were many in the Labour movement who had doubts at the time. Much evidence is available that the League States were not generally considered in such quarters to be " overwhelmingly strong " as against Japan. The co-operation of the United States of America was held to be necessary, though it was often assumed to be assured, and even on that basis the fear of war remained. In Labour circles, as elsewhere, people plainly found increasing difficulty in convincing themselves that Japan would give way if economic sanctions were imposed. Their consequent dismay and disillusionment is only too obvious ; it does much to explain the mood of exasperation in which, in so many instances, they turned to scapegoat-hunting ; and it also accounts for the cautious qualifications with which limited sanctions were belatedly suggested—but not pressed.

The authors of *The Common People* may be correct in suggesting that a superficial reconciliation of the differences within the Labour movement on these matters was effected for the time being ; but they imply a far greater measure of " unity " than in fact existed, as we shall see. They also convey the impression that the Labour

movement suggested economic sanctions at an earlier date and more actively than, in fact, was the case. They refer to a manifesto "in 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria." No such manifesto is upon record for that year. The preoccupation of the Labour movement with other matters during the first phase of the dispute has already been sufficiently emphasised. What the authors of *The Common People* clearly have in mind is the manifesto of the National Joint Council of Labour, issued on *February 22nd, 1932*, and signed by the chairmen of the three component bodies. The phrases they quote are taken from that manifesto, which was occasioned not by the "invasion" of Manchuria but by the Japanese action at Shanghai, and came nearly a month after the initial fighting there. This manifesto urged the Government "to request the Council of the League of Nations immediately *to consider the advisability* of calling upon all the Members of the League and Signatories of the Peace Pact to withdraw their Ministers or Ambassadors from Tokyo"[1] The National Joint Council added a hope that this withdrawal would not be necessary. They proceeded:

> If the Japanese Government, in defiance of the public opinion of the world, continues the war, our Government will be obliged, in conformity with its undertakings as a Signatory of the Covenant (Article 16), to propose to the Special Assembly of the League whatever co-operative and graduated measures of financial and economic constraint may be necessary—in association and agreement with the United States and the Members of the League—to restore peace, and to ensure a just settlement.

It will be noted that the National Joint Council did not propose unilateral action in any eventual application of sanctions. They required, moreover, the agreement and participation of the United States, not only in any application of sanctions but also, by implication, in any previous withdrawal of Ambassadors. And, despite the reference to Article XVI of the Covenant, the measures of financial and economic constraint envisaged were to be "graduated."

It is very doubtful whether George Lansbury and the others signed this manifesto with "equal" conviction. Our account of the proceedings in the House of Commons shows that, notwithstanding the Government's refusal to receive the proposed deputation, no serious pressure was brought to bear upon the Government by the Parliamentary Labour Party. Lansbury's reference to the matter in the House on the same day was not inconsistent with the

[1] Author's italics.

terms of the manifesto; and we have also noted Mr. Cocks's question that day. After that day there was nothing. There was no request for a debate on the subject; there were no further questions. Outside Parliament, no campaign was organised by the Labour movement in support of the joint manifesto. At that time another campaign was being conducted—a campaign for disarmament. It is amazing that in " the sole authentic history of the British people " dealing with this period there should be only one passing allusion to the Disarmament Conference, and that in connection with the preparatory work of the Labour Government of 1929-31 ! History, as written " for the common reader," presents some curious features.[1]

The Leader of the Opposition, of course, was a pacifist in the stricter sense. In his 1940 book, Mr. Mander endeavoured to portray the Labour Opposition and his own Liberal Party as ardent and consistent advocates of " collective security " throughout the inter-war period. Lansbury's position as leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party was one of many awkward facts for the painter of such a picture. Mr. Mander, however, declared that Lansbury, as a pacifist, was the leader of only a small minority which was never at any time in any sense representative of the Labour Party as a whole. He added that at the time of the Abyssinian crisis Lansbury was deposed and replaced by Mr. Attlee " solely on account of their views on collective security." In truth, pacifism in its various forms was an extremely potent influence in both the Labour and Liberal parties as it was also in the League of Nations Union. Even the advocates of what came to be called " collective security," which, in its British version, presented some peculiar features, were also, and indeed primarily, advocates of disarmament. For the most part they remained to the end opponents, though in varying degrees, of British rearmament. In 1932—even at the time of the Shanghai crisis—the Disarmament Conference (which had opened on

[1] The final remarks made on the Far Eastern crisis by the authors of *The Common People* deserve notice. The charge against the Government of rebuffing Mr. Stimson is put very discreetly. The authors are not sure that any " tentative approaches " did come from Mr. Stimson, but they are quite sure the Government rebuffed them; and the context conveys the impression that any such approaches related to " measures of financial and economic constraint " against Japan. A familiar charge against Mr. Amery is inserted in the middle of a sentence the first and third parts of which are directed against the Government. It is clear that the authors would not be unduly distressed if any " common reader " were to make the mistake of assuming that Mr. Amery was a member of the Government, or, at any rate, a supporter of its Manchurian policy. The " common reader " might even be led into the further mistake of assuming that Mr. Amery approved of the Munich agreement !

February 2nd) held first place in their attention as well as in that of the more extreme pacifists. The British " disarmament crusade " was gathering force throughout the year. As for Lansbury, he was the unchallenged leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party and remained so until 1935. The fact that he was not " deposed " in 1932 provides an important piece of evidence about the real state of opinion in the Labour Opposition at the time of the Sino-Japanese dispute. As an extreme pacifist, Lansbury had obvious personal difficulties in dealing with the dispute on behalf of his party, but his difficulties were far from being personal only.

On the morning of the National Joint Council's manifesto (February 22nd), a statement to the Press by Lansbury was published in the *Daily Herald.* In it the Opposition Leader urged the sending out of " a unanimous human appeal to Japan to stop the war." Japan should be told that " we will have no part or lot in boycotting her." Lansbury went on to say that he had been approached to take part in a campaign to boycott Japanese goods, but that was not his province, and the matter should be taken up with the T.U.C., adding, however, " If anything of the kind is to be done, the Government itself should do it." Yet, in his numerous speeches in the country, both before and after the 22nd, Lansbury sometimes spoke in different terms. According to the reports in the *Herald* and elsewhere, his customary line might be summed up in his own slogan, " No arms, no money, no trade." [1] There can be little doubt that " No arms " was the part of the slogan which appealed most strongly to the Opposition Leader. At Paisley, on January 29th, he had said in relation to Shanghai that there was one thing only the world could do at the moment—to refuse to supply armaments or munitions to Japan, adding : " Japan must be taught that the nations of the world will not tolerate flagrant imperialist attacks of this kind." But, in an interview published on February 2nd, Lansbury expressed the view that " the European Powers, with the United States, have only got to make it plain that they will boycott Japan unless it acts reasonably, and Japan will give way." " There need not be war " : there was " every possibility of a quiet settlement," if only the Americans, French and ourselves acted together.

The editorial comment in the *Daily Herald* on this statement

[1] At Bristol, February 28th. " Not a farthing, not a gun, not a stroke of business."—Interview, *Daily Herald,* February 2nd. " We won't do business with you, won't help you with armaments, money, or the things you need."—At Walworth, *Daily Herald,* February 27th.

illustrates admirably the confusion of mind then prevalent in certain Left circles :

> The League of Nations must come down firmly *on the side of peace*, and if Japan defies the League, the question of further action arises. Mr. George Lansbury, the Leader of the Opposition, suggests *an economic boycott*. If this could be applied, Japan could not for long make light of it. . . . An economic boycott from these two quarters alone (i.e. the British Empire and the *United States*) would teach the Japanese militarists a sharp lesson by bringing into play inside their own shores forces that would effectively curb their activities. Mr. Lansbury's suggestion will no doubt be received with derision by *Tory fire-eaters* in this country, who protest that what Japan may choose or not choose to do is no concern of Great Britain. . . . He (i.e. the Prime Minister) has an opportunity of putting into practice *the peace view* he has so long expressed.[1]

According to the report in the *Times* of a speech delivered at Bristol on February 28th, Lansbury urged that Britain should ask the nations in the League, " in co-operation with America," to inform Japan that unless the war was stopped and the whole dispute referred to arbitration, all trading and diplomatic relations would be at an end. In the same speech he repeated a proposal he had made several times in the House of Commons that all British forces and nationals should be evacuated from Shanghai.

3. Arms Embargo ?

The demand for an embargo on the export of arms, already made during the first (1931) phase of the crisis, met with considerable support during the Shanghai phase. It was presented in two forms. In the House of Commons it took the form of a proposal to withhold all licences for the export of arms to the Far East, to both Japan and China.[2] In that form it was not a " sanction," and was dubiously compatible with sanctions. In the country its backing was by no means confined to the stricter sect of pacifists. Sometimes, however, the embargo asked for was to apply only to Japan. That was the implication of the resolution passed by the Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland early in March 1932.[3]

[1] Author's italics.

[2] The suggestion was made on February 4th by Mr. Vyvyan Adams, a Conservative pacifist, prominent in the League of Nations Union, and renewed by him on February 9th, when he seemed to have the support of Mr. Seymour Cocks. Two members of the Labour Opposition made the same suggestion : Mr. T. Williams on February 17th and William Thorne on the 24th.

[3] The *Times*, March 3rd, 1932.

The demand was specifically made by the Bureau of the Labour and Socialist International on February 26th. Lansbury wavered between the two positions. So did many others. The *New Leader*, on March 4th, urged that workers should be called upon to refuse to handle munitions destined for Japan ; but it recognised that there were difficulties in the way of arousing the necessary spirit among the workers.

4. The Labour Press and Sanctions

The manifesto of the National Joint Council attracted some attention in the Press. Its important qualifications were ignored by the *Daily Herald* in its leading article on February 24th. On the day the manifesto was issued (the 22nd), that paper carried an article from Mr. W. N. Ewer, its Geneva Correspondent, in which he said that the League Powers were " afraid even to mention Article XVI." Commenting on this, the editorial that day said that the ordinary man or woman would be " shocked, bewildered, angry." The League, it said, had failed : it had shrunk from using Article XVI. " Let all those who profess a desire for peace ask, whatever their reluctance, whether it is not the plain lesson of history that Article XVI will have to be used if the world is to be made safe from war." On the 24th, the *Herald* called upon the League to insist on an immediate cessation of hostilities at Shanghai. If Japan did not comply, " the League Powers should, as the National Joint Council of the Labour movement suggests to-day, withdraw their diplomatic representatives from Tokyo, and apply the financial and economic boycott provided for by Article XVI of the Covenant." Japan, it was added, could not continue the war " in defiance of the whole civilised world." It is notable that on the same day Mr. W. N. Ewer's message from Geneva attacked the British Government's disarmament proposals as " pitiable." The message was printed under the headlines, " Britain Shirks the Issue at Geneva. No Move for Real Reduction of Armaments."

The other newspaper which made editorial comments on the National Joint Council's manifesto was the *Daily Express*. An editorial in that paper on February 24th was headed " Labour's Call to Arms." This description of the manifesto was based upon the contention that the demand that the League should urge its members to withdraw their Ambassadors from Tokyo meant that

" the Powers should take the first step that will lead inevitably to war with Japan." The *Express* did not note that the " demand " was in fact only one that the League should be requested to " consider the advisability " of such a step. The paper added : " Yet the signatories to this document are the very men who raised the banner of ' No War with Russia ' and have been steadily trying to reduce the armaments of Great Britain to a point where war with any nation would be disastrous."

The *Herald's* comments on the National Joint Council's manifesto may be interpreted as advocacy of economic sanctions. If that interpretation be correct, it needs to be noted that the paper was dealing with the hostilities at Shanghai, and that its reference to " the whole civilised world " implied American participation. But, in any event, it was only one of several twists and turns in the fluctuating course pursued by the paper. On February 1st, it was arguing that unless the " deaf and blind " military caste in Japan could be " brought to reason," " conciliatory words in London or Geneva will matter as little as the twittering of sparrows in a thunderstorm." The paper's editorial on February 2nd, with its support of " an economic boycott " as a practical application of " the peace view " as distinct from the views of " Tory fire-eaters," has already been quoted. On February 4th, the *Herald* had an important article on its editorial page by Sir Frederick Whyte, which, far from advocating sanctions in any form, urged that " firm and benevolent conciliation " was the only method by which the complicated problem could be justly treated ; that our policy " must be designed to keep the combatants apart " ; and that if mediation failed, the policy of non-recognition should be adopted.

A week later, commenting on Mr. Eden's statement that the League had not considered the application against Japan of the economic and financial sanctions laid down in Article XVI, an editorial said : " If the League and the Great Powers fail to act decisively on these lines the moral responsibility for further bloodshed will rest upon them equally with the belligerents." The phrase " the League and the Great Powers " presumably covered the United States of America. The *Herald* had reported on January 29th an intimation from Tokyo that any joint economic action by London and Washington would be followed by immediate rupture of diplomatic relations. On February 15th an editorial announced that the League was " on the horns of a dilemma " because of

Japan's threat to leave the League. Grave though the difficulties were, the line of duty should be followed, " whatever Japan may do." " Let the League make a firm stand, and use the powers which lie to its hand." Next day, on the front page, with big headlines, and a lavish use of heavy type, " Grave Alarm at Japanese War Talk " was announced by the Political Correspondent. Japan was said to have let it be known through unofficial channels that " if the economic boycott against her by the League Powers begins, she will send her Fleet all along the coast to occupy the main Chinese towns."

War-mad extremists in Tokyo are even talking about a lightning attack on Singapore as a retaliatory measure against Britain, and as a strategic blow at the operations of the British Navy in the Far East.

It was added that although such wild talk was discounted the situation was most delicate and both the British and League authorities were proceeding with the utmost caution : " Every endeavour is being made to avoid inflaming Japanese opinion." We have noted the *Herald's* insistence, on February 18th, that all that was being asked for was " peaceful sanctions." The editorial on the 22nd appeared to recognise that there was no prospect of the League applying the sanctions of Article XVI, and the line taken on the 24th in reference to the National Joint Council's manifesto was not persisted in. The note struck in an article on February 29th was different : " Even at this late hour it is to be hoped that Japan will listen to the voice of justice and reason. If she decides to go ahead in the pursuit of her so-called ' rights,' blind to her ' duties,' she may win temporary victories, but the time will come when she will bitterly rue the day that she affronted the moral sense of the world." And, on March 1st, when news had come of the imminent cessation of hostilities at Shanghai, the *Herald* asserted : " Japan has learned a lesson. The League of Nations has shown her that world opinion cannot be defied with impunity." Manchuria, the editorial pointed out, remained : but no suggestion was made that sanctions should be applied in that connection. No further editorial attention was given to the Far East until March 19th, and the question of sanctions disappeared from the paper altogether.

The Glasgow *Forward* showed little interest in the Far Eastern crisis, even during the height of the Shanghai fighting. Only once, on March 5th, was there any discussion in its pages of the sanctions issue. Reference was then made to the controversy in this country ;

and the Labour Party and the Trade Union Council were mentioned among those who had " pushed for League action—that is, the withdrawal of Ambassadors and moral reprobation." The British Government, however, had " come down on the side of the anti-Leaguers." Sir John Simon was " like Pontius Pilate "—" he washes his hands of the blood of the Just." " If the League of Nations is not allowed to act now, it will die." This seems to suggest that *Forward* supported sanctions—at any rate in the form of withdrawal of diplomatic representatives and " moral reprobation," but there is nothing else to go upon, except the periodical's preoccupation with other matters. Curiously, in the article referred to, *Forward* evinced considerable alarm lest the United States should take military action. Its concern about what it regarded as a threat to fortify the Philippines and Guam has already been recorded.

The *New Leader* for this period presents another strange picture. Mr. H. N. Brailsford wrote ironically on February 5th about the reactions of the Powers to events at Shanghai. " Who could have foreseen " that they " would have been so exercised over a spent bullet on the boulevards of Shanghai ? " Japan had blundered : " she forgot that white men's windows are insured." James Maxton on the same day said that " a clear intimation a week or two ago by the Powers interested " that aggressive action on Japan's part " would lead to her isolation from the trade, commerce and finance of the world might have proved an adequate deterrent," but " to-day, when the guns are already booming, such a threat is less easily heard amidst the din." Whereas Mr. Brailsford had no suggestions to make, Maxton advocated " anti-war and anti-capitalist propaganda." The Lancashire Divisional Conference of the I.L.P., whose proceedings were reported in the same number, unanimously " registered uncompromising opposition to this country being dragged into the war, and urged that the workers should form Councils of Action in every district to prevent such a step." On February 12th, the Disarmament Conference seemed to have put Shanghai almost out of the *New Leader's* mind. On the 19th, Mr. Brailsford proclaimed that the League was dead and no one cared, although the circumstances had been unusually favourable for action against Japan. " America, moreover, was ready to act with the League." He dismissed the objection that Japan might resign from the League ; she ought to be expelled. There was more substance, however, in the rumour that if an economic boycott

were imposed, Japan would retaliate against China by landing her armies all along the coasts. That possibility had to be faced. Financial assistance at least could be given to China ; and it was difficult to believe that Japan could for long resist the pressure of an economic boycott. But, said Mr. Brailsford, this was " an academic argument," since neither the League Council nor the League Assembly would do anything. On the following week, he confined himself to an attack on Sir John Simon ; while an editorial sought an explanation in a desire to divide China into various spheres of capitalist influence as a means of defence against the Soviet Union. The same issue of February 26th contained a resolution of the National Council of the I.L.P. denouncing the League as " a dangerous sham," and urging that the organised effort of the workers in the various countries should be directed to compelling Governments to place an embargo on any provision of credit and on the manufacture and export of arms and war materials of any kind to Japan. On March 4th, as we have noted, a not very hopeful call was made for workers to prevent any further munitions going to Japan. Thereafter, the *New Leader* apparently lost interest in the whole subject for the time being. Nor does it seem to have attracted any prominent attention at the Annual Conference of the I.L.P. that Easter.

The *New Statesman*, which had a sixteen-page supplement on disarmament on January 30th, said on that day that the United States was counting on British co-operation in " calling a halt to this aggression " at Shanghai. On February 6th, it declared that the Powers must insist on Japan ceasing acts of aggression and giving up the territory stolen in Manchuria. " There is no reason except lack of courage why this should not happen." If we and the United States were determined, Japan would have to give way. " There will be no need to use the economic sanction to which the League and the United States could in the last resort have recourse with overwhelming effect." On February 13th, the attention of the *New Statesman* was again concentrated upon the Disarmament Conference, and particularly upon a denunciation of the Tardieu security plan. On the following week (February 20th), it declared that the risks involved in taking a firm stand against Japan were negligible compared with the risks of letting things drift. The League Assembly was logically and morally bound to declare Japan a Covenant-breaker and to call for the application of Article XVI ;

but, if sanctions were decided on, " grave complications " were threatened. The *New Statesman* discussed the possibility of a Japanese attack " on all the ports of China, and even on Singapore." " Emphatically," it said, " we do not want war," but it did not believe that " united action by the League States and America would be forcibly opposed by Japan." On the contrary, " it would almost certainly bring her to her senses." Japanese public opinion had " put on a brazen front," but was " sensitive to the judgment of the world." The Japanese could hope, at best, for nothing but a Pyrrhic victory. The *New Statesman* concluded that " the danger of acting in concert is a bagatelle : the dangers of going on doing nothing are immense." It was not a case for independent action by Great Britain or by the United States, " but these two must evidently lead, and lead in unison."

On February 27th, the *New Statesman's* tone was but a little less confident. Sir John Simon, it said, might have good reasons for rejecting " the demand for a policy of gradually applied economic sanctions," but " he should tell us what they are." The article explained the dilemma in which most people found themselves : they were sure it was disastrous to let Japan make war unchecked, but, at the same time, they did not wish to become involved in war themselves and feared the consequences of attempting to enforce the obligations of the Covenant. However, it was suggested that the dilemma was unreal. " If the League Powers would co-operate with the United States in bringing economic pressure to bear upon Japan she would be forced to give way." People were said to be " curiously ignorant in this matter "—

> It is not a question of making war. The first step is openly and honestly to denounce Japan as a treaty-breaker and aggressor. That alone would emphasise Japan's sense of moral isolation, and Japan is, in spite of her bluff, singularly sensitive to world opinion. A second step would be to refuse her financial facilities, and to lay an embargo on the export of arms and munitions to Japan. A third, which in Japan's peculiar economic position would certainly prove effective, would be to cut off her export trade, by refusing to admit her ships into foreign harbours. The mere threat to Japan's silk trade with America, on which her economic life is dependent, would in all probability be quite sufficient to bring her to terms.

To the objection that the United States would not co-operate, the *New Statesman* asserted that it had good reason to believe that

American opinion was in advance of our own, and that the United States would " very willingly co-operate with the League."

It is, of course, true that without the United States no economic sanctions are worth considering. But all the evidence at present suggests that the British Government is putting forward an alleged hesitation on the part of the United States as an excuse for its own inaction.

To the further objection that Japan would reply by seizing Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, the *New Statesman* argued (1) that this was " to accept the Japanese bluff at face value," and (2) that the admitted risk of Japan running amok in the Pacific was not as great as the risk involved in inaction. If the less immediate risk were preferred, if the notion of " pooled security " had failed, then the only right course was a policy of non-recognition.

The whole of this argument rested upon the assumption that the United States were prepared to participate in the application of economic sanctions. There was the further assumption that the Japanese were bluffing. It would be difficult to find a better illustration of " wishful thinking " about the attitude of the United States. One might almost conclude that Mr. Stimson succeeded at least in bluffing the *New Statesman.* It is a pity that the paper produced no part of " all the evidence " to which it referred.

However, the *New Statesman's* conditional support of cautiously graduated economic sanctions coincided with the last phase of the Shanghai fighting. By the following week, March 5th, the paper was hoping that Japanese public opinion was beginning to see the need of prudence. On March 12th, it hoped that " the extreme step " of putting into force the sanctions of Article XVI might be avoided ; and that a non-recognition declaration by the Assembly would " bring Japan to reason." On the 19th, it declared that the League with its restored prestige must insist on the evacuation of Manchuria as well as Shanghai. If the Assembly's Resolution were not enough, there were " other means in reserve—the withdrawal of Ambassadors, the stoppage of munitions, the refusal of all loans." But it was hoped that there would be no need to use those weapons. The *New Statesman* did not want to " see Japan put in the pillory."

5. The League of Nations Union

The attitude of the League of Nations Union during the first (1931) phase will be recalled. Events at Shanghai made a difference ;

and the Union preceded the National Joint Council of the Labour movement by ten days or so in raising the sanctions issue. Professor Gilbert Murray foreshadowed this development in a letter published by the *Manchester Guardian* on February 9th. After saying that there was "an enormous conspiracy" to destroy "the whole peace system," and, in particular, to wreck the Disarmament Conference, on the part of "all those forces which have a vested interest in war," he urged those on the other side to avoid two mistakes: (1) That of quarrelling with the League or the Covenant or one another, and (2) that of proclaiming policies for which public opinion was not prepared and which went beyond the necessities of the time. The immediate necessity, Professor Murray contended, was that Japan should accept the five proposals for the settlement of the Shanghai trouble which had been made by the British, American and other Governments. A firm attitude in support of those proposals, he hoped, would be successful. If not, the Government must be supported in further steps—"the summoning of the Assembly, the withdrawal of Ambassadors, certain forms of financial pressure, and whatever else may be necessary."

On February 11th, the Executive Committee of the L.N.U. passed a Resolution which warmly supported the five proposals and urged the Government to do everything possible to secure the co-operation of the United States with the Council of the League, and then proceeded:

> The Union urges that, if either party to the present dispute continues to reject these proposals, H.M. Government should take steps to convene a special meeting of the Assembly, and *in concert with the Government of the United States* and Members of the League should apply (on the lines of Article XVI of the Covenant) whatever pressure of a diplomatic and economic character might be necessary to re-establish peace.[1]

A note added that such measures might include:

1. An embargo on the export of arms;
2. The exclusion from the world's ports of the goods of whichever party continues to reject the five proposals;
3. The refusal of financial facilities;
4. The withdrawal of diplomatic representatives.

It is important to note that this conditional advocacy of certain sanctions was specifically related to the Shanghai hostilities; and, once again, was dependent upon the participation of the United

[1] Author's italics.

States. In an explanatory note issued to the Press, Professor Gilbert Murray, Major J. W. Hills, Viscount Cecil and Sir Arthur Salter expressed the view that :

> The present instance is particularly favourable for American co-operation, a rare opportunity unlikely to recur if we have trouble in Europe. The American people will seldom have such strong reason for joining in collective pressure upon a country which seems to be breaking collective engagements.

The *News Chronicle* (February 13th) had only one serious criticism to make of this Resolution—it ought to have been passed before. The *Manchester Guardian*, so critical of the Union in the preceding phase, pointed out that this was " the first time that the Union has committed itself to advocating the use of the ' sanctions ' provided in the Covenant." Its editorial rubbed the point in :

> One of the most disturbing circumstances about the crisis in the Far East has been the apparent indifference of public opinion as to whether the League Council did or did not make a serious attempt to deal with it. Even some of those who take an international rather than a national attitude towards questions of foreign policy have at times seemed tepid in their protests against the British Government's lamentable failure to honour its obligations under the League Covenant. The dangerous assumption seemed to be that support of the League meant support of whatever the League might do and that loyalty to the League meant interpreting its ineptitude as being in the interest of world peace. By a Resolution passed yesterday by the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union that body at least cleared itself of any such suspicion.

Since the Resolution was based upon support of the proposals put forward by the Powers, Britain included, in relation to Shanghai, the *Guardian's* argument is a little difficult to follow. Referring to the explanatory note, the *Guardian* also went beyond its actual terms in saying that it had pointed out that " the League can count on American co-operation." Lord Cecil, one of the signatories, certainly knew better than that.

The L.N.U. Resolution attracted little comment elsewhere.

6. Viscount Cecil

On February 18th the *Times* published a letter from Lord Cecil, Professor Murray and others.[1] It began with these words :

[1] The signatories were Lord Cecil, Sir Arthur Salter, Sir Charles Addis, Sir Arthur Haworth, Dr. A. D. Lindsay and Professor Gilbert Murray.

It is time that British opinion faced the fact that the Japanese Government has committed itself to a course which seems to be directed towards the military domination of China as a whole.

Its main point was that the dominant purpose of British policy in the Far East should be

to secure the co-operation of the United States with the League as a whole in order to exert all the diplomatic and economic pressure which may be necessary to secure from Japan respect for the collective system and the sanctity of treaties.

Admiral Sir Sydney R. Fremantle, in a letter published on the 22nd, asked whether " any unprejudiced student of contemporary affairs " believed " that an attempt to secure the co-operation of the United States with the League in any such definite action would have the smallest prospect of success in present circumstances or in any other circumstances which can reasonably be foreseen in the near future ? " He went on to deal with what he considered to be the great national danger involved in any attempt on the part of the League to impose an economic blockade on Japan.

Lord Cecil, in his reply next day, said :

First, for the last three or four months there has been close co-operation between the United States and the League. The proposal that that co-operation should be continued, and if necessary intensified, is not, therefore, so fantastic as he pronounces it to be.

That statement is relevant to the criticisms of a supposed British rejection of such co-operation. Lord Cecil continued :

Secondly, in the letter on which he comments, no suggestion was made that the League—still less that this country—should take action independently of America.

In a letter published on the same day, Sir Rennell Rodd (afterwards Lord Rennell of Rodd) said, *inter alia*, that there was " a curious irony in the advocacy of measures on our part which might have incalculable consequences by those who have invited us to give a lead to other nations and anticipate them in disarming ourselves, and not least in that particular arm which lent weight to the voice of Britain beyond the farthest seas." Professor Gilbert Murray replied (February 25th) that Sir Rennell must know quite well that " the Union does not advocate a unilateral reduction of the British Navy nor yet war with Japan." The Union, he said, simply advocated the fulfilment, so far as possible, of Article VIII of the Covenant

and Articles XII-XVI. " Where the fulfilment of the pledge is considered not to be possible, we think that some expression of regret would be in place."

At an emergency meeting of the General Council of the L.N.U. at Caxton Hall on February 28th, Lord Cecil said (according to the *Times* report) that he had no reasonable doubt " that from February 3rd Japan was not acting on the defensive but on the offensive, and she was, in the ordinary sense of the word, the aggressor." He went on to argue that there were only two courses open to us. " One might be described as a policy of ' washing our hands.' If that were to be pursued we would issue some solemn declaration of repudiation of Japan's action." But many would regard that as a confesssion of the bankruptcy of the whole world peace movement. " The alternative was, at any rate, to make an attempt by some form of diplomatic or economic pressure to bring the state of things to an end. It would involve a formal demand made on behalf of the League of Nations to Japan to agree to an armistice and to the establishment of a neutral zone between the two armies, to be occupied by neutral troops. The principle was not rejected by the Japanese even."

That, said Lord Cecil, was a very moderate suggestion, and the first thing that should be asked :

Whatever was done could not be done by this country alone. It must be done by the League, acting with the United States of America. That was an essential and vital factor of anything that could be done, and if it should turn out that it was impossible to secure that co-operation, then we might be thrown back upon our first policy, of which he himself did not approve.

According to the report in the *Manchester Guardian*, Lord Cecil was asked many questions by the delegates, and in particular one by Miss Nield, of Bury, who said : " The difficulty uppermost in the minds of everybody is this, are we at this moment going to hold by the Covenant, and in the event of the failure of diplomatic or economic action are we going to war ? That is what our branches want to know." In reply, Lord Cecil said

the question as to how Article XVI was to be operated was subject to the discretion of the Council. The idea was not that full diplomatic or economic pressure was to be exerted all at once. The pressure could be steadily increased, but only so much as was needed for the purpose. No country was to be held bound to take action that would impose on her

a grave danger. He added that it would be of no use for only one or two countries to exert pressure and that it would be absolutely essential to have the co-operation of the United States. " I do not," he said, " share Miss Nield's view that the application of economic pressure necessarily involves any military action."

Once more, it will be noted, the suggestion of " some form of diplomatic or economic pressure " was made with specific reference to the Shanghai situation ; and in this case of Lord Cecil nothing could be plainer than his repeated insistence that any such action was conditional upon American co-operation. It must be concluded that Lord Cecil, while not counting upon such co-operation, thought it possible to secure it. The *Daily Telegraph*, however, attacked him strongly on this ground, as on others, in its editorial of February 29th. After saying that Lord Cecil insisted upon inclusion in the category of mischief-makers, since he had followed up the " letter in which he and other co-signatories took sides strongly against Japan " by " a solo attack " at the Caxton Hall, the leader went on :

Washington, in the most emphatic way, has shown that she will not take joint action with the League, and that she has no thought of sanctions on the general issue which Lord Cecil raises. Nor has the British Government. Nor has France, nor has Italy. Even if the Assembly of the League were to lose its head later on this week, there will still be no sanctions, for no responsible Government is thinking of committing suicide. Lord Cecil, by his intemperate zeal, rules himself out of all further employment at Geneva as a spokesman of Great Britain in any representative and responsible capacity. Facts are facts, and he ignores them.

On March 2nd, the *Manchester Guardian* published a letter from thirteen distinguished academic persons associating themselves with the letter in the *Times* of February 18th.[1] The main point was :

Only a determination on the part of the States members of the League of Nations, *with the collaboration of the United States of America, to stop short of no measures*, as provided under the Covenant, necessary to uphold the sanctity of international obligations can save a system in which all promise of a peaceful and happier world is centred.[2]

The article by Lord Cecil in the *News Chronicle* two days later (March 4th), although repeating the substance of his Caxton Hall speech, explained his position with so much greater clarity that it

[1] The signatories were : Lascelles Abercrombie, G. Lowes Dickinson, J. L. Hammond, J. A. Hobson, H. J. Laski, John Macmurray, J. J. Mallon, J. E. Neale, Eileen Power R. H. Tawney, Arnold J. Toynbee, J. Dover Wilson and Leonard Wolff.

[2] Author's italics.

must be summarised. He insisted that two questions should be kept absolutely distinct : (1) That of the general grievances of each side against the other, and (2) that of which side resorted to war. Only the second question was of immediate importance ; and, there was no room for doubt about it. If Japan refused to stop fighting, a formal condemnation should follow. As for the obligation under Article XVI to sever all trade and financial relations, that was for Governments " to consider in the light of what is practically possible," and Lord Cecil pointed out that the obligation was to be fulfilled (according to a Resolution of the Second Assembly) subject to three considerations :

1. Only such coercive measures are to be employed as are necessary to produce the desired result ;

2. The action must be effective and therefore must be taken simultaneously by at least all countries of considerable commercial importance ; and

3. The boycott need not be so applied as to involve any particular country in special dangers.

Some particular economic measure, wrote Lord Cecil, which might be definitely effective but did not go the whole length of Article XVI might be adopted. But, he added, there was one consideration of great importance, which was no secret. It was essential that there should be full consultation with the United States before any action was taken. Without the collaboration of the United States no economic action was likely to be effective ; and little beyond solemn repudiation of Japanese action by the rest of the world would be possible. However, Lord Cecil proceeded, such repudiation was itself of great importance ; and anyhow he hoped that none of the measures referred to would be necessary, and we would not add to the difficulties of the Japanese people.

The tone of this article, as exemplified particularly in its closing passages, may well have been influenced by the prospect of a cessation of hostilities at Shanghai. Some passages in Lord Cecil's speech at the Albert Hall on March 7th seem at first sight to be inconsistent with his previous attitude. He then declared that Japan had been " the instigator and aggressor " from the beginning. He also appeared to forget his insistence on the indispensability of American co-operation when he said :

It was ridiculous to say that the Assembly, representing some fifty nations, was not perfectly able to insist on the cessation of hostilities if it

chose to do so. Those nations had the power to do so, and if they did not exercise that power they made themselves the accomplices of the aggressor.

But, if one judges correctly from the newspaper reports of this speech, Lord Cecil did not go beyond demanding that the League nations should follow up insistence upon a stoppage of the fighting by a non-recognition declaration. It is difficult to assess this utterance because it was undoubtedly influenced by a desire to counteract the effect of Lord Grey's remarkable speech on the same occasion.

CHAPTER NINE

SHANGHAI AND SANCTIONS—2

1. The "Manchester Guardian"

THE attitude of the *Manchester Guardian* towards the question of sanctions during the Shanghai phase was substantially the same as in the preceding period. Its language, however, was on the whole more cautious, perhaps because it was no longer fighting almost a lone battle and because the prospects of "firmer action" against Japan appeared more favourable. Despite its previous criticisms of the League of Nations Union, the *Guardian* did not go much beyond the Union, if it went beyond at all, in advocacy of sanctions. It seemed content to support others rather than to give any lead; and it never came out with any specific demand for sanctions. On the other hand, it continued on occasions to use expressions which suggested that it would approve the most far-reaching action against Japan.

How far this paper was influenced by doubts about the attitude of the United States of America is an interesting question. On January 29th it expressed the view that the United States would welcome British co-operation in "a more vigorous policy," and said that the troubles in Shanghai would probably not have occurred "if we had been readier to co-operate with the Americans at an earlier stage of the dispute." That there would have been no hostilities at Shanghai if the Manchurian problem had been dealt with more "firmly" was a contention constantly advanced in this paper during the following weeks. Next day (January 30th), discussing what action the League could appropriately take, the editorial said that no policy would be likely to succeed which did not take the attitude of the United States into account. That country had given every indication of wishing to act with the League in this matter, and to it belonged "the credit of having taken the only positive step to check the Japanese invasion" by its non-recognition declaration. On the other hand, America was "strongly opposed to measures of force whether against Japan or any other country, even in order to preserve peace." America "does not believe in the

method of ' sanctions ' so beloved, in theory, by the French." Since in the Far East the principle of sanctions had less appeal to the French, everything depended on Great Britain :

The situation does not call now, any more than at the earlier stages of the dispute, for a dramatic assertion of authority by the League. At least let us begin modestly. Until we have tried we cannot tell whether even a moderate display of moral firmness might not have sufficient effect.

On February 1st, all the paper was asking for was that the chief Powers, the United States included, should " present a stronger front to the Japanese than they have yet done." On the 5th it was " obvious that unless the Powers are prepared to exert real pressure in one form or another to bring her (Japan) to reason she will proceed from violence to violence until she gets her way with China." This view was repeated next day. The difficulty, in the editorial opinion, was no longer to arouse indignation against Japan but " to direct it into useful and effective channels." The League Covenant contained provisions for dealing with just this kind of situation, but no serious attempt had been made to carry them out because statesmen were uncertain and ill-supported by public opinion.

At least let the League try, so that we may know whether in these most favourable circumstances, when world opinion is with it and *when it may rely on the co-operation of the United States and the approval of the Soviet Republic*, it can fulfil those functions which are the basis of its very existence.[1]

No solution, the article declared, could be provided by Chinese resistance, by protests, by buying Japan off with Manchuria, or by America fighting Japan. Japanese aggression could be checked only by a determined effort on the part of the League Powers " to apply the clauses " of the Covenant. If the " clauses " were the sanctions clauses, did the *Guardian* then believe that the co-operation of the United States could be relied on ?

On February 13th, as we have seen, the *Guardian*—a little grudgingly—welcomed the L.N.U. Resolution. In its editorial that day it defended " the bellicose pacifist " who was " a frequent subject for ridicule." Great Britain, in common with the other League States, was bound " in the last resort " to approve the application of Article XVI to the Sino-Japanese conflict. The provisions of the Covenant must be carried out as scrupulously as any other international obligation :

[1] Author's italics.

The bellicose pacifist only wants to try out the Covenant. He wants to know whether it will work. Is that so very bellicose?

As noted already, the *Guardian* on this occasion endorsed the view, which it attributed to Lord Cecil and his associates, that "the League can count on American co-operation."[1]

On February 19th the *Guardian* was writing that if the war continued it would be the duty of the League "to use all the resources of the Covenant" to compel Japan to stop. That day, incidentally, its Geneva Correspondent discussed Russia's reticence; pointed out that the explanation was obvious, "She is helpless"; and said that all Russia could do, for the time being, was "to respect the territorial integrity of China and remain on as good terms with the Japanese as possible." That American co-operation was still felt to be assured seems to follow from the editorial question on the 20th, "does the Government intend at last to encourage the League to act with American co-operation?" On the 22nd, it was said that "the full support of the United States" would "unquestionably have been forthcoming" if the League had made a serious attempt, when Japan first took action in Manchuria, "to apply those provisions in the Covenant that were drawn up to meet just such a situation." In discussing the existing situation, however, a much vaguer phrase was used about America. If the League undertook to carry out the obligations of the Covenant, the United States "would be on its side." As to the argument that we might be involved in war with Japan, the same argument would apply, it was said, to any situation threatening world peace with which the League had to deal.

The *Guardian* had carried no reports from the United States

[1] This editorial was plainly in the mind of Colonel l'Estrange Malone, a former Labour M.P., when he wrote a strong letter of protest, published in the *Guardian* on February 19th, against "the terribly violent and bellicose propaganda which is being carried on by so many of our so-called peace organisations":

"I think it should be clearly understood that there is a great body of opinion which is not going to allow this country to be pushed into war just because of the theorists, the sentimentalists and the pacifists, who wish to test their theory that the League of Nations' final sanctions can be applied to bring a country like Japan to heel. At this moment of great danger, let us beg the National Peace Council, the League of Nations Union and such like bodies to moderate their warlike ardour. Those of us who did the fighting in the last war will not be a party to the sacrifice of more human blood."

Another Labour ex-M.P., Mr. Wilfred Wellock, wrote on the 22nd in full agreement with Malone's "timely" warning. He was not prepared to go beyond withdrawal of Ambassadors and stoppage of all loans, credits and munitions. And the Secretary of the London Peace Council wrote on the same day in similar terms, expressing the view of "very many pacifists"; he said that Colonel Malone had written under a "misapprehension."

about the attitude there towards sanctions. But on that same day, the 22nd of February, its New York Correspondent wrote that there was " a large and growing public agitation in favour of an economic boycott against Japan, usually in the form of a suggestion that the United States should co-operate with the League of Nations if that body attempted to exert pressure upon Japan. Mr. Newton D. Baker and Dr. A. Lawrence Lowell were mentioned as having endorsed the proposal. The Correspondent, however, went on to say that there was strong opposition in Congress, coming from both parties and from Progressives and Conservatives alike. Indeed, " the general view " seemed to have been expressed the day before by Senator Borah, who was quoted as saying :

> In my opinion the best way to advance the cause of war between this country and Japan, to destroy the last vestige of influence that the United States may have in helping to bring about an adjustment of matters in the Orient, the best way to turn the face of the American people towards another war, is to do precisely what these people are urging in the way of peace.

On the following day (February 23rd) there was a Reuter message from Washington that President Hoover was understood to be " opposed to any suggestion of a boycotting of Japan either by the United States alone or in conjunction with the League of Nations." A Press Association message from Tokyo spoke of bitter national feeling aroused by suggestions of an economic blockade of Japan. It quoted one " challenging statement " that : " If such a thing were attempted, Japan will be faced with the alternative of surrender, which is inconceivable, or of staking everything on a vast gamble in which, even if she finally lost, she would make the world pay dearly in lives and trade before she gave in." It was added that, faced by such a contingency, Japan would occupy strategic points on the mainland to secure her sources of supply.

The *Guardian* made no comment on the manifesto of the National Joint Council of the Labour movement. On the 25th its Geneva Correspondent reported that some Far Eastern experts there considered it quite likely that " Japan would be dangerously defiant if other than moral pressure were applied (though of that there seems no question at the moment)." The New York Correspondent, on the same day, said that unofficial propaganda in favour of a boycott of Japanese goods was " assuming startling proportions." Newspapers were said to be filled with comment, which, however,

was " by no means unanimous," since " many prominent persons were strongly opposed to the proposal on the ground that it would be certain to lead to war." President Hoover, and Mr. Stimson, were believed also to be opposed to the idea, at least for the time being.

When the *Guardian* wrote next day (February 26th) on " America and the Far Eastern Crisis," it said that America had " from the beginning had a consistent policy," unlike the other Powers concerned ; but it had nothing whatever to say about the American attitude towards sanctions. On the 29th, the paper had a good deal on the subject. The New York Correspondent said that almost 5,000 Americans had now signed petitions to Congress asking for a boycott against Japan, in most cases opposing any independent action but urging that the United States should pledge itself to co-operate with the League in case that body applied economic sanctions under Article XVI of the Covenant. There were said to be large numbers of opponents, but they were less vocal. Mr. Hoover's Cabinet was understood to be divided, the President opposed and Mr. Stimson in favour. In Congress, several prominent figures, including Senator Borah, had spoken out against a boycott, and virtually no one had so far come forward to defend it. The Correspondent pointed out that no action could be taken by the United States without new Congessional legislation. If the League should call for a boycott, it was said that Mr. Hoover would submit a proposal to Congress, but it seemed certain that it would be defeated by a narrow majority. Reuter's message from Washington on the same day conveyed a different impression. It had been announced (apparently by " high officials ") that the United States Government " strongly opposes a boycott against Japan." Apparently, the report said, there was not complete agreement within the Government, " as it was added that President Hoover and other members of the Government and legislators were ' almost unanimously opposed to a boycott.' " The State Department had been advised by American observers abroad that the major Powers were in line with the United States in its attitude. A boycott, high officials said, could easily lead to war, and would generate bitterness leading to violence against citizens of the boycotting countries residing in the boycotted countries and vice versa.

During the following week, whether because of a clearer appreciation of the American attitude or because of the improvement in conditions at Shanghai or on account of apprehensions about possible Japanese reactions, the *Guardian* made but one indirect

allusion to sanctions in its editorial comments. On March 7th, after saying that the United States had gone farther than any other Power in demanding respect for international treaties, it proceeded :

It is, nevertheless, known here that the United States—though not absolutely opposed to pressure of every kind—would in no circumstances associate themselves with formal sanctions.

That did not prevent the *Guardian* from going on to criticise the League Council for using " neither the moral, nor the juridical, nor the material means which the Covenant provides." As has been noted, the paper was well satisfied with the League Assembly's Resolution of March 11th. It pointed out, however, that it embodied no threat or hint of pressure, adding, " it is, of course, possible that pressure may still be necessary."

The Geneva Correspondent's message on the 12th has several points of interest. He thought that the United States was in a better position to apply pressure upon Japan than the League Powers precisely because it was not bound by the Covenant and by the obligation to apply formal sanctions in certain circumstances, and could therefore act informally, not needing to " shrink from taking one step for fear lest they might be compelled to take the next step, a step that might be impossible or disastrous." He proceeded :

In fairness to the British Government it must be remembered that in any other than a theoretical or purely legal conflict between Japan and the League the main responsibility and the main burden falls on England. Application of Article XVI (the " sanctions " article) would mean that Japan would be deemed to have committed " an act of war " against all other members of the League. Any apparent " weakness " on the part of the British delegate in the Assembly must be considered in the light of that fact.

On March 14th, the paper returned editorially to the subject of sanctions. If hostilities were to break out again, it would be necessary to consider afresh the means which the League should employ to restrain Japan. The general assumption in this country seemed to be that there was no pressure which League members could bring to bear upon Japan short of fighting her.

This is, of course, pure delusion. It is just conceivable that Japan might declare war on the League—as she might now—and also on America, but only the clumsiest kind of bullying would drive her to such madness. The assumption that to bring any kind of international pressure

to bear upon the Japanese would necessarily provoke them to make a world war is put forward only by those who would in their hearts be sorry if the League were able to constrain a Great Power.

The last sentence suggests that the *Guardian* failed to appreciate not only the good faith of those whose views it was opposing but also the strength of their case. Yet what is one to make of the rest of this editorial?

But they have to support them the foolish wording of Article XVI of the Covenant, which explicitly assumes a state of war to exist between the League and any country which makes war contrary to the provisions of the Covenant, and the fact that the foolishness of this Article has been exaggerated by the French into a whole philosophy of international "sanctions." It would be a great pity if a very proper reluctance to endow the League prematurely with the attributes of a military State should lead anyone to suppose that its functions are purely advisory and mediatory.

The *Manchester Guardian*, like nearly all British "sanctionists," had always made considerable reservations in supporting "the collective peace system." It was well aware of the objections to military action under the terms of the Covenant, though it may not have felt them so strongly in the particular case of Japan. It was clearly not wholly unaware of the dangers involved in any application of "economic sanctions," and it had seemingly arrived at the position, so widely accepted in later years in this country, of being willing to support whatever sanctions might not involve war. It may be noted, in passing, that this paper, like its Geneva Correspondent, seemed unfamiliar with the authoritative interpretations of Article XVI which the League had long before adopted as its rules of guidance in the matter.

2. The "Economist"

The paper which came nearer than any other, perhaps, to advocacy of sanctions by the League States alone was the *Economist*, although it did so in general terms, and did not press the matter after the end of February.

On February 6th, holding that a determination on Japan's part to flout the world's judgment would expose her to "the full weight of the Sanctions of the Covenant," it considered it a "supreme piece of good fortune" that the ordeal should have come in the Far East and not in Europe, because in regard to the Far East we were

quite free from the nightmare of the Dominions hanging back and the United States pursuing a possibly unfriendly neutrality. On the 20th, discussing the absence of any " hint of action " in the League Council's Note to Japan of the 16th, the *Economist* declared it evident " that nothing but the certainty of incurring the economic sanctions of Article XVI of the Covenant was likely to induce Japan to call off her offensive." It was " obvious " also that " economic sanctions cannot be imposed on Japan without a risk of Japanese naval reprisals," but it was a balance of risks that had to be cast up, and inaction meant the risk of a far greater evil in the not distant future, and the " death-knell of disarmament."

On the following week, this position was reaffirmed. The *Economist* held, " if possible, more strongly than ever," that it was the first duty of " the League and the Powers to bring the sanctions of the collective system of security to bear upon Japan." It did not deny the " element of risk," but " the risk involved in letting things go on from bad to worse is incomparably greater." The phrase " the League and the Powers " suggests that the *Economist* included the United States, but there was no discussion of the American attitude on the subject nor of its relevance to League action.

On March 5th, however, in setting out the " vital points " upon which the League Assembly ought to insist, this weekly made no allusion whatever to sanctions ; nor was the subject mentioned on the following week. On March 19th, the only reference was made by the Geneva Correspondent, who insisted that the non-recognition policy would have to be supplemented by " a readiness, if necessary, to take other measures." There were, he said, as yet few indications of anv real indignation or of willingness to take energetic action regarding Manchuria on the part of any of the Great Powers, except possibly America ; " and if America wants action she will have to be far more precise in saying so than she has hitherto been." *The Economist* had nothing more to say about sanctions during this period, and its attitude illustrates once again the close connection between talk about sanctions and the course of events at Shanghai.

When, on April 23rd, it asserted that " the collective system " had been badly battered, and asked whether it was the fault of the United States, its answer was in the negative. The Government of that country had been in constant touch, and at times in actual co-operation, with the League of Nations throughout the crisis ;

and on certain occasions had taken a firmer line than the Foreign Office :

It is true that the United States is not prepared to use all the weapons which are in the armoury of the League of Nations, and pins its faith to the theory that the pressure of clearly and, if necessary, forcefully expressed world opinion, reinforced by the fear of the dangers resulting from political isolation, will suffice to safeguard the treaty system. But the United States has gone farther and has made it clear that, if the League decided to use its own special weapon of the boycott, America would not stand in the way or create difficulties. In the circumstances it would be hypocrisy to lay the blame at the door of the United States.

The real cause, said the *Economist*, was due to a state of mind characteristic of the world at large :

The " collective system " is threatened because Japan has shown that she will not yield to reason or conciliation or, indeed, to anything short of pressure, and it is feared that the pressure—even mere diplomatic and economic pressure—would expose the countries exerting it to a risk—however small—that Japan might retaliate by military measures. But in their anxiety to avoid any risk of the kind, the Powers are running a risk which in a long view is a far more serious danger—namely, that the whole existing system of international law and order may fall into discredit.

3. The " News Chronicle "

The views expressed by and in the *News Chronicle* during the period now under review illustrate admirably the hesitations and the divisions of opinion in Liberal and pacifist circles. After the initial stages of the Shanghai episode, this paper did not discuss the American attitude towards sanctions. Its first impressions, based upon reports from its New York Correspondent (January 28th), were that the United States Government was urging this country to join in a boycott of Japan, but within two or three days it appears to have realised that the rumours which had been reported by its Correspondent were unfounded, although it did not publish Mr. Stimson's statement of January 29th which would have settled the point. This statement, indeed, appears to have been published only in the *Times*. After explaining his consultations with the British Ambassador about making representations to Japan in regard to the Shanghai crisis, and the resulting communications by both Governments to Japan, Mr. Stimson added : " No other proposals

for international action have been made by the American Government." The whole episode is interesting, but it seems to have escaped the attention of the British newspapers other than the *Times* and the *News Chronicle*.[1]

On January 29th, an editorial in the *News Chronicle* described as seemingly incredible an alleged statement by a Japanese Government spokesman that any economic action by the United States would be followed by the breaking off of relations by the Japanese Government; but (it was said) the military clique, blind and arrogant, had apparently got control. The question of an economic boycott was discussed by "W. W." next day. He was plainly not much impressed by the idea, which was not "particularly new." Nor was he certain that the mere threat of a boycott would be immediately effective. With an autocratic military junta in control, Japan might elect to fight at all costs, and it would be rash to assume that she could not do so. A boycott, declared "W. W.," was "a kind of war," far preferable to actual war, but a very great evil none the less. In his view, the reluctance of the League to sanction its use was not wholly due to timidity; it was, and ought to remain, a last resort,

[1] The New York Correspondent of the *News Chronicle* reported that the question of a trade boycott had been the subject of exchanges between Washington and London during the two previous days, but that neither Mr. Stimson nor the British Ambassador would give any indication "as to whether the British Government is receptive to Washington's proposal." Another message on the same day (January 28th) from the same source interpreted the attitude of Congress to be one of willingness to impose a total embargo on Japanese trade should the Administration favour such a course. An article by "W. W." on January 30th mentioned that the United States was understood to be pressing Great Britain to join in a boycott of Japan. On the same day, however, the paper contained quotations from the American Press, notably from the *New York Herald Tribune*, which was confident that Mr. Stimson had not taken up the question with Great Britain. The United States Government's policy, it said, had been "based on the avoidance of force"; a boycott would mean not only force but war; and it was unthinkable that Mr. Stimson could have initiated any such action. The *Tribune* was quoted as adding: "It is all the more deplorable, therefore, that the irresponsible boycott gossip which has been going on during the recent League Council sessions in Europe should have gained headway in official circles in Washington. While we have no doubt that Mr. Stimson's attitude has been consistent and correct, other officials in the State Department have not been so careful. The latest eruption of boycott discussions in Washington dispatches originated from this loose talk."

The well-informed Washington Correspondent of the *Times* reported, before Mr. Stimson's statement, that there had been exaggerated reports as to the nature of the proposal which had been made to London by Mr. Stimson, "and loose references to an 'economic boycott' directed against Japan." These, he said, should be accepted as the irresponsible speculations of individual writers: "No shadow of support for them can be observed in any official quarter." In the *Times* next day (January 30th) this Correspondent, after giving the text of Mr. Stimson's statement, said that one of the reasons for it was the desire to allow it to be generally known that "no other proposals" than those described had been made; and added that it should be read in conjunction with the article in the *New York Herald Tribune*.

though a case for using it might arise. However, in its editorial that day the *News Chronicle*—perhaps under the influence of the rumours referred to above—supported " any action such as an economic boycott which might be deemed necessary and likely to be effective " to end a situation, difficult and dangerous already, but bound to be much more so if tamely accepted.

Such a combination of a vague and wide demand for action with far-reaching qualifications was often to be met with in this matter. The *Morning Post*, ignoring the qualifications, sternly rebuked its " Liberal contemporary " for " demanding an ' economic boycott.' " But did the *News Chronicle* really want sanctions applied? On the day it was reproved by the *Morning Post*, February 1st, its Washington Correspondent reported that Mr. Stimson had " put a damper on other Government officials " who had been urging a trade boycott of Japan ; and, editorially, it pleaded for restraint in an extremely dangerous situation, warmly commending, from that standpoint, the example of the American Press. Japan, it was said, had got into an indefensible position and must be helped out of it. The League had handled the original Manchurian dispute " feebly and ineffectively," but it was absurd to say that its action or inaction was " in any sense even a contributory cause " to the Shanghai " dispute." The best course to pursue was one of close co-operation with the United States in " maintaining the peace " ; to assure that co-operation ought to be the keynote of British policy ; and the United States ought to be easily persuaded that joint action was likely to be infinitely more effective than isolated intervention. The *Morning Post*, commenting on this next day, was not sure whether it meant that the United States were expected to join in an " economic blockade."

On February 2nd the Washington Correspondent said that the United States Government feared to be " jockeyed into a position of isolation at a time when Japanese militarists are in a reckless mood," though, he said, " this risk might have been foreseen last November, when the State Department declined to work with the League over Manchuria." Editorially, the *News Chronicle* echoed the *Guardian* in a plea for the presentation of " a stronger front to the Japanese." It lamented that " no really effective expression of world opinion " had yet been heard. It needed to be made much plainer than it had been that Japan was defying the opinion of the world. Where were the statesmen? The answer to this query

apparently came quickly. Next day (February 3rd) the paper welcomed with considerable enthusiasm the proposals regarding Shanghai put forward on the 2nd. The step taken by the British Government, it was said, might be remembered, when history came to be written, to its lasting credit. Mr. J. H. Thomas's speech at Geneva had gone a long way to retrieve the errors of preceding weeks. " The authentic voice of the world's opinion " had " at last found a spokesman."

The opening of the Disarmament Conference (February 2nd) put the Shanghai situation and the Sino-Japanese conflict almost completely out of the picture in the *News Chronicle* until February 12th, when brief editorial comment expressed the view that the war party in Japan appeared to be quite out of hand. Discussing the L.N.U.'s Resolution next day, the paper said that " the trade boycott contemplated in Article XVI of the Covenant " was " fantastically misrepresented in some quarters as a naval blockade." The withdrawal of diplomatic representatives would almost certainly, and the " trade boycott " and refusal of financial facilities very probably, be treated as a declaration of war by the Japanese military junta. It was useless to pretend otherwise, and, said the *News Chronicle,* no one in this country wants to go to war with Japan or anybody else. But what was the alternative? To the writer of the article it appeared to be acceptance of Japan's claims ; but neither support nor opposition was expressed to eventual action on the lines of the L.N.U. Resolution.

Mr. Wilson Harris, writing on February 15th, defined what was meant by " a firm stand," an expression usually allowed to speak for itself. According to him it meant " the issue of a strong united warning to Japan, followed, if necessary, by the withdrawal of Ambassadors and the temporary severance of trade relations." He pointed out that some believed the Japanese reply would be an attack on the International Settlement and perhaps Hong Kong, but he had not found many who believed the Japanese capable of deliberately declaring war on the world. This is a typical example of the attitude taken up by those who are supposed to have advocated sanctions during this period. There was no demand for immediate application of sanctions. The particular sanctions mentioned were to be applied " if necessary." A condition was " united action " ; and the danger of consequential war was more or less comfortably dismissed, on the assumption that Japan would be confronted by " the world " and would therefore not risk war.

J. A. Spender, in an article four days later (February 19th), considered direct military action against " the local preponderance of Japan " so difficult as to be ruled out, even if it were desirable. To him, the League's main purpose was " to vindicate law without breaking the peace." He thought that could be done, but only if the Powers (including the United States) acted loyally together. If the League could not agree on alternative methods to those of force, it would have been far better to have refrained from addressing remonstrances which proved, when tested, to be mere words. Spender did not indicate what such alternative methods might be. On the 23rd, in a further article, he again ruled out military action, and, on this occasion, in strong terms. The Governments of the Western Powers, he said, must be assumed to " have a sufficient modicum of common sense to save them from plunging into a military adventure which the merest glance at a big map would show to be folly." But that did not mean that the Powers were helpless ; to say so was " altogether gratuitous." Spender was critical of the League's action in the dispute. It had been " too much under the influence of an abstract idea of war and fighting." It was not merely a matter of stopping a war ; it was a matter of removing the causes of conflict, and this was " much easier done at the beginning than after weeks of strife and bitterness." In fact, Spender rejected the view that all consideration of the merits of the dispute should be deferred until " the law had been vindicated."

There was editorial comment the same day (February 23rd) on a leading article in the Scripps-Howard newspapers, which referred to the proposal for an economic boycott of Japan put forward by Newton D. Baker and his associates, and expressed anxiety lest, in the event of President Hoover acting accordingly, the United States should find herself isolated and left to act alone. The *News Chronicle* considered the accompanying criticism of Great Britain to be substantially just, stating that criticism to be that there had been a " tacit refusal " by Great Britain and France " to support America in her desire to intervene effectively," due probably to " timidity " rather than " positive bad faith." The paper said it was " not surprising that quite friendly Americans should now suspect that if they continue to press for the boycotting of Japan, they may be left to execute the threat themselves." " The whole moral force of the boycott depends upon its being general." It will be noted that the *News Chronicle* was extremely vague in its

criticism of Great Britain and France, and that, except perhaps by implication, it did not indicate approval of the proposed economic boycott. It certainly did not specifically urge such a course of action upon Great Britain and France.

The attitude of the paper towards the Stimson-Borah Letter has already been dealt with ; so also has Lord Cecil's article dealing with the sanctions issue on March 4th. Apart from a reference on March 8th that it " understood " Lord Cecil's policy as expounded the previous day at the Albert Hall, the *News Chronicle* did not express any view about sanctions after February 23rd until a month later (March 23rd) it said that " in a case in which the use of direct sanctions was ruled out," the League had discovered " the power and value of the rôle " which remained to it " of rallying world opinion on the side of peace." It was the steady pressure of this opinion which, it was said, had ended the fighting at Shanghai. Before then the Sino-Japanese dispute had begun to take a minor place in the columns of this newspaper.

4. " The Times "

When one turns to the Conservative Press, the contrast between its understanding of the real attitude of the United States Government and the " wishful thinking " or misunderstanding of so much of the Left Press is rather striking. It is also notable that although in some instances the talk about sanctions by " bellicose pacifists " was roundly dealt with, the controversy did not reach the heights briefly attained during the first phase of the crisis. In these quarters the sanctions talk often aroused irritation, but, on this occasion, no serious alarm.

The Washington Correspondent of the *Times* kept its readers accurately informed about the American Government's attitude. It is difficult to believe that any careful reader of that newspaper could have been " bluffed " by Mr. Stimson's reticence. At the outset, the Washington Correspondent emphasised that the American Government was moved to approach Great Britain for co-operation largely in order to avert the serious complications which would inevitably arise if the group then nominally constituting the Chinese Government formally declared war and the Japanese Government thereupon announced a blockade of the coast of China.[1] His reports

[1] See the *Times*, January 27th and February 1st ; also *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 134.

on January 29th and 30th about the " boycott " rumours and Mr. Stimson's statement have already been noted. They dispelled any doubts the *Times* may have had about the feasibility and desirability of Anglo-American co-operation in the matter.

On February 1st, this Correspondent reported an uncompromising statement by Senator Borah :

> Those who are urging a boycott on the part of the Americans seem to look upon it as a peace movement. It would in my opinion be a movement of a wholly different kind. An economic boycott is in the nature of a threat and might easily be the first step towards war. It is the employment of force and often of a most cruel and inhuman kind. Regardless of what may be thought of Japan's course, and the deplorable situation in Shanghai, a boycott should not be urged by our people.

The Washington Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* also reported Senator Borah's views that day, pointing out that he and other leaders of Congress were strongly opposed to any movement which might involve the United States in a quarrel with Japan and rejected suggestions of an economic boycott or an arms embargo. It is interesting that no other newspaper appears to have published any similar item of news. It was not until three weeks later, as we have seen, that a report about Senator Borah's attitude appeared in the *Guardian*.

The *Times* published a message on February 3rd from its Correspondent at Washington that it was stated " in the highest quarter " that the United States Government was engaged in the protection of the lives of American citizens, and that such military operations or movements as had been undertaken were directed solely to that end. It was also lending its friendly offices, upon the specific request of China and Japan, to bring about an adjustment of the dispute. The Correspondent added that the motive behind this statement was undoubtedly " the desire to correct the exaggerations and intemperance of certain published reports, and to reassure the public mind."

Editorially, the *Times* had nothing to say about " sanctions " until after the meeting of the League Assembly, unless a passage in the leader on February 18th may be regarded as an indirect allusion to the possibility. The *Times* then said that the Japanese would make a great mistake if they imagined that the comparative moderation of the protests and appeals so far made represented the last word of the League and of the foreign countries having definite

and palpable interests in China. It proceeded : " The reason why public opinion has so far refused as a whole to follow those who demand drastic action against Japan is that popular sympathies have been divided between the two disputants." But recent Japanese action, the editorial went on, had driven opinion wholesale to the side of China, and the League supported by united opinion was bound to be a far more effective body than when opinion was divided.

On February 20th the *Times* reported Dr. A. Lawrence Lowell's broadcast, in which he had said that " the duties of members of the League under Article XVI of the Covenant could not in fact be carried out in the case of Japan without the concurrence of the United States, nor would such action be seriously proposed without the assurance that, if it were taken, this country would concur." On February 26th its Washington Correspondent, writing on the Stimson-Borah Letter, said that the Hoover Administration

> have no sympathy with and no conviction of the practical possibility of such measures as an economic boycott, which has been proposed by a group of educators ; they are fully convinced that the British Government are in agreement with this view ; and they do not anticipate and would not join in any such action by the League of Nations.

The paper's Tokyo Correspondent that day reported that the Japanese would not be deterred by even the direct threat of a blockade. " National prestige," he wrote, " is at stake in its prickliest form." The Chinese were broadcasting their alleged victories," and any solution which left them free to continue boasting would be an unendurable blow to national pride, which reaches its maximum where the honour of the Army is concerned."

In two dispatches published on March 2nd and 3rd, the Washington Correspondent made it plain that so far from the American Government desiring the League Assembly to impose economic sanctions it was actually not a little anxious lest it should do so. The reported cessation of hostilities at Shanghai was particularly welcomed on that account :

> There has never been any certainty that this resort would be taken by the Assembly as a whole, and there has never been any doubt that the United States Government would deplore it if it were taken. But the perplexities which would be created if a League " boycott " of Japan were ordered and the United States, as would be inevitable, were asked to take complementary action, are too obvious to need description. In

such an event, and in spite of its own conviction that this form of action should be avoided, the United States Government might be moved by reasons more cogent and forces more powerful than its own disinclination. Perhaps the possibility of a League "boycott" has never been as real as has recently appeared, and perhaps now it will cease to exist.

On the next day, March 3rd :

It goes without saying that this possibility has been seriously discussed in the innermost circles here, and when every allowance has been made for the rigid determination of the United States Government not to initiate such measures as part of its own policy, it nevertheless remains a question whether it could stand aloof if these measures were decreed by the League. It will throw all the weight of such influence as it possesses against an economic boycott, but it has to remember, and does remember, that the consequences of its refusal to participate with the rest of the world might be even more serious than its consent to go along. There is a middle ground between inaction and the adoption of full economic sanctions, and it is the middle ground that this Government hopes the Assembly will take.

In its editorial on March 11th the *Times*, discussing the League Assembly's Resolution, welcomed the fact that it contained no phrases which could be interpreted as a direct condemnation of or an affront to either party to the dispute, and still more the fact that there was no recommendation for "punitive action, in the sense of Article XVI of the Covenant." The credit for the avoidance of any such "folly" was assigned largely to Sir John Simon :

He has firmly withstood the exhortations of those who, in a mood of quite natural moral indignation, would take measures against Japan which could only have been interpreted as war, would have irremediably complicated the political problem, and would almost certainly have extended the area of hostilities.

The *Times* contended that the vast bulk of public opinion in this country strongly approved the principle of policy that had guided Sir John Simon "through a maze of conflicting propositions"— "the principle that the function of the League of Nations in this case should be mediatorial and not coercive."

This is not to say that never in any circumstances should the League mobilise collective action against a recalcitrant State ; but the fundamental rights and wrongs of the dispute would have to be far more plainly demonstrated than they have been in this instance.

The Foreign Secretary, it was pointed out, had had the explicit support of two of his predecessors, Sir Austen Chamberlain and Lord Grey.

5. The Press of the Right

As we have seen, the *Daily Telegraph* was aware at an early stage of the state of Congressional opinion in the United States. On February 4th, it may be noted in passing, its Diplomatic Correspondent said that, according to Washington, it was Tokyo that first intimated to America that the good offices of the Powers would be welcomed in regard to Shanghai. He also said that Washington was anxious that the initiative of laying the proposals before the world should be assumed by Britain.

Although this paper did not discuss the subject of sanctions editorially until February 29th, its Diplomatic Correspondent, on February 19th, emphasised the dangers to Great Britain—the risk of an armed conflict, the brunt of which would devolve upon Great Britain as the biggest naval Power among League members, and a conflict which would have to be waged " in the most disadvantageous conditions against an opponent with compact and locally concentrated forces." There was not and could not be any assurance or certainty of America coming in to help. " America was never less war-minded than she is at present. She profoundly distrusts the League and its ' intrigues ' and 'entanglements ' " ; and strategically she was not in the best position for carrying on operations across the Pacific and in the China Seas. On February 24th the Washington Correspondent of the paper declared that the American Government would not be influenced by pressure from any source to join in an economic boycott of Japan ; and although many prominent citizens endorsed Dr. Lowell's proposal the majority were anxious that the country should not be involved.

On February 29th the *Telegraph*, which had previously advised zealots for the League's authority to keep the rule of silence and leave the issue in the hands of the responsible statesmen, was moved by Lord Cecil's speech at the Caxton Hall to break silence itself and denounce the meddling of mischief-makers. On that occasion, we have seen, it said that the United States Government had demonstrated its opposition to sanctions " in the most emphatic way." The paper did not return to the subject until March 23rd, after the debate in the House of Commons, when it described Lansbury's

speech as " a model of that form of militant pacifism which has been so well advertised during the past six months," and endorsed the Foreign Secretary's claim that the activity of the League as a purely mediating influence was producing far better results than could have been looked for from any hasty attempt to exercise pressure.

The *Morning Post* took the line on January 30th that, although it did not believe in peace at any price, it valued it enough to beware of entering into superfluous danger in a doubtful cause. On February 1st it dismissed the proposals for an " economic boycott " as " nonsensical," but on the next day felt called upon to explain at length what was involved in an " economic blockade." It signified nothing more or less than war ; for it was impossible to suppose that a high-spirited nation like Japan would admit to being starved into submission. The question was : " Is Great Britain prepared, either alone or in any conceivable combination, to embark upon this project of a naval blockade and the consequential war ? " The *Morning Post* noted that " the same kind of people who are urging us into this quarrel have worked for years to promote our disarmament." We were in no position to carry out any such operation as a naval blockade in the Pacific. " The people who want us to put on the screw have broken the screwdriver. They cannot have it both ways : if we reduce our Navy to the danger point, they cannot afford the luxury of a naval blockade at the other side of the world." The *Morning Post* was not, apparently, really alarmed. The Government was not in the least likely, it said, to undertake any such insane adventures, and " we only put the case in order to demonstrate the folly of which the Liberal mind is capable." This paper was not much concerned with the question of American participation. But, on February 29th, it quoted Lord Cecil on the matter, adding : " Without this co-operation, Lord Cecil mournfully observes, nothing can be done, so it appears that in this, as in other cases, Might is to be Right. It hardly needed the League of Nations to introduce this principle to the world."

Neither the *Daily Express* nor the *Daily Mail* discussed the attitude of the United States. The former, indeed, had little to say about sanctions. On February 1st it urged the postponement of the Disarmament Conference, on the ground that in the circumstances it would be held in " a sheer fog of make-believe." Its comments on the National Joint Council's manifesto have already been quoted.

The only other reference was on March 1st, when the news had come of the provisional agreement for an armistice at Shanghai. This it considered " an immense justification " of the attitude it had adopted throughout that " forcible intervention from the outside, economic or otherwise, was the last thing needed." The *Daily Mail*, on the other hand, conducted a continuous editorial campaign against sanctions during the month of February. Its arguments, presented with a liberal use of such epithets as " fire-eating pacifists " and " pacifist warmongers," were essentially the same as those it employed in the first phase. " Economic boycott " and " pacific blockade," it declared, were impossible in the modern world without war ; and the brunt of that war would have to be borne by the people of these islands. It added that if the programme were to be taken seriously it would involve " the introduction of compulsory service, the trebling of the Navy, the reconstruction of the Air Force, and an immediate expenditure of hundreds of millions " (February 22nd). Moreover, no vital British interest was at stake ; and Japanese action was justified in view of the complete anarchy prevailing in China.

6. " Observer " and " Sunday Times "

In the *Observer*, the paper's New York Correspondent, Edward Marshall, wrote on January 31st that Mr. Hoover's desire was to avoid increasing Japanese hostility and complicating negotiations. There were few suggestions, he said, that active steps should be taken. Marshall pointed out that Congress had withdrawn, temporarily at least, two bills obviously aimed at Japan, " empowering the President to impose an embargo on any nation violating the Kellogg Pact." On February 14th reference was made to " certain misguided idealists " who still aspired to the organisation of a world war upon Japan as a method of restoring peace. " Irony is flattered to death by mental muddle on such a scale."

J. L. Garvin took up the question of sanctions again on February 21st. He discussed it on the assumption that armed intervention was involved, and irrespective of whether the United States co-operated or not. The danger was that of being involved by degrees without intention, and, in his view, British policy " must not go one single inch in that direction."

You cannot cure war by plunging into it. You cannot end war by

spreading it everywhere whenever it breaks out anywhere. You can only multiply passions, discords, armaments, conflicts, and causes of further conflicts.

Garvin declared that the " practical purpose of mediating statesmanship " was to limit the war, then to stop it, not to spread it.

This for several plain reasons. Effective armed intervention, whether European or American, in the Far East—as every competent student knows—would take a long time to prepare. While it was preparing, what would happen meanwhile in China and at points on the routes to China. What ?

In any case every hope of peace and disarmament would be destroyed for generations.

We ask the vast sane majority of the British people, what do they think of it ? If the choice comes to be seriously put to them the power of their " No " will astonish the world and perhaps save it.

After criticising the failure of the League to engage in systematic constructive effort for removing the motives of war by political reconciliation and economic adjustment in the Far East as elsewhere, and insisting that sane statesmanship should forget all the theoretical contentions and look into the substance of the case, encouraging not hindering direct negotiation between the two belligerents, Garvin returned to the sanctions issue :

Meanwhile, and at all costs, the British people must and will keep out of war. . . . Carrying one-sided disarmament honestly to a hazardous degree ; reducing the Navy to a nucleus ; cutting down the Army to a minimum ; accepting mildly a preposterous inferiority in air-power ; and with a democratic financial system paralysing the old " sinews of war "—Britain, before engaging again in the hideous gamble with human life and blood, must at least take some years to reorganise her whole national system if war is indeed to be the future purpose.

On February 28th, these arguments were reiterated in an editorial which ended : " To advocate both Disarmament and Sanctions in one breath is about the climax of human absurdity." The paper's Diplomatic Correspondent, dealing with the Stimson-Borah Letter on the same day, said that " the notion of economic sanctions and the like is now regarded definitely as exploded " ; although a report from Washington said that, according to usually well-informed sources, the United States Cabinet was divided on the question, Mr. Stimson being understood to favour a decision in advance as to whether the United States would join the other Powers

in any economic sanctions against Japan, while the boycott idea was opposed by the Secretaries of War and the Navy on the ground that it would probably lead to hostilities. It is plain that by March 6th the *Observer* considered the danger over ; a view plainly expressed by Garvin on the 20th, when he added that he had nothing but commendation for " the saving patience and conciliatory skill with which the Far Eastern crisis has been managed by Sir John Simon and by the National Cabinet as a whole."

The *Sunday Times* continued to display a divided mind during this phase of the crisis. Its editorial on January 31st went no further than to say that the Western Powers most interested, Britain and America especially, should " bend every effort to the task of averting war," i.e. between China and Japan, and if that failed should ceaselessly pursue two main objectives. It was essential, of course, to see that war was on no account allowed to spread so as to involve other interests ; but it was hardly less essential to prevent conflict between the two Powers from proceeding to its logical conclusion in China's state of confusion. There was no discussion of the sanctions issue, and indeed a surprising absence of comment on the Shanghai crisis during the two following weeks.

When " Scrutator " turned from " Disarmament " on February 14th to the Far East on the following Sunday, he argued in favour of the policy of mediation and patience which was being pursued. " These are not days for war or the bluff of war." If the Assembly made a declaration involving the application of Article XVI, " we shall do our duty as a loyal member," but " to anticipate by action or speech a declaration which would mean blockade and war would be rash to the point of lunacy."

On February 28th the editorial was entirely non-committal. There was no reference to the American attitude towards sanctions. Mr. Wickham Steed, in his article that day, made only indirect allusions : the American Fleet had gone to the Pacific ; the American people were ceasing to " buy Japanese " ; Mrs. Hoover had taken to wearing American cotton gowns instead of Japanese silk gowns ; American bankers were asking Japanese banks and merchants to pay up what they owed. What America wanted, Mr. Steed said, was " to stop the fighting in China before it grows into a real big war " in which everybody might have to take a part. " England, too, would like to stop the fighting if she could do so without hurting Japanese feelings." On March 6th, Mr. Wickham Steed said that

the American Government had " already given a hint to France and Great Britain that if they, as members of the League, cease to trade with Japan because she has attacked China, the United States will do the same." When and in what form he thought this hint had been given was not disclosed. Possibly he was another victim of Mr. Stimson's attempted " bluff."

On March 13th the editorial was inclined to think that the League Assembly's Resolution might mark the beginning of the end of an episode that had alarmed the world. Mr. Wickham Steed had no article that week, and on the 20th was dealing with " The Crisis of Europe."

7. Naval Estimates and Sanctions

Two interesting and relevant episodes, both of which occurred on the same day, March 7th, throw additional light on the attitude of British " sanctionists," so-called, during this critical phase. One of these episodes was the Albert Hall meeting organised by the L.N.U., to which more than one allusion has already been made. The other was the debate on the Naval Estimates in the House of Commons.

Lord Grey was then one of the vice-presidents of the L.N.U. A passage from his speech at the Albert Hall has already been quoted.[1] Other passages are more appropriately quoted now. To those who were disappointed that the League of Nations had not been able to do more in the Far Eastern dispute, Lord Grey said

> first of all, do not underrate what the League of Nations has already done. It has been a restraining influence from the beginning. It is quite true, we know, that that restraining influence has not been successful to the extent we would like. But we do not know what would have happened had there been no League of Nations.

After contending that the matter was peculiarly unfitted to be a test case, Lord Grey proceeded :

> There are people who ask, could not the League of Nations have done more ? I will ask, what more could it have done ? The League of Nations is not a separate entity, but is composed of the Governments of those countries who are members of the League, and it cannot act unless those Governments are all in agreement that action should be taken. Does anyone suppose that those Governments would be in favour of going to war in this case, or, if they had been in favour of going to war, that they

[1] pp. 132-3, above.

would have been successful? I do not like the idea of resorting to war to prevent war. What we wish is to prevent war. War is a disagreeable thing, even if it be resorted to in order to prevent a war. It is too much like lighting a large fire in order to prevent a smaller one. Anyhow, this instance seems to me peculiarly unsuitable for any action of that sort on the part of the League of Nations.

The report in the *Times* prints the word " cheers " at this point.

Then people say that economic pressure might have been used. There is provision in the Covenant of the League for economic pressure. That is quite true, but, again, look at the geographical circumstances. Economic pressure could not possibly have been applied unless it was done in co-operation with the Government of the United States. It would be mean, and, I think, not just, to say that the United States is responsible for the fact that no economic pressure has been applied, because I do not know that the Governments who are members of the League would have resorted to economic pressure without the United States. But I do say this, that in the peculiar circumstances of this dispute any action taken by the League which had not the co-operation of the United States would have been futile.

On the same day, in the House of Commons, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell (afterwards Lord Monsell), presented the Navy Estimates. In the course of his speech, he said

it is my misfortune to introduce the lowest Estimates that have been introduced since 1913, and which have obviously been framed not on what we would like but with a view to contributing, and contributing very generously, towards the nation's common effort to meet the great financial crisis.

The Estimates showed a decrease of £1,128,700. Among the facts pointed out by the First Lord were the following: No capital ships had been laid down for ten years. Only five cruisers had been laid down in the previous four years, although it was essential to have three a year to maintain our position under the Naval Treaty arrangements. We were not building destroyers up to the limits allowed by the Treaties. The First Lord said that the economies in the administration and maintenance of the Fleet had been arrived at " only by cutting everything absolutely to the bone." And he added that the economies had been made to meet exceptional circumstances, " but I must warn the House that they cannot be continued if this country is to have an efficient Navy."

In the course of the ensuing debate, Sir Austen Chamberlain

pointed out the unprecedented fact that the previous year's programme was only going to be begun in the following September. He said :

> Let it be clearly understood that . . . our Navy is not only incomparably weaker than it has been in the past . . . but it is proportionately weaker as compared with the navies of other Powers. Year after year, we, in anticipation of a disarmament which in other lands was still to come, have made reduction after reduction. When other countries were building up, we, alone hitherto, have made reductions. That cannot go on indefinitely.

Sir Austen added :

> I beg the House to observe that, in all that concerns the physical force that it will exert in an emergency, this country is weaker in proportion to the rest of the world than at any time within my public life, and I ask them to consider whether our weakness really serves the cause of peace. . . . If you want your Foreign Secretary to speak with the authority that he ought to have, if you want yourselves to be masters in your own house and able to decide your own policy, you must be in a position to defend yourself, you must be in a position to fulfil your obligations and to secure the respect of others for the obligations that they owe to you.

All three of these speeches were severely criticised in the so-called " sanctionist " Press. Even more interesting is the fact that they were linked together in the criticism of the *News Chronicle*, which added Sir John Simon's speech at the League Assembly, also on March 7th. In regard to the latter, the paper said that the smaller States of the world had looked to Great Britain for a lead and had got nothing but words. The speeches of the First Lord and Sir Austen Chamberlain were said to present " the very familiar view that the British Navy existed solely to preserve the peace of the world and that the only security for peace was preparation for war—a theory " probably in the mind of Cain upon a famous occasion "—but it was new for such speeches " in praise of big navies " to be delivered in the middle of a Disarmament Conference. Lord Grey's speech was regretfully added as " the third on the list of rather deplorable exhibits." The *News Chronicle* could not understand what Lord Grey's policy was : apparently it was " to make the best of a bad business " ; indeed, " the inference which his speech inevitably suggests " was that it was right to bomb women and children on one side of the world but wrong to bomb them on the other, although Lord Grey could " scarcely have meant that." In view of the Simon, Eyres-Monsell and Grey speeches,

the *News Chronicle* did not wonder at " the ingrained conviction of the unenlightened foreigner that hypocrisy and make-believe are the foundation stones of British policy."

The *Manchester Guardian* did not comment on Lord Grey's speech.[1] It quoted the First Lord's remark about his " misfortune," and Sir Austen's passage about the Foreign Secretary. This, it thought, might perhaps be intended for the encouragement or consolation of Sir John Simon :

If anyone complains henceforth that he has not upheld this country's obligations in respect of the Covenant or the Nine Power Treaty, he can excuse himself by saying that the British Navy was not big enough for him to get his way. It is hardly to be believed that a Government of which Mr. MacDonald is the Prime Minister could revert to the crude truculence and complacent nationalism implied in the words of its spokesmen.

The *Daily Mail* also linked the Naval Estimates with the Far Eastern dispute, but in a totally different way :

That we are navally disarmed is, beyond dispute, the deduction to be drawn from the First Lord's speech. Yet this is the time chosen by our bloodthirsty pacifists to demand that Great Britain shall intervene in every quarrel abroad and try to enforce economic boycotts and so-called " pacific blockades." With the shrunken Navy which is all that we possess to-day a cautious policy is imperatively necessary for our national safety, and a complete abstinence from all crusading.

In the Glasgow *Forward*, L. McNeil Weir quoted Sir Austen Chamberlain's remarks about the Foreign Secretary's position, commenting :

It is sad to think that a statesman of the standing of Sir Austen Chamberlain should lend the weight of his authority to such a stupid, obsolete and criminal policy. And, to crown all, the League of Nations Union, with a strange inverted humour, have just appointed this picturesque survival of pre-War militarism a vice-president.

The *New Statesman* said that Lord Grey's speech " gave the impression that he thought the League would do very well by doing little or nothing." This periodical complained that the *Times* gave a very full report of this speech, and a much slighter one to those of Lord Cecil and others who voiced the contrary view, " and the view which, we believe, has general support." The *Times* was, in fact, the only one of the chief dailies which gave any considerable

[1] One indignant correspondent wrote (March 14th) describing it as a very mischievous speech, and, " logically construed," a " resignation speech."

space to the Albert Hall speakers other than Lord Grey and Lord Cecil, and its report of the latter's speech was much more adequate than that of any newspaper other than the *Manchester Guardian*. The last-mentioned newspaper reversed the order of the two main speeches, Lord Cecil's being given first, though delivered last of all, and Lord Grey's, the first and much longer speech, being reported afterwards, though at some length. The *New Statesman*, apparently, did not notice the interesting and amusing treatment of the Albert Hall demonstration by the *Daily Herald*. On March 4th and 5th, notices of the demonstration appeared in that paper. On the 5th, over the initials " H. S.," it was said :

> Who is it that hates the League of Nations and all its works ? Viscount Grey, formerly Foreign Minister, and Viscount Cecil, the greatest member of his family since its founder made it important in the days of Elizabeth, arranged days ago to protest at the Albert Hall, next Monday, against Japan's action and to strengthen the work for peace. . . . " We have received no publicity at all from the Government," say the promoters. " The Tory newspapers ignored us. Because of this lack of publicity, the meeting is in danger of being cancelled. Even if it is held, it may fall quite flat." We all made great protestations, years ago, boasting of our support of the League. Then the Tories went on supporting it in public, but, in private, pooh-poohing it. This is happening in half the countries of the world. When we all send peacemakers to Geneva, we shall have peace. But while we send warmakers, war will go on.

The report of the demonstration in the *Herald* on March 8th was headed : " Lord Cecil puts blame on Japan and Japan alone," and began, " In spite of a boycott of the meeting by a section of the Press, the public crammed the Albert Hall, W., last night to protest at a continuance of the fighting in the Far East." Four lines only at the end of the report were devoted to Lord Grey's speech. They read as follows : " Viscount Grey of Fallodon, who presided, said the Far Eastern dispute was not a test case. It had been between two nations at the other side of the world."

CHAPTER TEN

SHANGHAI AND SANCTIONS—3

1. Lord Cecil and Shanghai

WHEN Lord Cecil wrote his book, *The Great Experiment*, in 1940, he maintained that if " the Peace Powers " had been " prepared to take serious action, as at Shanghai," then Japan would have complied with their demands concerning Manchuria. "Nothing that occurred later," said Lord Cecil, had modified that conclusion :

> At Shanghai, Japanese action not only brought fire and sword to the destruction of Chapei and its inhabitants, but in doing so threatened the safety of Western interests. We and others had invested very large sums in the Foreign Settlements of Shanghai. The maintenance of the law of peace under the Covenant might be belittled as " idealism." But the protection of British property was a British interest. Accordingly, warships were sent there, such reinforcements as were readily available were also despatched, meetings of foreign representatives in Shanghai were called. All talk of the possibility of Japanese reprisals on Hong Kong was forgotten. And what happened ? A British admiral presided over a conference, a British Ambassador devised formulas, and in a little while Tokyo became convinced that the Western Powers were in earnest and the Japanese naval and military reinforcements were withdrawn without having secured any stoppage of the Chinese boycott. (p. 233.)

The argument was that the British Government (together with the American Government and the Governments of the other Powers interested) was prepared to fight in defence of the International Settlement at Shanghai ; that, in view of this readiness to fight, the Japanese gave way ; that they would also have given way if Great Britain had shown a similar willingness to fight in regard to Manchuria ; and that the British Government was prepared to fight in the one case and not in the other because in the first British property, territory and subjects were affected, while in the second it was only a question of enforcing the Covenant of the League of Nations. In short, the Shanghai episode is taken as evidence that the British Government's policy in regard to the Manchurian crisis was determined, not by any practical difficulties or

considerations, still less by any views it may have entertained about the merits of the dispute, but simply by a refusal to act in accordance with the Covenant, implying a rejection of the principles upon which the Covenant was based. As Lord Cecil put it :

> It seemed to establish that the British Government would risk nothing to preserve peace in a quarrel which, as they believed, did not affect British interests—that is to say, British subjects or British territory. Not only was force not used to restrain the aggressor, but the reason given for not using it reduced League action to fatuity or worse. The whole object of the members of the League should have been to stop the aggression, not because it was a threat to the territory of this or that Power, but because it endangered the peace of the world. That is the very essence of the League system (p. 332).

The reader will not have noticed that Lord Cecil himself advocated the use of force in order to restrain the " aggressor " during the period so far dealt with, whether in regard to Manchuria or in regard to Shanghai. Indeed, he did not do so at any stage of the Far Eastern crisis.

No evidence can be produced that in the Manchurian affair the British Government ever gave as its reason for not resorting to force the reason alleged by Lord Cecil ; although, as we have seen, that reason, among others, was advanced by certain newspapers, e.g. the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, and by those who shared their views. It is, indeed, in the highest degree improbable that any British Government failed to realise that British interests in the narrower sense could not be dissociated from the interests of world peace. Events in later years were to show that the grounds of British policy, however they may be regarded, in cases of aggression were essentially the same whether or not British " interests " were directly involved. It was, indeed, frequently to be charged against successive British Governments that they failed to take effective action even in defence of British territory, property and nationals. At the same time, doctrinaire supporters of the League in this country often argued as though they held the view that there should be no national defence of national territory, but only " collective " defence. Such a view ignored the direct immediate responsibility of any Government to its own people. Moreover, " collective " defence is clearly unlikely if the Government or Governments of the territory concerned are unwilling to fight in its defence. In that respect, there is an important distinction between defence of national

territory and participation in the collective defence of the territory of another nation. National defence comes first ; and, without it, there can be no collective defence. The failure to grasp that was plainly seen in the opposition in this country, so long maintained by the advocates of " pooled " or " collective " security, to British rearmament. It may be pointed out, incidentally, that the Chinese Central Government did not employ any of its forces in the defence of Manchuria ; and that the resistance of the Nineteenth Route Army at Shanghai was apparently contrary to the orders of that Government, in so far as any such Government can be said to have existed at all at the time, and appears to have received no effective assistance from any other of the many different armies operating under the very many different authorities in China, some of which armies were very near at hand.[1]

Lord Cecil's 1940 account of what happened in regard to Shanghai cannot be reconciled with the facts. It is no doubt true that a rather greater measure of public support would have been forthcoming for the British Government and other Governments had they proposed to take forcible action at the time of the Shanghai crisis than would have been accorded at any time in regard to Manchuria ; though it is obvious enough that it would not have been sufficient to enable any Government to have embarked on any such action. It is possible, moreover, that concern for the protection of British property at Shanghai (apart from the protection of British nationals) might have played a part in a readier response to any proposal of the kind ; but opposition to the use of force against Japan was nowhere stronger than in the very circles supposed to be representative of British " property interests." Very much more important would have been the widespread indignation at the methods employed by the Japanese forces and the anxieties which the fighting aroused or strengthened about Japanese aims.

There was, of course, general approval of the measures taken for the protection of the International Settlement. At any rate, no opposition was expressed to the despatch of the naval and military reinforcements ; although the Leader of the Opposition, as we have seen, several times pressed for the withdrawal of all our forces and the evacuation of all our nationals, and did so, according to his own

[1] The Tokyo Correspondent of the *Times* reported on February 17th, 1932, that General Chiang Kai-shek had 25,000 troops in the southern suburbs of Greater Shanghai, but " as they have remained quiet the Japanese will not molest them."

statements, with the support of his Party, and doubtless also with that of pacifist circles generally. The British Government shared the responsibility for the defence of the International Settlement. It had direct responsibility. It had forces there. Its legal right to take precautionary defensive measures could not be challenged. Nor could such action be construed as intervention in the Sino-Japanese dispute. Moreover, the Government would have been free to take further defensive measures without waiting for League action.

Lord Cecil's 1940 argument implied that such naval and military measures as were taken by the British, American and other Governments were directed against the Japanese in the sense that their purpose was to bring pressure to bear upon Japan in defence of "Western interests." They may conceivably have exercised some restraining influence upon the Japanese Government: the degree in which that is thought likely largely depends upon the view taken concerning the motives of Japanese action at Shanghai. But if any such purpose entered into the motives of the Western Governments it was subsidiary. The primary purpose was to prevent the Settlement from becoming involved in the fighting. The situation was, of course, greatly complicated by the fact that the Japanese used their sector of the Settlement as a base of operations: that added immeasurably to the dangers threatening the Settlement, which were for some while acute. It is possible to contend that the speedy arrival of reinforcements may have restrained the Japanese from attempting to secure control of the non-Japanese sectors of the Settlement, but there is no evidence that any such attempt was contemplated. No doubt, the presence of the forces of the Western Powers checked unauthorised encroachments by Japanese troops. In fact, the intrusion of certain of these troops into the American sector did not lead to fighting with the American forces, who maintained, with what Mr. Stimson has described as "admirable self-control," an attitude of passive defence. But the greater danger to the Settlement came from the influx of Chinese refugees and from possible attack by Chinese forces or mobs directed either against the Japanese or against all foreigners.[1]

[1] See *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 134: "... the Settlement and all that it contained might become identified in the minds of the Chinese with Japanese aggression and thus a target for undiscriminating Chinese resentment and attack." And p. 142: "But the greatest danger of all was that these Japanese attacks originating from the Settlement would ultimately provoke the Chinese troops into an attempt to rush the International Settlement itself. Had they done so, their numbers were such that it would have been impossible to protect the inhabitants of the Settlement from disastrous consequences."

The despatch of reinforcements to Shanghai was not in the nature of a coercive measure directed against Japan. The only other measure of the kind which was taken was the decision of the American Government to allow the American Fleet to remain in the neighbourhood of Hawaii after the conclusion of its annual Pacific manœuvres. What Mr. Stimson wrote in his 1936 book indicates that this was at most only a precautionary measure :

> During the winter responsible foreign observers stationed in the Far East were informing their respective Governments that in their opinion there was a real possibility of a Japanese attack being suddenly launched at the possessions of European and American Governments in the neighbourhood. In such a situation the presence of the entire American Fleet assembled at a port which placed it on the flank of any such outbreak southward towards Hong Kong, French Indo-China or the Philippines undoubtedly exercised a steadying effect. It was a potent reminder of the ultimate military strength of peaceful America which could not be overlooked by anyone, however excited he might be.[1]

So far from it being true that " all talk of the possibility of Japanese reprisals on Hong Kong " was forgotten, it appears to have been the basis of the one military measure definitely taken with a view to restraining Japan ; and that measure, Mr. Stimson has since made clear, was part of his policy of " bluff." We have already seen, moreover, that the danger of a Japanese attack on Hong Kong and other places was much talked of in the Press at the time.

The steps taken to defend the International Settlement, with or without the reinforcements, might conceivably have led to war with Japan ; but the risks were relatively slight. If war had resulted, it would have been due to a direct Japanese challenge. The Japanese had no desire to become involved in war with Britain and the United States ; a fact which, no doubt, was fully appreciated by the two Western Governments. But the position would have been entirely different if Great Britain and the United States had taken coercive measures against Japan, either in connection with Manchuria or in connection with the position in the Shanghai area. In such an event, the choice between war and peace would still have rested with Japan ; and it does not follow at all that Japan would have given way. The challenge would have come from the side of Britain and America, and there is little doubt that Japan would have met it by force of arms. Britain and America might have been

[1] Cf. *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 88 : " . . . it was probably useful in restraining the more flagrantly headlong Japanese militarists."

prepared to go to war with Japan in defence of the International Settlement, although even that is doubtful. Japan would almost certainly have been prepared to go to war if Britain and America had taken any coercive action against her. In fact, Britain, America and their associates relied upon diplomatic pressure and mediation.[1] And it cannot even be maintained with much confidence that Japan "gave way" in regard to Shanghai because of the diplomatic pressure. Opinions differed widely then and subsequently about Japanese motives both in regard to the original and later military operations and in regard to the eventual withdrawal. Indeed, Lord Cecil was reported to have described the Shanghai affair then as "a perfectly meaningless interlude."[2]

2. Mr. Stimson on Shanghai

That Japanese aims and intentions at Shanghai should have been diversely interpreted is not surprising. The rights and wrongs of the situation, according to Mr. Stimson, were complex. He recognised that the Japanese were entitled to intervene to protect their nationals from violence, and also that violence had been used against Japanese property and traders. But Mr. Stimson had no doubt that the objective of the Japanese naval move was the breaking of the Chinese boycott, which had been going on for over four months, and was "most intensive and effective.[3]

This he regarded as a further act of aggression on the part of Japan, and he was apprehensive as to what it might lead. His fear that Japan might wish to provoke China to declare war has already been mentioned. To Mr. Stimson, apparently, the boycott was "China's answer to Japan's aggression in Manchuria," though, in a footnote (*The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 111), he pointed out that it had actually originated in June of 1931. Whatever his first apprehensions may have been, Mr. Stimson was clearly convinced at a very early stage of the Shanghai crisis that the Japanese

[1] Nor was the pressure confined to Japan. One of the chief preoccupations of the American Government was to avert a possible declaration of war by China and its probable consequences. See *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 134.

[2] The *News Chronicle*, May 10th, 1932, Geneva Correspondent, report of interview given by Lord Cecil.

[3] "I at once recognised that her real purpose was to break up the Chinese boycott and that the ostensible object of protecting her nationals in Shanghai was but a cloak." (*The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 133.)

Government wished to escape from an embarrassing situation.[1] On January 31st that Government suggested that the British, American and other Governments should offer their good offices to stop the fighting.

When, four days later, Mr. Stimson considered Japanese preparations for further military operations, he was equally convinced that the Japanese Government felt it necessary " to obtain something in the nature of a military success at Shanghai in order to ' save its face,' " and he remained so convinced during the fighting which followed later in February. In the circumstances, Mr. Stimson was not in the least anxious to assist the Japanese Government out of its embarrassments. When fighting stopped on March 3rd, and the Japanese were anxious, as he wrote, to withdraw their troops, Mr. Stimson was less concerned with expediting that withdrawal than with the impending proceedings at the League Assembly.[2] It is interesting to note that throughout his account of the Shanghai affair, Mr. Stimson refrained from any specific references to the important parts played by the British representatives at Shanghai and Geneva in the efforts made to stop the fighting and in the

[1] " The Japanese Government undoubtedly had been startled and taken aback. Its Admiral clearly had made a bad mistake. He had attacked with insufficient forces and received a severe military repulse. He had then affronted the world by methods of terrorism employed on a civilian population." (*The Far Eastern Crisis*, pp. 146-7.)

[2] At this stage, Mr. Stimson instructed his representative to abstain from attending the conferences at Shanghai until further notice. His reasons for this step (see pp. 177-8, *The Far Eastern Crisis*), deserve attention. He wrote that " an Under Secretary of the Foreign Office," according to Press reports, " had indicated," in answer to questions in the British House of Commons, " that it was doubtful whether the British Government would support a resolution as to non-recognition." He was " troubled by these rumors." It seemed to him, therefore, that matters of immediate detail about the withdrawal of the Japanese troops at Shanghai " could wait at least until there was a clearer understanding about the questions of ultimate principle which had now come to the foreground at Geneva." Mr. Stimson informed the British Foreign Minister at Geneva of what he had done, " and the reason." " He replied to my message with a cordial reassurance as to Britain's intentions in the Assembly, and there was thereafter no further trouble." Mr. Eden's answer in the House of Commons on March 2nd was in reply to a question by Colonel Wedgwood about the Stimson-Borah Letter. The questioner asked what action was being taken in regard to the question of non-recognition. Mr. Eden referred to his answers on February 24th, saying that the Government had already made their attitude clear on the question, and reminding his questioner of the League Council's Note of February 16th. To Colonel Wedgwood's supplementary enquiry whether the Government approved of the principles of the Stimson-Borah Letter, Mr. Eden said that his questioner would be on safer ground if he assumed " that we approved of the statement which His Majesty's Government made as a member of the Council." In reply to a further supplementary, Mr. Eden said that no further action was contemplated " at present." That Mr. Stimson should have been troubled by these answers, or by Press reports of them, to the extent of taking the action referred to is a further example of his peculiar methods of dealing with the British Government. But the incident is important chiefly for the evidence it provides of the fact that Mr. Stimson was no longer perturbed about Shanghai.

negotiation of the final agreement of May 5th, although he wrote of the " great skill and patience " displayed by " the local mediators."

3. British Opinion on Shanghai

It is plain that Mr. Stimson would not have endorsed the assertion of Lord Cecil and his associates on February 18th that the Japanese Government had committed itself to a course seemingly aimed at the military domination of the whole of China.[1] The Cecilian view was not, it seems, widely shared. It is true that the *Manchester Guardian* on February 5th held that Japan was not seeking to remedy specific grievances, but to repeat her Manchuria performance in China proper ; and next day thought that the ultimate aim might even be the complete subjection of China.[2] The *Daily Herald* also considered that " Japanese Imperialism has clearly made up its mind to something very like the conquest of China " (January 29th). Moreover, in the early stages, there was some not unnatural uncertainty about Japanese intentions. After the bombardment of Nanking the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that the friends of Japan were asking themselves in growing bewilderment to what end such measures were expected to lead (February 2nd). But, for the most part, it was assumed that Japanese objectives related exclusively to the Chinese boycott and its accompanying acts of violence and destruction ; although doubts were felt and expressed about the ability of the Japanese Government to control the consequences of the Japanese Admiral's operations, and its own armed forces.[3] The circumstances, indeed, make any other hypothesis appear rather far-fetched. It

[1] In a letter to the *Times* on February 27th, Viscount Ishii and five other distinguished Japanese Liberals described this as an " amazing " assertion which " would be laughable if it were not so mischievously dangerous and ill-timed." They added : " Manchuria is an outlying appendage to China : Shanghai is an International Settlement. In both places small Japanese forces were lawfully stationed : in both they lawfully defended their position when aggressively attacked, just as America, for instance, would certainly defend the Panama Canal zone. . . . America, Great Britain and other Powers have in the immediate past found it imperatively necessary to repel the attacks of Chinese militarists, even if to accomplish this they were forced to carry out military operations on Chinese soil. Japan has done no more and has not the remotest intention of entangling herself in that remarkable operation of ' launching on a course of military domination over all Chinese territories.' "

[2] To the *Daily Mail*, apparently, this would have been not at all a bad thing. " So hopeless indeed has the welter of anarchy and civil war in China become that the trade of the world would greatly benefit if Japan were no longer prevented by international jealousy from extending her administration and doing there what she has done in Manchuria, where she has brought order and peace." (February 27th.)

[3] See the *Times* editorials, January 29th and 30th, and the *Daily Telegraph*, January 29th.

was pointed out that the Japanese forces employed were quite inadequate even for such an enterprise as the capture of the Chinese city.[1] Against " those who think that plans of foreign Governments are always deep-laid " and who had begun " to indulge the theory that Japan is embarking on a gigantic Imperialist enterprise," " Scrutator " in the *Sunday Times* on February 21st considered it much more likely that Japan's military and political competence had " for once been seriously at fault." The *New Statesman*, after the crisis had passed, spoke of the Shanghai affair as " if not an accident, an incident " (April 16th).

That the Japanese had had serious provocation at Shanghai was the view held by the bulk of the British Press. The contrast between comments on this matter in this country at the time and Mr. Stimson's attitude towards the Chinese boycott (both as regards its political implications and its nature) is rather striking. In this country the parallel with events in 1927 attracted much notice. That Japan was within her rights in taking forcible action was, as a rule, conceded. It was pointed out that, in March 1927, Sir Austen Chamberlain had asserted the right of the British Government to move troops beyond the limits of the Settlement if the Chinese authorities should prove unable to protect British nationals.[2] It was not at all clear, therefore, that the Japanese were technically unjustified in using the Settlement as a base of operations. The *Times* on January 30th considered the Japanese demands reasonable in themselves :

> Anti-Japanese associations in Shanghai and in many other places were not merely boycotting the products of Japanese industry ; they were deliberately destroying all Japanese goods in China or appropriating them wholesale without any compensation to the owner. The movement was encouraged by a Government which has since ceased to exist, but which, nevertheless, thereby put China in the position of waging an economic war upon Japan.

The reference to the Chinese Government is important. Few things are more notable in Mr. Stimson's book than the absence of any

[1] Sir Frederick Whyte, the *Daily Herald*, February 4th.

[2] His Majesty's Government (Sir Austen had said) consider that they have the right to land troops for the protection of British nationals when no protection can be afforded by the Government of the country concerned, and he added that this right is not dependent upon any treaty provision.

On February 1st, 1932, the Washington Correspondent of the *Times* reported a Press statement by the American Admiral Pratt : " Our Fleet will be ready to evacuate our nationals or to protect them if a crisis arises where mob rule prevails. Our forces will go in and take whatever steps are necessary to protect our people. . . . We cannot draw any line as to who objects. We can say we are very sorry, but that we have to go ahead."

adequate treatment of the political conditions and changes in China. In his account of the Shanghai phase there is virtually nothing on this subject, apart from a footnote about the pressure of the Cantonese leaders upon Chiang Kai-shek to declare war (p. 134). In this country, the *Manchester Guardian* was similarly sparing of news at the time. Only from the *Times*, indeed, could the student of affairs have got any real information about what was happening in this respect. The Government which broke up some days before the Japanese action at Shanghai was one from which Chiang Kai-shek was missing and in which Cantonese influence was strong. On February 27th the *Times* carried a report from its Shanghai Correspondent which stated that no proper Government was functioning in Nanking. Whatever sort of Government existed there, and a little later at Loyang, exercised little authority. It was reported on February 13th to be unfavourable to any policy of active resistance to the Japanese ; and on the 16th was said to be again apparently under the control of Chiang Kai-shek. The *Times* editorial of January 30th had gone on to say that the Mayor of Shanghai (the Chinese city) had no direction or support from the shadow Government in Nanking, and hesitated for two days, through his fear of the Chinese mob, to comply with all the Japanese demands. Much attention was to be drawn to the fact that he then unconditionally complied ; but it was the entry meanwhile of the Cantonese forces into the suburb of Chapei which confronted the Japanese Admiral with a fresh problem, and which, according to the *Times*, led to his decision that the suburb had to be cleared.

That the prevailing disorder in China was the root of the trouble remained the prevalent view in the British Press. None the less, the Japanese resort to force was not approved, save, perhaps, by the *Mail* and the *Express*. Immediately danger threatened, the *Times* (January 23rd) had pointed out that in 1927 other Powers were consulted before British troops were sent to Shanghai and that Japan had the same obligation when contemplating action there.[1] Emphasis was at the same time laid upon the dangers to the International Settlement, and upon the unwisdom of still further weakening the feeble authority of the Chinese Government. This last point was again strongly pressed in the same paper on January 29th ; it was held that the Japanese action might " merely intensify the

[1] The same point was made by the *Morning Post* on the 26th, and by the *Daily Telegraph* on the 29th.

confusion that reigns in the Yangtze valley both at the capital—where Ministers resign almost weekly and an embarrassed Administration holds out with difficulty against demands for a rupture of relations with Japan—and at Hankow, which is threatened by a Communist Army."

But it was the nature of the military action taken which was most strongly objected to. The bombing attack on Chapei, in particular, was severely condemned. The *Times*, on February 1st, dwelt upon its political folly; and, while taking the view that the Japanese Government doubtless had not foreseen that Admiral Shiosawa would take such "violent and perilous measures," pointed out that Japanese statesmen would inevitably be held responsible by the public opinion of the world if they could not curb the ardour of their soldiers and sailors before it caused even worse complications. Next day the *Times* said that the "savage bombing operations" had "very greatly estranged foreign sentiment, which was at first inclined to sympathise with the Japanese Government," and had "exasperated almost uncontrollably the local Chinese troops and population."

On February 3rd this paper again warned the Japanese Government that its naval and military representatives in China were rapidly turning the opinion of the whole world against their country: "The British public, which has fully understood the initial difficulties and provocation of Japan, has an instinctive detestation of force irresponsibly used." This viewpoint was expressed more strongly later in the month. On February 18th the *Times* placed "the immediate responsibility" "squarely on the shoulders of Japan." The use of the Settlement as a starting-point for military operations was described as a grave abuse. Because of "the methods of terrorism" employed by the Japanese Navy, "sympathies which were gained to Japan are now lost to her," and public opinion was being consolidated more and more on the side of China. On the 24th, the fight to "save face" at Shanghai was said to be "against all the decent dictates of humanity" and "against common sense." Whereas previously, the *Times* declared, public opinion had been divided between sympathy with Japanese grievances and dislike of their manner of redressing them, "this dislike has grown into very definite condemnation since the entry into Chapei, the exhibition of terrorism employed there, and the initiation of war for a purpose which has never been clearly defined and is in any case

wholly insufficient to justify these intolerable methods of reaching a settlement."

The *Daily Telegraph* on January 29th was " startled " by Admiral Shiosawa's action ; and on February 1st declared : " There is no friend of Japan who does not feel himself affected by this blow to the reputation of a civilised State." The declared objects of Japanese action were, this paper said, legitimate ; but they did not justify the " stark terrorism " of the methods employed. A " staggering shock " had been administered to the League of Nations and all that it stood for. The *Observer's* condemnation, on January 31st, was equally outspoken. " This will not do." Japan's action in Manchuria to defend her treaty rights had been justified ; but " isolated and arbitrary attack on China proper, where all international interests converge, is another matter." The League, it was said, had blundered grossly on the Manchurian question and had inflamed the Japanese people with a sense of injustice, but China proper was a quite different issue, and Japan had gone too far. Similarly, on the following week : " As a result partly of normal human muddle, partly of the unwise provocation of Japan by Geneva in the matter of Manchuria, the Japanese Government has crossed the line between reason and unreason and placed herself definitely in the wrong."

Whereas to the *Manchester Guardian* what was happening at Shanghai provided plain confirmation of its view about Japanese actions in Manchuria, the *Observer* rejected the suggestion that " Japan's wrong in Shanghai proves Japan's wrong in Manchuria." To the former paper, and to others who shared its attitude, the developments at Shanghai provided an opportunity for the League to re-assert its authority. In the first week or so of the Shanghai crisis it dwelt repeatedly and hopefully on the reactions of the Western Powers. " It is possible that the action which they shirked on a question of principle would be quickly taken if their commerce and investments were seriously and directly threatened " (January 29th). " The League, to give it its due, has not formally abdicated. Indeed, now that the peace of the International Settlement is threatened, not to mention the whole of the trade that passes through Shanghai, it is likely that the League will become quite active, or, if not the League, the Great Powers who are chiefly concerned with Far Eastern trade " (February 1st). " . . . there is reason to suppose that the Powers will prove more resourceful now that their own interests are directly concerned " (February 5th). " It is unhappily

a fact that the Powers became seriously concerned about Japanese aggression in China only when their own interests there were threatened, and a cynic might wonder whether even the attack on Shanghai would have aroused more protest than, say, the attack on Mukden, had it not been for the International Settlement" (February 6th).

The reactions of the *New Statesman* were similar. "We can hardly believe that the complaisance shown by the Foreign Office in the Manchurian affair will be extended to proceedings of this sort, which threaten not merely bits of paper like Covenants and Pacts but the solid material interests of the International Settlement at Shanghai and, indeed, British trade in other parts of China" (January 30th). And this paper attributed what it interpreted as the sudden change of mind on the part of the Powers to the fact that their own interests were threatened. When Garvin said "Japan has gone too far," he meant, it was said, "as far, that is, as British and American interests," and he explained precisely the policy of the Powers.

But it was not long before the *Guardian* and the *New Statesman* realised that the threat to the interests of the Western Powers involved no change in their policy (or policies) towards the Far Eastern crisis. The sending of reinforcements to the International Settlement was obviously a purely defensive action; and it soon became clear that mediation, not coercion, was to be the method of dealing with the situation at Shanghai. Despite the plain evidence that the United States was at one with Great Britain in this respect, the policy of mediation was treated with scornful impatience in the *Guardian* and in those quarters which shared its views. A number of insinuations were made in attempts to account for the policy. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the suggestion that the Powers were seeking to buy off Shanghai at the expense of Manchuria.[1]

In the *Daily Herald*, Mr. W. N. Ewer voiced the suspicion that the Shanghai Powers "would like to use the presence of the Japanese as a lever to extract from China new privileges and new concessions for themselves, as well as for Japan" (March 8th). By the third week

[1] The *Manchester Guardian* began to suggest this as early as February 6th. The Geneva Correspondent of the *Economist* kept it up until the League Assembly Resolution of March 11th. In a message dated March 8th, published on the 12th, he said: "There is a general suspicion that Manchuria is being sold for peace and quiet in Shanghai, and that the so-called impartiality of the Great Powers is an excuse to avoid, as long as possible, if not altogether, a pronouncement against Japan."

in February the *Guardian* was complaining that the British Government had consistently favoured a " policy of inaction." As for " the mediating statesmanship," so warmly approved by the *Observer*, it was that which had been largely responsible for the war's extension. Indeed, on February 23rd the paper considered " the more fundamental question " to be " the betrayal of the Covenant by the Powers that had agreed to honour it." That, possibly, was the *Guardian's* comment (for no direct comment was made) on the Foreign Secretary's speech in the House of Commons the day before, when Sir John Simon explained the mediatory rôle Great Britain was endeavouring to fulfil in regard to Shanghai and, as the *Times* put it, made it clear that he regarded the League as an instrument of conciliation rather than of coercion.

For those who had taken the view that the Japanese action at Shanghai was a further instalment in a " carefully planned attack on China," and had considered a policy of mediation to be wholly inadequate, it was not easy to account for the success of the policy. When the news came of the meeting of Chinese and Japanese representatives on the British flagship on February 28th and the prospects of a truce, the *Guardian* attributed the Japanese attitude to " the unexpected strength of Chinese resistance." But it now drew a distinction between " Japan's carefully planned and carefully executed conquest of Manchuria " and " her ill-planned and ill-executed attack on Shanghai " (March 1st). Four days later, this paper declared that the truce, in so far as it existed, represented " a Chinese surrender to armed force." On March 14th it was extremely sceptical about the prospects of a Japanese withdrawal, but, it declared, " undoubtedly the Japanese are in a more chastened frame of mind than when they lightheartedly proposed to cow the whole of China with a couple of thousand marines." The Japanese, it was suggested, now realised that " conquest of China " was far too difficult and costly an undertaking.

We have already pointed out that suggestions for the imposition of sanctions rapidly petered out after the end of February ; and in many quarters the termination of the fighting at Shanghai was attributed primarily to the pressure of world opinion. That was the immediate reaction of the *Daily Herald*, for example, on March 1st : " Japan has learned a lesson. The League of Nations has shown her that world opinion cannot be defied with impunity." It was, said

the *News Chronicle* on March 23rd, the " steady pressure of world opinion " which had ended the fighting at Shanghai.

The slow progress of the negotiations for a definitive cessation of hostilities provided opportunities for continued criticism of the policy of the British Government. In a speech at the Junior Liberal Club on March 16th, Lloyd George (in what appears to have been his first public pronouncement on the Far Eastern crisis) accused the Government of " hesitation," " feebleness " and " poltroonery."[1] The *Daily Herald* on March 19th began to develop a line which was afterwards to be carried to extreme lengths. It spoke of " the unconcealed sympathy of Sir John Simon and other important delegates " with the " intransigent Imperialism " of the Japanese. But these were only occasional discordant notes.

4. In the House of Commons

When the House of Commons debated the Far Eastern situation (and Disarmament) on March 22nd Shanghai played only a subordinate part in the discussion. The Leader of the Opposition, we have already noted, congratulated the Foreign Secretary warmly about the developments there ; and Mr. Seymour Cocks was also " very pleased." The only other speaker from the Labour benches, Mr. Neil Maclean, hardly alluded to the subject. Comment has already been made on the absence of any demand for coercive measures on this occasion. Although the Foreign Secretary, who spoke early in the debate after Lansbury and Austen Chamberlain, specifically restricted action in the Far East to mediation and conciliation, no subsequent speaker raised any objection to such a policy. Austen Chamberlain had advocated reliance upon the conciliatory procedure provided by the Covenant. To him the sanction of the League was " the moral condemnation of the world." That was also the view expressed subsequently by Sir Rennell Rodd and Mr. Emrys-Evans. Mr. Pickering, from the Liberal benches, delivered a long speech to the effect that Japan had " a very good case indeed," while Mr. Godfrey Locker-Lampson concentrated his attention upon the problems arising from the disorganisation

[1] Lloyd George was sharply answered two days later by Austen Chamberlain (at Birmingham) and Mr. Eden (at Kenilworth). The latter's remarks have a particular interest : " Mr. Lloyd George (he said) would act the rôle of the pugnacious pacifist—characteristically careless of the contradiction in terms. To show his devotion to the Goddess of Peace, he would risk to deluge the steps of her altars with blood."

in China. Mr. Eden was, indeed, completely justified in his assertion at the close of the debate that the Government had received a very wide measure of support.

Nor was any opposition expressed to the Government's Shanghai policy in the Press comments on the debate. The *Guardian* had none to offer, although it did not refrain from criticising Sir John Simon on other points. The *Herald* devoted its remarks to an attack upon the Foreign Secretary for being "blandly optimistic" about Shanghai and "complacency incarnate" about the Far Eastern situation generally—charges for justification of which the Foreign Secretary's speech can be searched vainly. Sir John, it is true, in an allusion to Lloyd George's remarks outside the House, expressed the belief that the Government's policy was more effective than "less practical and I dare say more spectacular methods." But, as the *Telegraph* pointed out, that belief was supported by the facts about the withdrawal of Japanese forces from Shanghai. In the words of the *Times*, "the conciliatory efforts appear to be succeeding."

The policy pursued by the British Government in regard to the Shanghai crisis was in no essential respect different from that pursued in regard to Manchuria. Lord Cecil's 1940 view to the contrary is refuted by the facts. The defence of the International Settlement, though of much importance, was incidental. In the case of Shanghai as in that of Manchuria, the methods employed were those of mediation and conciliation. In the one case, those methods were successful. And it has sometimes been argued that had they been used as skilfully and consistently from the beginning they might have been equally successful in the case of Manchuria.[1] Whatever measure of truth there may be in that contention, however, the primary reason why the policy of mediation and conciliation succeeded in the one case and not in the other was that the Shanghai affair was, for the Japanese, in the words of the *New Statesman*, incidental if not accidental, whereas the achievement of their aims in Manchuria was considered vital.

[1] See, for example, Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis, 1931-32*, p. 225. The author of this book assigns the chief blame for failure in this respect to the American Government; but, characteristically, she fails to attach any significance to the fact that Sir John Simon was not in charge of British policy during the period she considers crucial.

PART THREE

THE THIRD PHASE

(APRIL—SEPTEMBER 1932)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WAITING FOR THE LYTTON REPORT

1. Into the Background

IN the six months from the end of March 1932 until the close of September, the Far Eastern situation received only slight and intermittent attention. For the great mass of the British public, it may confidently be said, the problem receded well into the background, and was almost forgotten. Interest in the situation at Shanghai swiftly declined when fighting there ceased. As for Manchuria, further consideration of the problem by the League of Nations had been deferred until the Commission of Inquiry, under Lord Lytton's chairmanship, had completed its task. In the meantime, other and graver issues had come to dominate the international scene.

Already, throughout the month of March, Germany had been involved in the fierce Presidential election which resulted in the re-election of Hindenburg after a second ballot on April 10th, in which Hitler received nearly thirteen and a half million votes. Later in April came the critical State election in Prussia. The inter-connected problems of disarmament and security, of reparations and inter-Allied debts, of economic crisis and political instability, pushed Far Eastern news, for the most part, out of the front and middle pages of the newspapers and from their editorial columns.

Elections and changes of Governments distracted attention during the summer of 1932 and seriously impeded the handling of the grave issues with which Europe, in particular, was confronted. Before the Presidential election was over in Germany, France was in the throes of a general election. Little progress could be made at the Disarmament Conference, despite Mr. Stimson's visit to Geneva in the second half of April. The French elections (May 1st and 8th) led, after some delay, to the formation of a new Government. But, on May 30th, Dr. Brüning was dismissed and von Papen took his place as Chancellor of Germany. The political crisis in Germany had taken an ominous turn. Its further developments were watched with increasing anxiety.

The long-delayed Conference on Reparations assembled at Lausanne on June 10th, and by the time it had ended (July 9th) Germany was again involved in a bitter election campaign. In the United States the economic crisis worsened, and the always protracted Presidential election campaign was well under way. On June 22nd, during the course of the Lausanne Conference, President Hoover presented disarmament proposals at Geneva which for the time being monopolised the attention of the British "peace movement." In July came von Papen's seizure of power in Prussia. Almost at the same time the Ottawa Conference opened, terminating a month later (August 20th). The agreements concluded there led to acute political controversy and the eventual resignation, on September 28th, of the Free Trade Ministers in the "National" Government, involving the reconstruction of that Government on a narrower basis. Earlier in September the proceedings at the Disarmament Conference reached a critical stage with the formal demand of Germany for equality in armaments and the subsequent German withdrawal from the conference. In mid-September the Reichstag was again dissolved. The long German political crisis was still unresolved.

In these circumstances the whole problem of the Far East appeared in a different and truer perspective. The limitations upon effective action in that part of the world became plainer. And pending the completion and publication of the Report of the Lytton Commission the Far Eastern situation was overshadowed, naturally enough, by issues of greater urgency more closely and directly affecting this country and the European States in general.

2. The End of the Shanghai Affair

The final agreement for the withdrawal of the Japanese forces in the Shanghai area to the International Settlement was concluded on May 5th, and on the last day of the month the withdrawal was completed. In Parliament and Press alike, these events received little attention, but, until they took place, Shanghai remained the chief centre of such interest as was taken in the Far Eastern situation, although tending to be replaced by Manchuria.

At Westminster the Shanghai negotiations were not the subject of debate, and such questions as were put from time to time were mainly requests for information. Indeed, the Far Eastern question

was not debated in either House of Parliament throughout the six-months period, although it must be remembered that Parliament was adjourned on July 13th until October 27th.

In the Press the degree of interest varied considerably, from the regular reports in the *Times* and the fairly frequent comments of the *Manchester Guardian* to the almost complete silence of the *Mail* and the *Express*.

After dealing with the debate of March 22nd, most newspapers had given no further editorial attention to the Far East during the rest of that month. Two dailies, however, carried editorial comment on the Shanghai situation on March 30th. The *Mail* considered that the agreement for the complete cessation of hostilities was " a fresh proof of Japanese forbearance," while the *Guardian* pessimistically maintained that Japan obviously had no intention of abandoning her position at Shanghai until her demands for the suppression of the trade boycott had been conceded, and that, apart from the fact that hostilities had ceased, the situation was unchanged.

Thereafter, the *Mail* printed nothing of any importance about the Far East until September 2nd, and made no editorial reference to the subject throughout this third phase. Most other newspapers at least had leading articles on April 30th, either expressing anxiety or providing reassurance about the bombing outrage at Shanghai, in which the leading Japanese negotiators were injured. The *Express*, however, made no other editorial allusion to Shanghai throughout the period : it had not mentioned the matter since March 1st. The *Times* kept its readers informed of the course of the Shanghai negotiations, but its editorial columns were occupied with other matters until April 30th, when its article on the bombing outrage contained an appreciative reference to Sir Miles Lampson's formula which had resolved the deadlock. On May 6th an editorial welcomed the signature of the long-delayed armistice agreement, and paid tribute to the skilful and indefatigable work of Sir Miles Lampson in Shanghai and of Sir John Simon at Geneva. The *Telegraph*, much concerned with the course of developments in Germany, broke editorial silence on Far Eastern affairs only on April 28th, when it welcomed the acceptance of Sir Miles Lampson's formula and warmly congratulated him. Alarmed by the bombing outrage on the 30th, it commented briefly on May 6th on the happy conclusion of the negotiations. The *Observer* had nothing to say on the subject of Shanghai ; while the only comment of the *Sunday*

Times came on May 1st, when that paper welcomed the indications that, despite the bombing outrage, Japan seemed sincerely anxious to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

The *Manchester Guardian* remained sceptical almost to the end about the prospects of Japanese withdrawal at Shanghai. On April 4th it summed up the position there as one of deadlock. A week or so later (12th) it blamed Japan for what it called the breakdown (" which will surprise no one ") of the Sino-Japanese negotiations. The League Committee of Nineteen (the editorial contended) would find it difficult to avoid a direct condemnation of Japanese tactics, but, " thanks to what has complacently been termed ' mediating statesmanship,' " the Japanese authorities at Shanghai were not likely to be worried about the Committee. On the 19th another editorial asserted that it had been quite obvious from the beginning that the negotiations would break down. Japan, it was said, had pursued the same tactics in Shanghai as in Manchuria, " and small wonder when the Powers, and especially Great Britain, showed themselves so little concerned to uphold the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact." The article suggested that the Committee of Nineteen should either fix a time limit for Japanese withdrawal or insist that neutral observers should decide when conditions were normal in Shanghai. The Japanese contention that their troops must remain outside the International Settlement until in their view conditions were normal was interpreted to mean that they intended their troops to remain until they had extorted whatever concessions they fancied from China under duress. On April 27th the *Guardian* reviewed the general situation in the Far East in an article which had first place in the editorial columns. Important in other ways, this article referred to a possibility that negotiations at Shanghai might be resumed as a consequence of Sir Miles Lampson's persuasion.

When the agreement was reached, the *Guardian* had no editorial comment on this success of " mediating statesmanship," and no word of appreciation for the leading part played in it by the representatives of Great Britain. On April 30th it was anxious lest the agreement then about to be signed might be upset altogether as a consequence of the bombing outrage ; but, though it had much to say about the Far Eastern problem in the following week, its only references to Shanghai were incidental and brief. On May 3rd, for instance, the cessation of fighting in Manchuria and Shanghai alike was attributed to the combatants being unequally matched, and

there was a bare passing allusion to the impending signature of a truce in Shanghai. The actual signature received no editorial attention. But, on May 13th, an editorial was devoted to the Japanese evacuation. The decision to withdraw all troops within a month was described as " belated but still welcome." The *Guardian* thought it possible that difficulties in Manchuria had " tempered the enthusiasm of Japanese militarists for further conquests inside the Great Wall." There was reason to suppose, it said, that some of the troops would be sent to Manchuria. The *Guardian* wrote in bitterly ironical terms of the " plaintive " official comment that Japan felt that in Shanghai she had been fighting the battles of other nations as well as her own and had gained only world-wide odium. This paper now declared that the " aimlessness " of the Shanghai fighting was " particularly obvious."

The other papers of the Left gave relatively little attention to the Shanghai negotiations. Perhaps the chief point of interest in their treatment of the matter was criticism of Sir John Simon during the second half of April on the ground that he was supporting the Japanese.

Apart from a plea on April 30th that the bomb outrage " should not be made the excuse for further bloodshed," the *Daily Herald* had no editorial comment on the Shanghai situation after March 23rd until on May 12th it expressed its views on Japan's intention to withdraw her troops. The news, it then said, would have been cheering if the motives had not been unhappily clear. The Japanese troops were being withdrawn only because they were needed in Manchuria. It was " a new move in a new war."

One passage in this article read as follows :

> There is irony in the fact that after fighting successfully at Geneva (with the aid of Sir John Simon) for the right to stay at Shanghai as long as they chose, they should choose to go at once.

The reference to Sir John Simon must be linked with the reports of the paper's Correspondent at Geneva, Mr. W. N. Ewer, who on four occasions had directly or indirectly attacked the Foreign Secretary in connection with Shanghai. On April 18th, under the heading " Sir John Simon backs Japan's Tactics at Geneva," Mr. Ewer reported that the Foreign Secretary " appeared in the rôle of counsel for Japan," and that Sir Eric Drummond,[1] the Secretary-

[1] Later the Earl of Perth.

General of the League, intervened in the debate in support of Sir John. Without attempting to explain the issues under discussion or to give any precise information about the line taken by the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ewer wrote that " Sir John seems determined to fight to the last ditch for the right of Japan to remain as long as she chooses in the country she has invaded, and to go on violating Article 16 [*sic*] of the Covenant until it pleases her to stop doing so." Similarly, on the 19th, 26th and 27th this Correspondent's dispatches continued to foster the impression that Sir John Simon (described as " pro-Japanese ") was obstructing League action in the interests of Japan. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to add that the *Herald* gave no credit to the Foreign Secretary and his associates for their successful mediation.

The sole comment of the *News Chronicle* on Shanghai after the debate of March 22nd occurred on April 19th. On the previous day Mr. Wilson Harris had recorded, " without being able either to confirm or to contest it," the judgment of four or five persons who had told him that Sir John Simon " constituted himself very largely an exponent of the Japanese case at Shanghai." In the course of the editorial on the 19th, the deterioration in the Manchurian situation was attributed to " the weak and ineffective handling of the Shanghai problem at Geneva." It remained to be explained, the article proceeded, what part Sir John Simon was taking in the confused discussions, but anyone who delayed the " necessary prompt clearing up " of the Shanghai situation was taking a very grave responsibility. For the remainder of April the *News Chronicle* was immersed in the Disarmament Conference. The Far East attracted only brief occasional notice in the news columns. When the Japanese withdrawal at Shanghai took place, the event was barely noted, and received no editorial attention. The *News Chronicle* did not seek to enlighten its readers on the part played by Sir John Simon.

Only the *New Statesman* among the Left weeklies had much to say about Shanghai in April and May. The *Economist* was almost silent, the Glasgow *Forward* entirely so, while the *New Leader* made only one indirect allusion, saying that Sir John Simon had become " the open mouthpiece of Japan." The *New Statesman* not only voiced the unsubstantiated criticism of the Foreign Secretary but also at one point raised again the question of sanctions. On April 9th it declared it to be a calamity that Great Britain was represented by a man like Sir John Simon, who " seizes any occasion to lick the boots

of the Japanese militarists." In a main article on the 16th this weekly asserted that the Far Eastern problem in reality overshadowed every other in the international field. However, its view now was that for Japan, "as everyone knows," it was Manchuria that mattered, Shanghai being only an incident. It was no longer satisfied with the Assembly's Resolution of March 11th. The risks involved "in showing a firm front to aggression" ought to have been taken; and the hope was expressed that the Committee of Nineteen, together with the United States, would "demand the submission of Japan, quite definitely and within a time limit, so far as Shanghai is concerned, and with a clear intimation that sanctions will be applied if the demand is not complied with." On the following week the British representative on the Committee of Nineteen was accused of adopting an "obstructive attitude" and stiffening Japanese resistance. But then came silence until, on May 14th, the *New Statesman* noted that the Japanese had at last made up their mind to leave Shanghai, and declared that the main point was gained, the centre of gravity now shifting back to Manchuria. Far from giving any credit to the British Government, the *New Statesman* described it as the villain of the piece. Had the Government supported the Americans instead of cold-shouldering them, the Japanese would have been out of Shanghai long before, and the Manchurian problem would have been very much nearer settlement.

The criticism of Sir John Simon passed quickly in the circumstances, but it foreshadowed, both in its nature and in the manner of its expression, what was to come. Moreover, the degree of publicity it received was sufficient to bring it to the notice of the House of Commons, where the matter was raised twice. Mr. Mander, on April 27th, asked whether the British delegate to the Assembly was giving support to the resolution of March 11th that the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Shanghai should take place without political conditions. To Mr. Eden's reply that the delegate was, of course, supporting the execution of a resolution in whose adoption he played so prominent a part, Mr. Mander said: "Then the statements in the Press that the Foreign Minister has been supporting the Japanese point of view are entirely untrue?"; to which Mr. Eden answered: "I have no responsibility for statements in the Press." When, on May 4th, Sir John Simon made his statement in the House about the agreement about to be signed, Mr. David Kirkwood, dubiously in order, asked him:

whether there is any truth in the statement that is being made throughout the world that he used his influence for the Japanese against the Chinese in these negotiations—(Interruption). I would like a reply to that question.

Sir John Simon then replied :

If it is not irregular, I am very willing to reply to the hon. Member's question. There is no truth at all in any such statement.

3. Manchuria Again

As the month of April passed, interest moved from Shanghai back to Manchuria. It is perhaps desirable to remind the reader that extraction of material from the columns of the newspapers may well convey the impression that the degree of interest taken was greater than in fact was the case.

Much was happening in Manchuria during these summer months of 1932. But, even in the *Times*, news items about the Far East occupied as a rule a relatively inconspicuous place. In the more popular newspapers, moreover, interest was spasmodic. The editorial columns after the Shanghai agreement provide some guide in the matter.

During the period of nearly five months before the publication of the Lytton Report, the *Times* itself had only two first leaders on the Far East, the first on May 17th, the second not until September 16th. Even the *Manchester Guardian*, during the same period, gave first place to the Far East only on five occasions—on the same two days and on July 16th, August 26th and September 26th—although it carried a considerable number of other leaders, more particularly from the beginning of August onwards. The *Telegraph*, on the other hand, had no editorials at all on the Far East after May, when it had two on the Japanese internal political situation. The *News Chronicle's* only editorials were on May 16th and September 16th ; the *Herald's* on May 18th and August 26th ; those of the *Express* on May 16th and August 11th. The *Mail*, as already noted, had none at all.

4. The Soviet Union

In the middle of April, with renewed fighting in Northern Manchuria, and mutual accusations from Tokyo and Moscow, the danger of a Soviet-Japanese clash attracted a good deal of comment.

The *Guardian*, on April 20th, considered it clear enough that neither country had any stomach for a war, but thought that the actual situation in Manchuria might easily cause them to drift into one. It recurred to the danger, described as a real possibility from the outset, and now " near," on May 3rd. On May 17th, a Correspondent in that paper, while taking the view that Russia would only go to war if Soviet territory were actually invaded, thought that the Japanese militarists might favour a war with Russia to consolidate their position in Manchuria and to " regain the ground she has lost in world public opinion " by representing the war as a fight for law and order against Communism.

The *Express*, on the other hand, while giving front page space to reports on the subject, was editorially confident on April 28th that Russia would not go to war, whatever happened, because of internal troubles. Russia, it declared, " is pegged to peace by her rulers' solicitude for their own skins." Next day, the paper had a report from Tokyo denying the existence of any war tension, and declaring that Japan and Russia were on better terms. The *Express* had printed on February 13th, with its customary front page sensationalism, an " exclusive " revelation of a Russo-Japanese pact, involving the sale to Japan of Russian interests in the Chinese Eastern Railway. This report asserted that Stalin, after bitter conflict in the inner councils of Moscow, had decided that Russia could not face the alternative of war. The rumour was promptly denied by Moscow, but subsequent events were to show that it was not entirely baseless.

That the crisis in the Far East would develop into an attack by Japan upon Russia had been the main preoccupation of extreme Left opinion throughout. The suggestion was often made that it was because of this possibility that the League Council had taken no effective action against Japan.[1] The *New Leader*, apparently not otherwise greatly interested, reverted to the subject of the Far East on April 22nd, urging that the danger was very near, and asking for the interest of British workers " in order to defend Socialist Russia." A few days previously the I.L.P. had issued a call to workers to refuse to make or transport munitions and war material for Japan. A week later, this periodical had more on the same theme, suggesting

[1] Mr. Pat Sloan (afterwards well known as a Communist writer), in an article in the *New Leader*, on March 11th, wrote : " It must be clear, after a little thought, that the only reason why the Council of the League has done nothing practical to restrain Japan must be, ultimately, because the Capitalist world did not wish to take action."

that the Powers might have hopes that a Japanese attack on Russia would bring the Soviets down. The I.L.P. organisation was instructed to set up " Hands Off Russia " committees. Mr. H. N. Brailsford wrote on May 27th, " On the Eve of War," that the Japanese were being prepared for the inevitable conflict with Russia. He refrained " from pity and shame " from mentioning the League, but considered it a hopeful sign that the Socialist International had discussed the possibility of direct action.

The Executive of the Labour and Socialist International, which had met in Zürich on May 19th-20th, passed a long resolution on the Far Eastern crisis. The resolution denounced the " complaisance and complicity of certain Great Powers " and their failure to apply the sanctions of the Covenant against Japan ; but it did so wholly on the basis of an assumption that the Soviet Union was threatened with war by Japan. Demanding the immediate and unconditional evacuation of Shanghai and Manchuria by the Japanese forces, and, in the event of a refusal, withdrawal of all diplomatic representatives from Japan, and the application of economic and financial sanctions, the resolution declared that if Soviet Russia continued to be threatened by Japanese military preparations the L.S.I. would appeal to the International Federation of Trade Unions for joint action in opposing the production, embarkation and transport of all munitions of war, and the despatch of any war material and goods for Japan, and in carrying out a boycott of all ships coming from, and going to, Japan.

Writing in the *New Leader* on May 27th, Mr. Fenner Brockway said that the International Socialist Movement had no doubt about the imminent danger of war ; and, on June 3rd, the paper had a special " Hands Off Russia " issue. Afterwards came silence. Readers of the *New Leader* were not bothered with the Far East again until, on September 2nd, it was explained editorially that the immediate danger of war in the Far East was less because the seasonal conditions for an offensive were bad.

The *Daily Herald* had commented editorially on April 19th on Soviet-Japanese relations, urging that Japan ought to be told, " in the plainest of plain language," to take her troops out of Manchuria ; but it did not pursue the topic, gave no publicity to the resolution of the Labour and Socialist International, and lent no support to the I.L.P. campaign. Nor did the Glasgow *Forward*, which, indeed, almost entirely ignored the Far East during the rest of the year 1932.

One of its few references came on May 28th when " A Diplomatic Correspondent " wrote on the possibility of Polish intervention in the event of war between Russia and Japan, and a speech by the Reverend Herbert Dunnico was reported in which war between Russia and Japan was said to be almost certain before the year was out unless the common people of Great Britain and America took prompt action. On June 11th, Mr. Emrys Hughes noted in this paper that Mr. Ernest Bevin had declared that he would not advise the dockers and transport workers of his union to refuse to load ships that were carrying munitions to the Far East.

5. The Trades Union Congress

An echo of this Left Wing agitation came some three months later at the Trades Union Congress (September 5th-9th) at Newcastle-on-Tyne. The proceedings at the Congress provide striking evidence of the relative lack of interest taken by the British Labour movement in the Far Eastern crisis. In his presidential address, John Bromley made only an incidental reference to the subject, when he illustrated " the grim mockery of talking about disarmament " by " the cynical action of the armament firms in enabling war to be carried on in China and South America in defiance of the League of Nations." In the section on International Relations in the General Council's report, no allusion was made to the Far East ; but the text of the statement of the National Joint Council of February 22nd, 1932, was given in another place without comment. Arthur Henderson addressed the Congress, nominally on reparations and war debts, but actually largely on the Disarmament Conference : he also made only a passing reference to " the prolonged and tragic situation " in the Far East. No resolution was sponsored or supported by the General Council on the subject.

The main discussion on international affairs at the Congress took place on a resolution, supported by the General Council, on Disarmament. The Far East was mentioned only once in the long debate—by a delegate of the Miners' Federation who considered " League of Bandits " an apt description of the League of Nations.

A second resolution was on the " War Danger "—the danger being that of " a joint attack by the leading capitalist countries on the Soviet Union." It called for opposition to the war which was being waged by Imperialist Japan against China and Manchuria

(a war said to be supported by the British National Government and to be the beginning of another world war) ; urged the workers " to smash the war plans of world imperialists " by (*inter alia*) demanding " the immediate withdrawal of the naval and military forces of Britain from China " ; and asked the General Council to take measures through the International Federation of Trade Unions " for the immediate prevention of the manufacture and transport of all war materials to Japan or China in order that war on the Chinese people and the danger of war on Soviet Russia may be effectively stopped."

The debate on this resolution appears to have been somewhat confused. Probably the sponsors and their opponents were at cross-purposes. The mover declared that the " definite and clear objective " was " the stoppage of production and transport of munitions." The opponents of the resolution, Will Thorne, Mr. Ernest Bevin and Mr. Walter (now Lord) Citrine, treated this proposal as one presented as a method of stopping any war. Such references as they made to the Far East were incidental and illustrative. One or two of those who spoke in favour of the resolution may also have interpreted it in the same way, but it was plainly inspired by those who, though concerned about the Far East, were only so concerned because the trouble there might lead to a war against the Soviet Union.

The mover complained that Henderson had not mentioned the Soviet proposals for total disarmament ; criticised the statement of the National Joint Council because it made proposals to " the very people that are plotting and supporting this war—the ' National ' Government and the League of Nations " ; and objected to any appeal being made " to the international gang of imperialist exploiters of the workers at the League of Nations."

Will Thorne contended that the previous resolution on disarmament had covered the whole situation " from A to Z," and declared the proposal quite impracticable, involving another General Strike. Mr. Ernest Bevin argued against singling out particular countries in connection with stopping war. He said that during the twelve months of the Sino-Japanese trouble he had had hundreds of resolutions asking the executive of his union to call on the dockers to stop the shipment of munitions, and the curious thing was that they came from branches of unions that were busy making munitions. Mr. Bevin proceeded, from this angle, to demonstrate that the

proposal was impracticable. One supporter of the resolution stressed the reality of the war danger and the hopelessness of the League of Nations; and another, a delegate of the Miners' Federation, replied to Mr. Bevin by asking "Why not ship munitions to Russia?" and declaring, "Arm the workers." Mr. Citrine, then the general secretary of the T.U.C., confined his remarks to an insistence that the resolution asked the Congress "to declare definitely and permanently against the manufacture of munitions and the transport of munitions as a whole," and gave a strong hint that the previous question should be moved. The hint was immediately acted upon, the previous question carried, and any further discussion thus prevented.

6. On the Left

During the greater part of the summer of 1932, as we have noted, discussion of the Manchurian problem in the newspapers of the Left was almost confined to the *Manchester Guardian*. This paper's attitude was not altogether consistent. It continued to condemn the Great Powers for not having applied the Covenant, and even for having encouraged Japan. But, on more than one occasion, it argued that the machinery of the League had broken down completely because of the nature of Japanese action. It seemed to imply that the only way of dealing with the problem effectively was by using armed force against Japan, but made no definite proposals of any kind and sometimes appeared to hold the view that nothing could be done.

On April 27th the Great Powers were said by this paper to have opposed the operation of the Covenant without openly repudiating it, "bringing the League thereby into contempt and playing into the hands of the Japanese militarists." The Covenant had been "made a laughing-stock by reason not of its faulty design but of the manœuvres of statesmen determined to go to any length rather than handle it seriously." Such feeble attempts as had been made to apply the Covenant were said to have been due to the efforts of the representatives of the small Powers. On this occasion, the *Guardian* conveyed the impression that it was at a loss to explain the attitude of the Great Powers:

> Can there be anyone at the Foreign Office who belatedly believes that by encouraging Japan to found an empire at China's expense we shall be provided with a bulwark against Russian Communism? Or is

the whole system of pooled security created by a war-weary Europe being jeopardised in order that French armament firms may do a roaring trade? Or because Great Britain is afraid that Japan would declare war on the world and win? Or because nobody knows what America will do?

On May 17th Japan was said to have been encouraged to make the League an object of cynical ridicule.[1]

But, in two remarkable editorials, the first on May 3rd and the second on July 16th, the *Guardian* placed the stress elsewhere. On both occasions it expressed a gloomy view of the situation.

In the May article it was said that the seeds of another great war were being planted in the Far East, and the failure of the League was declared to be the worst thing that had happened since 1918. From the first moment when the Japanese troops moved in Manchuria, wars between Japan and Russia and between Japan and the United States became real possibilities, " even if one of them is near and the other more remote."

It was then that the League could have acted with effect. But the statesmen on the League Council were too cautious to be sensible, and, terrified that the countries they represented might be involved in making a small protest in defence of the Covenant, they let the Covenant go by default and revealed to the whole world the emptiness of their protestations and agreements.

That, of course, was a familiar contention, but the *Guardian* then went on to insist that it was not exaggerating a relatively unimportant international incident. It stressed the mood of Japan. Everything suggested that Japan was possessed by a passion for imperial expansion, and this was " the very stuff of war, the prime cause of war."

Little international disagreements can be peaceably adjusted, but the swarming of a virile people means sooner or later a bloody conflict unless, in its very early stages, the whole of the rest of the world opposes it. Even then the issue is not certain. But there is a hope.

In the July article it was pointed out that Japan was quietly consolidating her position in Manchuria. When the trouble first began in the previous autumn, it would have been practicable, in the *Guardian's* view, for the League to have insisted on a Japanese withdrawal to the railway zone, but it was now doubtful whether

[1] On the next day, the *Herald* wrote of " feebleness or overt encouragement." It got in another characteristic gibe at Sir John Simon : " Her (Japan's) Manchurian adventure is contemplated with serene complacency by the present Foreign Secretary, who regards the virtual annexation of large territories from a member State of the League of Nations as an interesting and rather commendable historic development."

much could be done. The League had failed completely. There was only the formulation of the doctrine of non-recognition, and it remained to be seen how far that would upset Manchukuo. The *Guardian* then developed the main theme of the May editorial. The Manchurian problem, it declared, was " beyond reasonable statesmen," because it concerned " those passions and mass emotions out of which great Empires are built and through which the world has from time to time been laid waste." Japan wanted to expand. Where was she to expand but in China? To say " Let her have China " would be at least an honest, if a shameful, attitude. But that would not be the end. Established nations like Great Britain, it was said, could not understand the wild dreams of a people struggling for " a place in the sun," could not understand Japan's passion for conquest.

> In face of this passion all the machinery for preserving peace devised by a war-weary Europe broke down. Indeed, it was not even applied as it might have been. By failing to deal with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria the League showed that it could not deal with the most dangerous cause of war. It showed that we were as helpless as ever when a virile people began to swarm. Now Japan has Manchuria and will not give it up.

The *Guardian's* argument is strongly reminiscent of that presented in the Memorandum rejecting the Geneva Protocol read to the League Council by Sir Austen Chamberlain in March 1925, in which it had been contended that the League was not strong enough to guarantee its members against wars " deliberately undertaken for purposes of conquest or revenge " and that fear of such " extreme cases " could not be removed by even the most perfect machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The two articles also present an interesting contrast to Garvin's article in the *Observer* on February 21st, 1932. Garvin had then contended that no paper-bonds could restrain a people who felt that their " right to live " was at stake. That, he said, was the truth, like it or not. The *Guardian* (although admitting in its May article that China was disorganised and " not, properly speaking, a nation ") still failed to recognise the weight of the case for the action taken by the Japanese in Manchuria. That action was attributed to a crude, elemental expansionism, a " swarming tendency," the " lust for power," exaggerated by racial hate. In the *Guardian's* view, it could be dealt with, if at all, only by the concerted and immediate opposition of the rest of the

world. The nature of the " opposition " required was not defined. In the May article the *Guardian* wanted " some attempt " to be made to prevent Japanese expansion " in its present violent form " and " then to provide for it without hate and war." In the July article it apparently considered the situation hopeless. Garvin, on the other hand, had contended that for many years no attempt had been made to provide for the satisfaction of Japan's grievances and needs. " Neglect " had led to " Nemesis," and pedantic obstruction had only made matters worse. The *Guardian*, it may be noted, took no account of the Japanese reactions to the refusal of the League Council in the early months to consider the substance of the dispute. In the actual situation, Garvin rejected " opposition " in the form of coercive action. A " large practical readjustment " of Sino-Japanese relations was indispensable, and " whoever likes it or not," direct negotiation between the two parties would have to be the main means of settlement. China, he had insisted, should not be encouraged to refuse it.

7. On the Right

In these months Press opinion on the Right was represented as exclusively by the *Times* as that on the Left was by the *Guardian*. Apart from its constant flow of news items—and in this period again it was alone in providing adequate information about internal political developments in China—the *Times* gave editorial attention chiefly to the political crisis in Japan following upon the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mr. Inukai, on May 15th, and to developments in Manchuria.

Commenting, on May 17th, on an article by its Tokyo Correspondent to the effect that Japanese colonisation and supervision of the administration were being deliberately planned by the Japanese Army in Manchuria, the *Times* thought it probably erroneous to suppose that the scheme was a deliberate attempt to annex Manchuria. The Japanese claim—a reasonable one—was that they should be able to develop the natural resources of Manchuria without molestation or constant " official " interference and obstruction. The *Times* hoped that the Lytton Commission would be able to suggest an arrangement satisfactory to both countries. It dwelt on Japanese difficulties in Manchuria, to which it attributed largely the withdrawal of the Japanese Army from

Shanghai. In an interesting editorial on May 27th, on the formation of Admiral Saito's " National " Cabinet, the hope was expressed that nothing would be said or done in Geneva or in Washington that might excite the indignation of the extreme Nationalists, " who are still in a dangerous mood."

The *Times* showed increasing anxiety about Manchurian developments when it discussed the question of the Chinese customs on June 9th. The independence of Manchukuo, it declared, was obviously a diplomatic fiction : in fact, the new State was now a Japanese Protectorate, and " in some quarters the proposal to appoint a Japanese Inspector-General of Customs is bound to arouse the suspicion that it masks a design to obtain preferential treatment for Japanese trade and to close a potentially important market to imports competing with Japanese manufactured goods." The *Times* thought it possible that the proposal was supported by the Japanese military authorities in Manchuria rather than by the Japanese Government, adding that " the equivocal location of the sovereign power in Japan has been as disturbing a factor in the Manchurian question as the lack of complete sovereignty in China." The question of the customs was treated as a regrettable new complication in the general discussion which would have to follow the publication of the Lytton Report.

The attitude of the *Manchester Guardian* on the subject, as expressed on June 10th, did not differ greatly. Manchukuo was described as a puppet State, a mere branch of the Japanese Administration. " The State of Manchukuo has the same degree of independent volition as the rabbit which is swallowed by a snake." The time was coming, said the *Guardian,* when the League of Nations would have to pronounce on what was happening in Manchuria. In this connection the non-recognition declaration in the Assembly Resolution of March 11th was quoted, and the Assembly, it was said, could not surrender or go back on itself. On June 23rd, however, in a leader on the seizure of the Dairen Customs, the *Guardian* declared that Japan's clear intention was to annex Manchuria, the creation of the " independent " State being an obvious trick to facilitate the process.

The *Times* made no further editorial comment until July 21st, by which time its anxiety had grown. Although the Japanese were still involved in military operations in Manchuria, the Tokyo Government was still determined that Manchuria should be separated from China. When the Lytton Commission's report was

presented, the League would be faced with a most serious and formidable problem.

> The Japanese have every interest and indeed every right to expect that Manchuria shall be properly governed and that they shall have their full share in developing its economic resources. But the Manchurians have an even greater interest and a greater right to be fairly consulted as to the manner of their government.

8. Mr. Stimson Again

The visit of the American Secretary of State to Geneva in the second half of April 1932 (he was there from April 15th until May 2nd), had naturally been the object of much attention, but almost exclusively in connection with the Disarmament Conference. Only an occasional reference to the Far East appeared in the Press.

On April 4th, indeed, the Washington Correspondent of the *Times* had said that Mr. Stimson's trip had nothing to do with the Far Eastern crisis—a curious view to come from such a source. On the 8th, the same Correspondent wrote that Mr. Stimson had denied a report that he was intending to visit London in order to discuss the situation in China and Manchuria. He went on to say, however, that the Secretary of State would be involved primarily in consultations on the political background of the Disarmament Conference—" and, in particular, on the attitude of the Great Powers to what Senator Capper yesterday described as the ' Stimson doctrine.' " The Correspondent added :

> In a certain sense Mr. Stimson will be seeking co-operation, though he can hardly promise it in full measure while the legislative, as distinct from the executive, branch of the Government is in its present mood. The recent vote of the House of Representatives in favour of what amounts to a precipitate retreat from the Philippine Islands is a case in point.

Obviously enough, the Far Eastern crisis formed an important part, particularly in American minds, of the political background of the Disarmament Conference ; and the " Stimson doctrine," though it had much wider implications, had none the less been formulated in relation to the Far East.

The Geneva Correspondent of the same newspaper discussed American policy on April 18th. He referred to the question of how to reconcile the actual state of affairs in Manchuria with the

non-recognition doctrine, and said that "the still larger question" of "obtaining some sort of assurance of practical American disapproval of an aggressor" could not be avoided, if only in unofficial discussion. But, he added,

> so small is the hope that any pledge of assistance for an invaded State will in the present conditions be obtainable from the United States that in the lobbies of the Conference the idea is being mooted whether it might not be wise to drop the sanctions clause out of the Covenant of the League altogether. It is argued that its suppression is probably the only way to bring about an approximation of American and European views in the matter of unprovoked aggression; and that the deletion of Article 16 from the Covenant would by no means preclude the taking of specific measures of a penalising nature on the merits of each case as it arose. On the contrary, such measures might be more easily agreed upon and more appropriate to the offence than penalties automatically due but in fact never hitherto applied.

The *Telegraph's* Diplomatic Correspondent asserted on April 27th that Mr. Stimson was striving to secure from the League a full endorsement of the so-called Stimson doctrine, which would "deny to Japan any recognition of her special rights and interests in Manchuria." And, on May 4th, the same paper carried a report from Geneva that, according to League officials, the most important result of Mr. Stimson's visit was "a firmer and more comprehensive understanding between Britain and the United States on Far Eastern problems." There was little else on the subject in the British Press.

In his 1936 book (pp. 199-202), Mr. Stimson made it plain that the Far Eastern crisis had occupied much of his time during his stay in Geneva. His remarks on the conversations are of interest. The small Powers, he wrote, "had a much livelier sense of the importance of vindicating the general principles for which the League was striving than their larger colleagues. . . . They were the chief beneficiaries of the principles and were less open to the hazards and difficulties." Though even the small Powers were impressed by the obstacles, they had a "firm grasp of the ethical significance of the controversy" and "had no thought of flinching from pressing it through to a logical conclusion." What conclusion would be logical Mr. Stimson did not explain.

The small Powers, said Mr. Stimson, were very frankly critical of the absence of "vigorous leadership." And on this point "the

criticism of the Press correspondents at Geneva was open and almost universal." This, incidentally, is only one of several comments which suggest that Mr. Stimson attached undue weight to the views of the journalists at Geneva throughout the Far Eastern crisis. He had, he wrote, repeated talks " of the most frank and informal nature " with the representatives of the Great Powers. " Earnest anxiety for complete co-operation in the future conduct of the matter was expressed by all." Of particular interest is Mr. Stimson's statement that, " In order to minimise the possibility of misunderstandings, we held one conference at which not only Mr. MacDonald, Sir John Simon and I were present but at which we had with us on each side career representatives of the respective departments and at which it was attempted to cover all future matters of policy concerning which any such misunderstanding could be anticipated."

In *On Active Service*, the authors say that, although Mr. Stimson's mission was nominally concerned with disarmament, his principal interest was the treatment of the Far Eastern crisis. What he learned during his conversations was " not encouraging." Mr. Stimson is said to have regarded non-recognition less as a sufficient step than as a necessary first step, but in President Hoover's opinion it was not a minimum but a maximum measure. In Europe, Mr. Stimson found that it was the President's view that was widely accepted among the diplomats of the major European Powers. " His own attitude was echoed only among representatives of the smaller nations."

Unfortunately, we have no fuller information about the conference Mr. Stimson had with the British representatives.[1]

What is plain, anyhow, is that in his conversations Mr. Stimson, whatever his personal views may have been, was in no position to go beyond the policy of non-recognition and " moral condemnation." In his 1936 book he referred with feeling to the fact that just as he was embarking for Europe the House of Representatives had passed by an enormous majority, against the President's recommendation,

[1] In *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Second Series, volume III, p. 517, there are some interesting sentences in the record of a meeting on April 23rd, 1932, between representatives of the United Kingdom and of the United States. The discussion was on the French scheme for security. The passage is as follows :

" It was generally agreed among those present that the French scheme was quite unworkable. Mr. MacDonald emphasised that the British view was not in the direction of creating an international force, but of strengthening the expression and influence of international opinion. Recent experience in the Far East showed that the application of Article 16 in practice might only be a step towards war. Mr. Stimson declared that it was the American view that the attempt to put pressure on Japan by economic blockade would be a warlike act and added that this was Mr. Hoover's attitude."

the bill providing for speedy and complete independence of the Philippine Islands :

> The effect which such an abandonment of protection of our Filipino wards, as well as of American responsibility in general in the Far East, would inevitably have upon our prestige with Far Eastern countries can be imagined.

For the next three months the Press in this country had little to say about American policy in the Far East. Mr. Wickham Steed, however, alluded to it in an article from Geneva published in the *Sunday Times* on May 29th. The truth was, he said, that uncertainty in regard to American policy dominated the whole background of the Disarmament Conference—an uncertainty increased by the fact that " until the American Presidential campaign is over there is no knowing what the United States can or will do." But, Mr. Wickham Steed declared, the people and Government of the United States had never before stood so near to the League—as a consequence of the Far Eastern crisis. According to him, when the Japanese began their invasion of Manchuria Mr. Stimson had promptly assured the League Council that the United States would back it up in any measures it might take to put an end to the conflict, but " the assurance was not altogether welcome," for neither France nor Great Britain " really wanted to do anything." Mr. Steed was under a misapprehension about the nature of Mr. Stimson's message to the League at the outset of the crisis. In his opinion, the question was whether or not, when the Lytton Report was received, the League was going to stand firmly on the Assembly Resolution of March 11th about non-recognition. If so, the Disarmament Conference might succeed.

9. Mr. Stimson and the Kellogg Pact

On August 8th, 1932, Mr. Stimson addressed the Council of Foreign Relations on the subject of the Pact of Paris. According to *On Active Service* (p. 98) this speech was " a further step in the development of his campaign for moral pressure," but, although mainly devoted to a study of the Pact as it had been applied to the Far East, " it contained a paragraph which was designed to give to the leaders of France some part at least of what they had been asking for " (p. 113). In the 1936 book Mr. Stimson's comments on the speech were confined to the wider question of American policy

in regard to "collective action in support of peace." President Hoover, in 1931, had rejected Laval's request for a consultative pact. In June of 1932, largely as a result of Mr. Stimson's efforts, both the Republican and Democratic parties had included planks in their election platforms endorsing the principle of consultation.[1]

The main points in the speech of August 8th were: (1) that the Pact of Paris marked a new era in international relations by making war "illegal," completely altering the old concept of neutrality, and involving the right and duty of expressing moral condemnation.

> Hereafter, when two nations engage in armed conflict either one or both of them must be wrongdoers—violators of this general treaty law. We no longer draw a circle about them and treat them with the punctilios of the duellist's code. Instead we denounce them as law-breakers.

(2) that such moral condemnation could be made the most effective means of maintaining peace.

> The Kellogg-Briand Pact provides for no sanctions of force. . . . Instead it rests upon the sanction of public opinion, which can be made one of the most potent sanctions of the world. . . . Public opinion is the sanction which lies behind all international intercourse in time of peace. Its efficacy depends upon the will of the people of the world to make it effective. If they desire to make it effective, it will be irresistible. Those critics who scoff at it have not accurately appraised the evolution in world opinion since the Great War.

In support of this view, Mr. Stimson dealt at length with the application of the Pact in the Far East, referring to his Non-Recognition Note of January 7th, and to its endorsement by the League of Nations "at a meeting in which fifty nations were represented." (3) that, in the event of any threat of its violation, the Pact of Paris made consultation between the signatories inevitable for the purpose of effectively applying moral pressure.

> Another consequence which follows this development of the Briand-Kellogg Treaty . . . is that consultation between the signatories of the Pact when faced with the threat of its violation becomes inevitable. Any effective invocation of the power of world opinion postulates discussion and consultation. As long as the signatories of the Pact support the policy which the American Government has endeavoured to establish during the past three years of arousing a united and living spirit of public opinion as a sanction of the Pact . . . consultations will take place as an incident to the unification of that opinion. The course which was followed in the

[1] See Note, p. 204, *The Far Eastern Crisis.*

Sino-Japanese controversy last winter shows how naturally and inevitably consultation was resorted to in this effort to mobilise the public opinion of the world.

This was the paragraph designed to give to the French " some part " of what they had been asking for.

As the authors of *On Active Service* point out (p. 113) the assurance given was " strictly limited to consultation for the exercise of moral suasion by involving ' the power of world opinion.' " The speech itself, in their words (p. 99), said " pitiably little."

The *Times* carried a long report of the speech. Its Washington Correspondent wrote on August 9th that Mr. Stimson had spoken at that time " with the deliberate purpose of giving advance support to the League of Nations and the smaller nations thereof " in the crisis which would confront the League on the presentation of the Lytton Report. He said that Mr. Stimson had always " felt that the smaller nations were the backbone of the League's pacific policies," and that his object was to assure them " that the United States was wedded to the policy of consultation for the preservation of the Kellogg Pact and world peace," and to remove any fear that it would act independently and even use its fleet to break a League boycott against an aggressor nation.

The editorial that day was concerned almost exclusively with the wider implications of the speech and more particularly with its likely effect upon the prospects of the Disarmament Conference. Mr. Stimson's main point was said to be that the Kellogg Pact " necessarily carries with it the implication of consultation," and the *Times* warmly defended this approach to the problem of security as against the giving " of the sort of guarantee contemplated by some European statesmen." The American view was said to be exactly the same as that taken in this country and, even more strongly, in all the British Dominions :

> It is a view based partly upon a rooted objection to undertake any binding obligation to be discharged in circumstances which cannot be foreseen. But it owes its main strength to the instinctive conviction that the maintenance of peace and justice in the world depends in the last resort not upon paper documents but upon public opinion and the conscience of mankind.

Only at the end of the article was a reference made to the Far East. Mr. Stimson's speech was said to be described in Washington as a most important official pronouncement, and considered there " to

have special reference to the situation which may arise when the Lytton Commission presents its report on Manchuria." That situation, said the *Times*, might or might not have been in Mr. Stimson's mind, but the policy he had enunciated had a value and importance for the whole future of international relationships quite independent of its bearing on any specific problem.

On the next day, the Paris Correspondent of the *Times* made it clear that the general view in France was that Mr. Stimson's assurance was far from adequate. In a letter which appeared on August 11th, Mr. Wickham Steed warmly approved both the speech and the *Times* editorial from the standpoint of disarmament, making no direct allusion to the Far East. He endeavoured, however, to read more into the speech than was justified by Mr. Stimson's words when he raised the question, " which lies at the root of the whole disarmament problem," of the lawful function of armaments :

> It does not follow that armaments would need to be used against any law-breaker. The knowledge that they might thus be used would probably suffice to impede future recourse to war as an instrument of national policy, for they would be in reserve as means of upholding the economic, legal and financial ostracism of the lawless.

Mr. Steed, it is true, was not confident that Mr. Stimson's pronouncement really foreshadowed the course of American policy ; but there was no word in the pronouncement itself about the possible use of armaments against the law-breaker.

On August 12th, apparently alone in the British Press, the *Times* published a report of President Hoover's speech in accepting the Republican nomination. While stating that they would consult with other nations in times of emergency, the President declared that they would enter no agreements committing them to any future course of action or which called for the use of force to preserve peace.

Neither the *Telegraph* nor the *Mail* referred to Mr. Stimson's address. The Washington Correspondent of the *Express* did so on August 10th, saying that one of Mr. Stimson's motives was his desire " to encourage the anti-Japanese group in the League of Nations to take a strong line " when the Lytton Report was presented. The Correspondent was " able to reveal " that the Report " declared Japan guilty." Next day the *Express*, in an editorial headed " The Plague of Nations," presented the League's dilemma in these terms :

What can the League do now? (1) It can expel Japan from its membership and apply pressure against her. This policy of aggression would break up the League. (2) It can wait for other factors to bring Japan round to the Geneva point of view. This policy of impotence would finally slow up the League.

Nemesis has overtaken Geneva. Striving at all costs to be important as the arbiter of nations, it has at last become important only as the cause and the venue of the next big break in international relations.

The *Manchester Guardian* had printed on May 3rd an article from "A Correspondent" giving particulars of two resolutions, one introduced in the House of Representatives by Mr. Morton D. Hull, and the other in the Senate by Senator Capper. The first would have empowered the President to prohibit, subject to Congress, the granting of any loan to a State violating or threatening to violate the Pact of Paris: the second, reaffirming the principle of non-recognition, would have given the President a similar authorisation to prohibit the export of munitions of war. No information about the progress of these resolutions had subsequently, it seems, been given. On August 9th the *Guardian* dealt editorially with Mr. Stimson's address. Its main point was that America and the League Powers were committed not to recognise the existing situation in Manchuria; and, while non-recognition might not seem in itself any great matter and might not interfere appreciably with the working out of Japan's "positive" policy in Manchuria, it did represent a change in world opinion.

The *Guardian* returned to the subject editorially on August 15th. It then said that the non-recognition doctrine formed a more serious obstacle to the working out of Japan's Manchurian policy than anything so far achieved by the League.

The best that can be said for the League is that it has endorsed the "Stimson doctrine"; the best that can be hoped for from it is that its members will one and all refuse to recognise territorial changes in China brought about by means not compatible with the Kellogg Pact and the Covenant.

If the Lytton Commission were to report that Japan had broken the Covenant, it was difficult to see what the League could do except apply the "Stimson doctrine." Measures such as withdrawing Ambassadors were "now out of the question," and Japan had shown that "of all nations, she is the least susceptible to moral pressure." The *Guardian* was not sure what the result of non-recognition

would be, but it seemed to derive some slight comfort from Japan's apparent dislike of it. It will be noted that in this article the *Guardian* plainly ruled out any kind of coercive action.

The *Daily Herald*, for the time being, made no comment on Mr. Stimson's address, which was also ignored in the rest of the Labour Press. In the *News Chronicle* its Geneva Correspondent wrote on August 10th of Mr. Stimson's reiteration of the non-recognition doctrine and of speculation at Geneva " as to whether Britain will line up with America when Japan, as is anticipated, declines to accept the conclusions of the Lytton Commission." What the " line " was, other than non-recognition, was not stated. Next day, " A. V." looked more closely at Mr. Stimson's speech. Washington, he said, was " clearly ready to march in step with, or even to give a lead to, Geneva " in the prevention of warlike aggression ; but there was another side, viz., Mr. Stimson's advocacy of " effective public opinion " in place of specific " sanctions " Mr. Stimson, however, had been careful " not to exclude the possibility of ' action ' to make world opinion effective."

10. On the Eve of the Report

In the month of August 1932, the Lytton Commission was engaged in drafting its report, which was signed at Peking on September 4th, but was not to be published until its presentation to the League Council on October 1st. Forecasts of the report appeared occasionally in the Press ; sometimes, as in the case of the *Express* already mentioned, and in that of the *Herald* on September 5th, put crudely in the form " Japan found Guilty."

In the meantime reports from Tokyo made it plain that Japanese recognition of the State of Manchukuo was under consideration. There had been hints to that effect from time to time during the earlier summer months, and hints also of Japanese withdrawal from the League. Recognition appeared imminent in the middle of August, and no surprise was shown when Count Uchida, the Japanese Foreign Minister, in a speech to the Diet on the 25th, removed any lingering doubts. Uchida declared that recognition was the sole effective means of solving the Manchurian problem. He also said that Japan could never consent to " a plan which was being considered in certain quarters " to seek a solution " by patching up matters for the moment by investing China proper, in one form or

another, with authority over Manchuria." This, as the *Guardian* suggested, appeared to be an allusion to the Lytton Commission.

The full text of Uchida's address was given in the *Times*, but that paper made no editorial comment. Indeed, only the *Guardian* and the *Herald*, among the chief dailies, had editorials on the subject. The former declared that the speech implied a deliberate intention to ignore the recommendations of the Lytton Commission, whatever they might be : the latter described it as " a deliberate defiance of the moral sense of the whole of the rest of the world." Both papers discussed what was to be done. The *Herald* took a high line, but briefly, and in vague, ambiguous terms. There was no question, it said, about the attitude of the peoples :

> Japan must understand that she cannot hope to exist in isolation from the rest of the world. She is already threatening to withdraw from the League of Nations. The League must put all hesitation behind it and inform her that such a blatant flouting of the world's conscience cannot, and will not, be tolerated. And if Japan remains set in her present temper, there are ways and means, other than the utilisation of armed force, of persuading her of her folly. They must be employed.

Having spoken thus, the *Herald* had nothing more to say about the Far East until the publication of the Lytton Report at the beginning of October—apart from a passing reference to American " disappointment at the nerveless handling of the Manchurian business " on September 15th. The paper was preoccupied with the crisis of the Disarmament Conference.

The *Guardian* considered that Japanese recognition of Manchukuo should at least force the other League Powers " to admit once and for all that the present situation in Manchuria has been brought about by means not compatible with Japan's international obligations." This, it held, would involve their refusal under any circumstances to enter into relations with the Manchukuo Government ; a " meagre " outcome, but not a negligible one. The *Guardian* thought it " just conceivable " that the League, " fortified by the knowledge that American co-operation can be counted on, " might make " a belated attempt seriously to apply the Covenant." In that passage the *Guardian*, despite its careful ambiguity of language, was plainly suggesting once again that the United States would co-operate with the League in the application of sanctions against Japan, notwithstanding all the evidence to the contrary. But it was not even " absolutely sure " that the League Powers would stand

by the doctrine of non-recognition. America would, without a doubt. But what of this country? The *Guardian* hoped that the Lytton Report would provide the British Government with the necessary information about the Manchukuo Government, and that Great Britain would then " associate itself emphatically and publicly with the position taken up by Mr. Stimson." The implication here was that Mr. Stimson had specifically refused to recognise the Government of Manchukuo, which was not the case. That was indirectly admitted by the *Guardian* two days later (August 27th) when, in the course of a criticism of the French Press, it said that " all the League States, including, of course, France and Great Britain, were as committed to the Stimson doctrine as the United States, since they had voted in favour of a Resolution of the League Assembly embodying it."

On September 9th Professor Gilbert Murray had a letter in the *Guardian* explaining the policy of the League of Nations Union. They had to wait for the Lytton Report, but stood by their previously declared policy, of which the first point, non-recognition, had been formally accepted by the League. The second point was that, if the case arose, the League and the United States should " apply, on the lines of Article 16 of the Covenant, whatever pressure of a diplomatic and economic character may be necessary to establish peace."[1] In this connection, wrote Professor Murray, it seemed that the Japanese Government intended to pursue its ends by military force, and that might involve Japan's leaving (or being expelled from) the League. " What answer," he asked, " should the civilised world make? Simply, I think, refuse to the treaty-breaker that support and assistance which she has repudiated and without which she cannot succeed." In its editorial comment that day the *Guardian* was even more vague. It agreed with Professor Murray that the League could not allow itself to be deflected from the course of justice by fear that Tokyo would withdraw its membership. Although Japan, it said, had been impelled to her unpardonable aggression, " which Western indifference has alone made possible," by economic pressure, and although the vast majority of the Japanese were solidly behind their Government, such undoubted facts " should not prevent the League from taking a firm line against the aggressor." The only indication given of what was meant by " a firm line " was in the following sentence : " Geneva has far more to lose by

[1] See p. 163, above.

toleration of a monstrous policy of expansion than by the resignation of the treaty-breaking enemy of peace."

The Japanese treaty of recognition with the new State of Manchukuo was signed at Changchung on September 15th. Leading articles on this long-awaited event appeared in the *Times* and the *Guardian* only, among the chief dailies. The two editorials present a striking contrast in spirit, but on the subject of League action the divergence was nothing like so marked.

The *Times* wrote of " the virtual conquest of the Manchurian provinces " and of the challenge involved to the principles of the League, to the Pact of Paris and other treaties. After commenting critically on conditions in Manchuria, it said that Japan's whole policy had unquestionably been conducted without too nice a regard for treaty obligations and had indeed already been condemned in advance by the American Secretary of State and by a League Resolution. The *Times*, however, held that it would be a mistake to " hold Japan up to opprobrium " before the facts were fully revealed by the Lytton Report. " What Japan did in Shanghai found little support in this country ; but her position in Manchuria is very different." After summarising the main points about that position, the editorial went on :

> It can be argued with some force that the rules of conduct which the League lays down are not equally applicable in every part of the world ; but the point is apt to be ignored in the Assembly, where all States are in a general way presumed to be equal, and all members are assumed to have reached approximately the same stage of evolution.

The *Times* urged the wisdom of suspending judgment until the Lytton Report was available and the respective arguments were given a full hearing at Geneva. It added that the people most closely concerned were, after all, the Manchurians themselves.

The *Guardian* was unqualified in its denunciation of Japan. The report of the Lytton Commission was expected to be as unfavourable to Japan as its recommendations were likely to be unpalatable ; and Japan had presented China, the United States, Russia and the League with the accomplished fact. The signatories of the Covenant, the Pact of Paris and the Nine Power Treaty, declared the *Guardian*, could not tamely allow one of their members to violate them at the expense of another member. Japan's action was a blow at the whole international order. The editorial went on to say that until then the League, " largely because of the indifference or vacillation of our

own Foreign Office," had done little, " weak when firmness might have won the day, firm when the day was lost." Yet it had had, " and still has," one great advantage, " the assurance of the most complete co-operation from the United States, which the British Government has been unable to appreciate." The most complete co-operation ! Whatever that phrase may have been intended to convey, the impression it actually conveyed was highly misleading. The *Guardian* said that the League now had to face its task. It opposed any delay in the publication of the Lytton Report. The League's business was to discuss the Report, " to propose a scheme for the restoration of Manchuria to China," and, if Japan would not listen, " to consider by what means the disapprobation of the whole League, fortified by that of the United States and the endurance of the Chinese people, can be directed to persuading Japan at last to recognise not Manchukuo but the treaties she has signed."

The *Guardian* discussed the matter again on September 26th in an editorial which linked together the Manchurian problem and the crisis in the Disarmament Conference resulting from Germany's withdrawal in a criticism of the British Government for having no policy except drift. Regarding Manchuria, it was a case, said the *Guardian*, of vindicating the authority of the League, of law, against an aggressor. Regarding armaments, " justice, if not the letter of the law," was on the side of Germany, and the *Guardian* wanted large reductions by the armed Powers. But in both cases the core of the question was said to be " the supremacy of the moral authority of the League." Dealing with Manchuria, the article said that " at all costs " we had to fight for the authority of the League. It contended that it was the weakness and hesitancy of the European Governments, " our own foremost among them," which had produced in Japan a united front (lacking in the previous September) in favour of militarist aggression. It mentioned reports that Japan feared England would prove her only friend at Geneva. And the editorial ended with the following passage :

> We need a policy which, as to the Far East, will organise the League, with the cordial support of the United States, in a firm condemnation and a consistent pressure which will lead Japan to a better mind ; a policy which, in regard to disarmament, will, by offering reductions, invite them from others, and so, while firmly refusing to allow Germany to rearm, will give her what she has never yet had, a deposit as proof that we mean business.

The nature of the " pressure " consistently to be applied to Japan was, unfortunately, not explained ; but it can be inferred, perhaps, from its proposed combination with further reductions in armaments and a firm " refusal to allow " Germany to rearm. Yet it was also to be combined with " firm condemnation " of Japan !

On September 28th the *Guardian* strongly criticised the decision of the League Council, at Japan's request, to delay consideration of the Lytton Report until November 14th. The delay, it was urged, would be used by the Japanese to consolidate their position in Manchuria and, in all probability, to embark upon the invasion of the province of Jehol.

Two articles from " A Special Correspondent " appeared in this paper on September 30th and October 1st. In the first, the writer declared that the dispute had become insoluble by conciliation owing to the long delay in the presentation of the Report of the Lytton Commission. The second article was a critical review of the " timid " handling of the dispute by the Powers. In relation to the earlier (1931) stages, criticism was directed primarily against the United States Government ; but it fell exclusively upon the British Government for the subsequent period. Sir John Simon became the villain of the piece. The attack upon him, related essentially to the non-recognition doctrine, has already been dealt with.[1] The writer went on to complain that the British Government could scarcely be said to have a policy—that all too familiar criticism made by those who are dissatisfied with the actual policy—and was hopelessly and helplessly drifting. With dubious consistency, Sir John's attitude towards the Covenant was described as " that of a lawyer picking holes in a contract in the interests of a shady client "—an example of the equally familiar and much overdone criticism indulged in by those who happen to disagree with a lawyer-statesman. If the British Government had " faith in the Covenant," the Correspondent said, it would have been taking the lead " in a policy of isolating and putting pressure on Japan in co-operation with the United States "—one of those vague, ambiguous assertions with which the reader is also familiar but which is repugnant to the legal mind.

The *New Statesman* also resumed its attacks upon the Foreign Secretary in September. On the 10th, " Critic " wrote of his " pro-Japanese attitude " having already done infinite harm to Anglo-American relations ; and on October 1st there appeared a long

[1] p. 131, above.

attack under the title " Simon, the Lawyer." Sir John was said to have made no secret of his intention to abandon the Covenant. The basis of this charge was his alleged view that in this matter mediatory methods were " alone applicable." The *New Statesman* took the position that mediation was likely to be effective only when supported by the implied threat of coercive action ; and contended that " in this case a policy of unlimited mediation degrades mediation to the level of connivance at aggression." Sir John Simon, it was said, had been preoccupied throughout " solely with devising some means of avoiding the necessity of taking action." What action did the *New Statesman* itself wish to see taken at this stage ? The only indication had been given on September 3rd, when it was asserted that if Great Britain and other European Powers were prepared " to back the United States in a bold front against the demands of Japan," Japan had no alternative but to give way. American opinion was said to be now " very firm about Manchukuo." No information was forthcoming about what would constitute " a bold front " or " a bold stand " (another expression used) ; and here again we encounter the persistent endeavour to portray the United States as being eager, or at any rate much more eager than Great Britain, for some kind of coercive action.

In the *News Chronicle* Mr. Wilson Harris, whose treatment of the non-recognition issue has been previously dealt with,[1] wrote on September 12th that it was " not a question of what detailed steps were to be taken " in regard to the Far East, but a question of whether this country would " defend the principles it proclaimed when it signed the League Covenant, the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact, or condone violation of them to avoid trouble with Japan." He said that if America stood by the treaties as she had so far done, then both morality and self-interest required that we should take the same ground. Here, of course, was no demand whatever for coercive sanctions ; on the contrary, we should presumably be defending our proclaimed principles and standing by the treaties if we adopted the same policy as the United States—a policy which excluded sanctions other than the moral sanction of " non-recognition."

Mr. A. J. Cummings had an article in this paper on September 15th, consequent upon the Japanese recognition of Manchukuo. According to him, the best that could be said for British policy, as

[1] pp. 115-6, above.

expounded by Sir John Simon, was that " it was believed necessary to avoid a break with Japan at all costs, including even the abandonment of the Covenant, in the hope that when the Lytton Report came in it would make possible a settlement by agreement." Mr. Cummings argued that thenceforward " public opinion should be roused to the magnitude of the issue at stake." It appeared to him that a settlement could no longer be accomplished by mediation and conciliation. The task, therefore, was to help Chinese nationalism to defeat Japanese Imperialism ; and he did not think it would be nearly so difficult " to organise effective pressure by peaceful means " as some people represented it to be. " Japanese public opinion would be staggered by the condemnation of the civilised world, and by the complete isolation to which the country would be subjected." If Japan withdrew from the League, " spineless passivity " was, to him, inconceivable. That may well be interpreted as a rather indirect plea for the application of far-reaching sanctions under Article XVI, but Mr. Cummings might well have been more specific, and he made no attempt to justify his assumption that such means would have been likely to prove both " peaceful " and " effective."

On September 19th Mr. Wilson Harris discussed the situation which would arise when the Lytton Commission reported that Japan had violated the Covenant, which he considered it was bound to do. He held that " at any cost " the League must " stand by " the principles of the Covenant. What did this process of " standing by " involve ? The first essential, said Mr. Wilson Harris, was " to regard that judgment without equivocation or compromise." But, he asked, what could the League do in such a case ? His answer was : " Very little, perhaps." It would hardly be prepared to advise the severance of economic or even of diplomatic relations with Japan, he said, but it must not gloss the affair over. It would be far better to let Japan leave the League. At any rate, it was both necessary and practicable that Japan should be made to feel her isolation by every country refusing licences for the export of arms to her and discouraging participation of its money market in any Japanese loan. Mr. Wilson Harris added that a large section of American opinion obviously considered that the British Government had sold the pass and had no intention of upholding the treaties if that meant openly opposing Japan. This suspicion, he said, could only be dispelled by a " sudden access of firmness at this eleventh hour."

The *News Chronicle's* New York Correspondent said on September 22nd that Washington regarded the non-recognition policy as "second only in importance to the Monroe Doctrine," and was anxious to know how far other Powers would support America's stand.

In an editorial on September 18th, the *Sunday Times* discussed the difficult situation which would arise when the Lytton Report was published. Japan had had considerable and prolonged provocation, and had legitimate need of expansion, but she had sought a solution of her problems in deliberate defiance of international law and her own specific undertakings. There was a case, the article said, for avoiding immediate trouble and leaving Japan to reap the whirlwind; but the risks of such a negative policy were immense. If some effective action were not taken the chances of disarmament would become more and more slender. Moreover, the United States was looking to Britain for a positive policy, and the risks of a misunderstanding between the two nations would seriously weaken the hopes of a debt agreement. The *Sunday Times*, however, did not offer any suggestions of action likely to prove effective.

The *Observer's* line was different. In May Garvin had emphasised the far-reaching dangers involved in a policy which led to Japan's withdrawal from the League. On June 26th this paper bluntly dismissed the question what is to be done? Who could do anything?

> What should be is a matter of no practical value. The only practical thing is the fact as it is. The fact is that the initiative in the Far East rests with Japan.

This standpoint was maintained in September. The general assumption was said to be that the Lytton Report would criticise Japanese policy and would sympathise "with the somewhat ill-defined political entity known as China." The result baffled speculation, unless it were assumed that it would merely consist in Japan's withdrawal from the League.

> There are those who wax indignant against Japan and clamour for what they call strong action by Geneva. If they substituted common sense for indignation they would see that Geneva cannot do anything but accept what would be its own misfortune of Japan's withdrawal.

To the *Observer*, the decisive point clearly was that the only Power operative in the Far East was Tokyo. A week later (September 11th) the Lytton Report was said to be likely to prove "a clever essay in

diplomatic finesse," and that was much the best thing it could be. Wise diplomacy must aim at awarding the substance to Japan and the shadow to China and at harmonising the whole by means of a conference between China, Japan and the other interested Powers. On the 18th, the *Observer* held that Japan's recognition of Manchukuo had been timed with the deliberate intent of presenting Geneva with the accomplished fact. The question to be decided was whether the League could retain Japan as a member. Academic views of what is " right " and " wrong " were declared irrelevant in this case ; and the only practical point, " ironically enough," was that the very competence of the League in the Far East depended upon Japan.

The *Times* had nothing more to say editorially after September 16th. On the next day, however, it published an interesting dispatch from its Washington Correspondent. The American people, he said, was not interested in the formal treaty between Japan and Manchukuo, but the Secretary of State was giving almost all his time to the problem. Mr. Stimson had never counted on anything from France, but had continued to be hopeful of receiving British support for his attitude, although less hopeful since his return from Geneva in the spring. His policy, therefore, was definitely one of giving the smaller members of the League of Nations all possible support, " in the hope that they can prevent Great Britain and France from absolving the Japanese from blame in Manchuria." The implication, it will be noted, was that what Mr. Stimson wanted was that Japan should be blamed.

This report went on to quote at length a leading article in the Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers. This article presented a criticism of Great Britain and France (the two countries were lumped together throughout) which, in view of its wide currency, has a special importance. The European Powers were said to have given their support, " or at least their tacit approval," to Japan rather than to the Nine Power Treaty they were sworn to uphold. This contention was based upon three points. First, Great Britain and France had " refrained from joining the American declaration outlawing the fruits of Japanese conquest." The article made no reference to the fact that the League States, on Britain's proposition, had endorsed the American declaration. Secondly, the two countries were said to have obstructed the efforts of the smaller European nations " to hold Japan to her League of Nations peace obligations."

No details of this alleged obstruction were given in the report. Thirdly, the two Powers were reported to be trying to modify or postpone League action against Japan on the basis of the forthcoming League report. Nothing was said about the source or sources of this report nor was any information apparently presented in its support. After referring to reports of vast war preparations in Japan and to the sacrifice by the United States of certain naval and defence rights in the Pacific as the price of the Nine Power Treaty, the article said that the United States ought to know quickly if the Treaty had been destroyed beyond repair. The test of this was declared to be whether Great Britain and France and the other signatories of the Treaty and the Kellogg Pact were going " to defend " the treaties against Japan :

> When we say defend, we do not mean with armies and navies, we mean defend the treaties with joint moral, diplomatic and economic pressure, which is more in keeping with the spirit of the violated treaties and more effective than war.

The article considered two steps imperative at once : (1) the United States should openly demand that Great Britain and France declare themselves publicly, and (2) the United States should ban all military shipments from herself to Japan.

The ambiguities and the confusion presented by this Scripps-Howard article exemplify much. Had the United States " declared themselves publicly " ? If so, they certainly had not declared themselves in favour of " economic pressure," whatever that might mean. The writer of the article, and other Americans, may have favoured whatever economic pressure could be applied without risk of war. They may have favoured the prohibition by their own country of the export of arms and other war material to Japan. But their demand for such a prohibition indicated that the United States was not at the time prepared to " defend the treaties " even to that extent. Were the Americans—Government, Congress and people—ever to be ?

PART FOUR

THE LAST PHASE

(THE LYTTON REPORT AND AFTER)

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LYTTON REPORT

1. The Course of Events

THE Report of the Lytton Commission was published on October 2nd, according to programme. It had been awaited, for the most part, without eagerness, and it produced no sensation. The newspapers all had their comments, but, for the rest of the year 1932, public interest in the Far East showed no marked revival. For that there were several reasons.

In the first place, the Council of the League, which had appointed the Commission, had agreed to the request of the Japanese Government for time to study the Report and to prepare their observations. The Japanese document was to be available by November 14th. The Council met on the 21st. But, at the time of the Shanghai crisis, the dispute had been transferred from the Council to the Assembly ; and on November 28th the Council transmitted the Report of its Commission to the Assembly, which met on December 6th.

Secondly, there was a major question of procedure confronting the Assembly. The League Council had been acting under Article XI of the Covenant when it had set up the Commission of Enquiry. As a consequence of the Chinese appeal in the early stages of the Shanghai episode, and despite the objections of the Japanese, the Assembly was acting under Article XV. That Article provided, in paragraph 3, that the Council should endeavour to effect a settlement of the dispute. If such efforts failed, then, under the terms of paragraph 4, the Council had to make and publish a report containing a statement of the facts of the dispute and the recommendations which were deemed just and proper in regard thereto. These duties now devolved, under paragraph 10, upon the Assembly itself. The question at issue was whether or not the Assembly should make a further attempt to secure a settlement by conciliation in accordance with paragraph 3. Controversy before, during and after the December meeting of the Assembly centred round this question. As we shall see, the views of the British and American Governments diverged.

But the issue was not of the kind likely to arouse widespread interest.

Thirdly, public attention was directed to other matters ; to the crisis of the Disarmament Conference, accompanied in the closing months of the year by a great development of the disarmament campaign in this country, and culminating, for the time being, in the Five Power Declaration of December 11th, recognising Germany's claim to " equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations," which brought Germany back to the Conference ; to the revolutionary political situation in Germany, with the transport strike in Berlin, the Reichstag elections of November 6th, the widespread impression that Hitler and his party were on the down-grade, von Papen's resignation on November 17th, the complex intrigues that followed, and, on December 2nd, the appointment of General Kurt von Schleicher as Chancellor ; and to the war debt controversy with the United States of America.

That country was in the midst of its bitter Presidential campaign when the Lytton Report was published. On November 8th Franklin D. Roosevelt overwhelmingly defeated President Hoover. A new American Administration, confronted by increasingly grave domestic problems, would be taking over at the beginning of March 1933, and Mr. Stimson would then cease to be Secretary of State. In the meantime, instalments on the war debts were due on December 15th, and in the preceding month controversy raged about the British and French requests for suspension and their refusal by the American Government. " A very painful impasse," wrote Mr. Stimson in 1936, " on a most delicate subject had thus arisen between us and some of the most influential nations in the League."

By these occurrences the whole atmosphere of the relations between the United States and these nations of Europe was thoroughly poisoned. Not only the Press and people, but many of the leading statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic, were filled with a spirit of mutual resentment and recrimination.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the Far East occupied, at the highest, only a secondary place in the minds of statesmen, Press and public alike.

2. Initial Press Reactions

In after years criticism of British policy during the months following the publication of the Lytton Report was largely concentrated upon

particular incidents, and was customarily brought in to supplement or to illustrate a general indictment covering the whole dispute. The incidents raised were, more often than not, dissociated from the context of events. The chief of them was Sir John Simon's speech at the League Assembly on December 7th, 1932. In some quarters this speech was severely criticised at the time. Objection was then taken to what the Foreign Secretary had said about the Lytton Report. He had stressed the fact that the Report did not comprise a one-sided condemnation of Japan but a measured criticism of both parties. On this ground the speech was attacked, in words used years afterwards by Lord Cecil, as " a forensic defence of Japan." It will be dealt with fully later, but its purpose (we may point out at once) was to support the contention of the Report that " practical efforts at conciliation " were required. The importance of the controversy about this speech would by itself necessitate an examination of the initial reactions to the Report. What views were held about its nature ? Was it regarded as a simple condemnation of Japan ? How far was there opposition to any further attempts to secure a settlement by conciliation ? What measures were advocated in the event of Japan rejecting the League's recommendations in regard to the dispute, whether these were presented after a failure of efforts at conciliation or without any such efforts being made ?

The document was very long. Mr. Stimson was doubtless right when he said in 1936 that to be understood and appreciated the Report had to be read in its entirety. Few, therefore, fully understood it. Mr. Stimson, it is true, has said that the full text probably received a far wider publicity in the United States, despite the Presidential election, than it had in any other country. Here, and possibly elsewhere, brief versions of the Report were prepared and widely circulated ; but the vast majority of people derived their impressions of the document from their newspaper or newspapers. All of these had something to say about the Report. The *Times* published a detailed summary on October 3rd. The *Manchester Guardian* printed five articles summarising the Report, the first of which appeared on October 17th. Other newspapers were less satisfactory, some much less so. Like most documents, the Report was to receive diverse and fluctuating interpretations. As invariably happens, many people were inclined to find in it only what they wanted to find, or to remember about it only what they wished to remember. But,

at the time of its publication, and for some weeks afterwards, there was a remarkable measure of agreement about it.

Before very long it was to become an article of faith with large numbers of people that the Lytton Report had " found Japan guilty " or had pronounced Japan " an aggressor." At the outset, however, that crude interpretation of the Report was virtually confined to the columns of the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Express.* Under the heading " Guilty ! " the former's editorial declared it established that Japan had been guilty of a series of acts of aggression, and spoke of the Commission's " verdict " to that effect without any kind of qualification. The latter announced on its front page that the League had condemned Japan, but it did not discuss the nature of the Report at all in its editorial. The *Daily Mail* gave a more balanced interpretation. The middle-page report of its Geneva Correspondent bore the headlines " Pro-Chinese Report of the Lytton Commission. Japanese action condemned. China must be reconstructed. New Riddle for the League." The editorial considered that while the Report was not so anti-Japanese in tone as propagandist forecasts had suggested, the bias in it was distinctly pro-Chinese. The Report, it said, had condemned the presence of Japanese forces in Manchuria and the establishment of the new State of Manchukuo, but was compelled to admit that the issues were exceedingly complicated and that the weakness of the Chinese Central Government affected Japan's rights and interests. The Commission had made certain " constructive proposals," but these would involve years of negotiations and conferences. The article quoted what it called the ultimate conclusion, that " the maintenance of the peace in the Far East cannot be fulfilled without a strong Central Government in China " and that, therefore, " the reconstruction of China is the first necessity." The editorial comment in the *News Chronicle* was very brief, and, on the nature of the Report, all it had to say was that its essence was that the Japanese invasion of Manchuria was unjustifiable.

The other main organs of the Press were in substantial agreement about the nature of the Report, although there were naturally differences of emphasis and tone. There was no accusation of bias ; it was recognised that the document was not one-sided ; and attention was directed primarily to the recommendations and the prospects of applying them.

The *Times* (on October 5th), said that the rights and wrongs of

the Japanese occupation of Manchuria had been set forth clearly and quite impartially. The recommendations, with which this paper was almost exclusively concerned, were said (October 3rd) to have been drawn up " with the wisdom of a friend of both China and Japan." On the one hand :

> Full appreciation is given to the special interests of Japan, political as well as economic ; allowance is made for the provocation she had to endure when engaged in activities warranted by treaty ; and it is explicitly stated that a mere restoration of the *status quo ante* would be no solution.

On the other hand, the Report had made it clear that the local population were anti-Japanese ; and

> the sovereignty and administrative integrity of China are (according to the Report) to be maintained ; all armed forces other than gendarmerie are to be withdrawn ; and temporary international co-operation is recommended in the internal reconstruction of China.

The *Daily Telegraph* wrote of " a sincere and thoroughgoing attempt to get at the rights and wrongs of a highly contentious question." In that respect, this paper said, the Report differed from much of the public comment which had been devoted to the subject. It quoted the Commission's statement that " the issues involved in this conflict are not as simple as they are often represented to be." The Report recognised the wide extent of Japan's legitimate rights and interests in Manchuria ; that they had suffered greatly at the hands of the Chinese Administration ; and that Japanese Governments had done their utmost in the past to obtain redress by peaceful means. On the other hand, the Report insisted that Manchuria was an integral part of China, and that the population was hostile to the new Government set up under Japanese tutelage.

To the *Manchester Guardian* the Report was studiously moderate and reasonable. In its first stage it showed consideration for Japanese interests and feelings, admitting the " pinpricks " Japan had received at Chinese hands—a very mild *Guardian* version of what the Report had to say on the subject. The second stage of the Report, in the paper's view, amounted to a clear condemnation of Japan's actions ; while the third stage proposed " a new form of Administration in Manchuria which, while preserving the interests of China and the obligations of international law, would carefully recognise also the special position of Japan." The *New Statesman*, in its brief note on October 8th, wrote of the Report's proposals as an inevitable

compromise, " a very fair compromise between the legitimate claims of the parties." There was, it said, " no condonation of the Japanese aggression."

The *Economist*, which dealt with the matter at length, described the Report as " an admirable piece of work, well-informed, impartial, constructive, and—above all—inspired throughout with manifestly sincere goodwill, untainted by a single touch of animus." On the issues and the facts, it said, the Report was " devastating to Japan." It had declared that the military operations of September 18th-19th, 1931, were not measures of legitimate self-defence ; that Manchukuo was not the outcome of a spontaneous independence movement ; and that the Chinese population of Manchuria was in solid opposition to the Japanese. The article proceeded, in terms which are particularly interesting in view of the *Economist's* later attitude :

> The cumulative effect of these three conclusions is decisive ; and the moral impression is vastly heightened by the studiously moderate and conciliatory language in which the evidence and the conclusions are presented ; by the conspicuous absence of anti-Japanese bias ; by the handsome recognition of Japanese economic and even strategic interests in Manchuria ; and by *the searching exposure* of the long-drawn-out anarchy in China and of the provocation which the Japanese have received at Chinese hands—including an illuminating discussion of the rights and wrongs of the boycott.[1]

Mr. H. N. Brailsford's article on October 15th in the *New Clarion*, a Left-Wing weekly started in the previous June, is of special significance. It was an ironical comment on the Report's good reception :

> It is a gentle document. It can offend no one, neither the friends of China nor the partisans of Japan. It does not brutally affirm unpleasant facts ; it alludes to them so discreetly that they remain what they were, an obbligato, a muted accompaniment to our conscious opinions. *It pronounces no verdict* ; with a notable grace it leaves us to draw our own conclusions.
>
> One knows, of course, what Lord Lytton and his fellow-Commissioners would have to say, if a bullying lawyer asked them plain questions in the witness-stand, that Japan was the aggressor and that she broke three treaties. But they are gentlemen of exemplary manners ; they do not precisely say this ; they leave it to be inferred. They come nearer to saying that she had considerable provocation.
>
> They do say with almost startling plainness that Manchukuo is a puppet State which rests on Japanese bayonets and nothing else, and they

[1] Author's italics.

tell us that the people of these provinces are very miserable. By writing in this mannerly way the authors have their reward. No one outside Japan feels obliged to dissent from their Report. Our blood stream moves tranquilly ; we have heard no bugle call to action. . . . The Report accordingly has had a good reception.[1]

On the subject of what was to be done, there was an even greater measure of agreement. Different views, however, were held about the prospects. The *Times* (October 5th) held that the League would be wise to " follow the example of its Commission by dwelling as lightly as possible on the past and concentrating on obtaining—not all at once, but in the long run—a settlement by consent." It considered an immediate settlement on the basis of the Report's recommendations to be impracticable, since the Japanese Government had definitely committed itself to a conflicting policy. On October 3rd the *Times* had not the slightest doubt that the existing Government in Japan would be " altogether unwilling " to accept the recommendations ; but the Japanese people might in time come to the conclusion that it was not in their interests to disregard the feelings of the Manchurian population. Foreign Governments, it said, needed time to study the full implications of the Report. Hurried decisions were unnecessary and undesirable. " The opportune moment for active mediation by the League is likely to occur later rather than sooner." [2] In the meantime, no good purpose could be served by upbraiding Japan or making censorious comment upon her recent conduct. The problem for the League Council, when it met, would be that of " maintaining the principles of the Covenant without ignoring the facts of an unprecedented situation." There could be no condonation of any infringements of treaties, and no more compromise over principles ; but, so long as Manchukuo was not recognised, principles need not be in jeopardy.

The *Telegraph* endorsed the view of the Report that the problem was not to be solved by " criticism," and that practical efforts at conciliation were necessary. This paper took an even gloomier view of the prospects than the *Times*. They were described as being

[1] Author's italics.

[2] This leading article of the 3rd was described by Professor (now Sir) Charles Webster as " temperate and helpful," in a letter published on the 5th. Professor Webster, however, took a more hopeful view of the prospects. He considered it evident that the Commission was well aware of the approaching Japanese recognition of Manchukuo, and that the new State could not yet be regarded as *fait accompli*, the writ of the Manchukuo Government not running beyond the railway lines and the areas actually occupied by Japanese troops. This was also the view of the *Economist*, October 8th.

" in present circumstances, of the remotest." The Japanese Government's view was that the Manchurian question had been " settled," and so long as that view remained unchanged the Lytton Commission's laborious work would go for nothing. Like the *Mail*, the *Telegraph* drew attention to the statement in the Report that " a strong Central Government in China " was an indispensable condition of the proposed solution, and this was " an obstacle more formidable still." " It is the political truth about China which explains, if it does not fully justify, Japan's action for the securing of her vital interests in Manchuria. The *Mail* suggested that centuries might elapse before the requisite reconstruction of China was accomplished. Its view was, in effect, that nothing could be done or should be done, Japan's presence in Manchuria being " as natural and salutary as that of Britain in India or Egypt." The *Express* was content to argue that nothing could be done. The Japanese, it said, had no intention of giving up an inch of the territory they had seized, and the League could not get them out—all it could do would be to read them a pompous lecture. On the other hand, the *Observer* on October 9th took quite an optimistic view. A joint moral leadership on the part of Great Britain and the United States, wisely pursued, on the practical lines indicated by the Report, should be able to satisfy the fair interests of Japan, China and the external Powers. This paper (October 23rd) awaited the discussions " with some confidence in their success."

The views so far noted either favoured further efforts at conciliation in the near or the more distant future or, as in the cases of the *Express* and *Mail*, held that nothing could be done. There was no approval—it followed—for a policy of " moral condemnation." Nor was any suggestion made of any kind of coercive action should conciliation fail ; indeed, the advocates of conciliation regarded it as a policy unlikely to be successful in the short run, and, therefore, one to be persisted in. What about the views of the Press of the Left ?

The *Manchester Guardian* had little to say on this aspect of the matter. The League, which (it said) would be " supported at every step by the United States," would have to find out what the Japanese official answer was. It could not acquiesce in the position with which Japan had presented it. But no opposition was expressed to a further effort at conciliation ; and approval of such an effort might well seem to have been implied by the paper's endorsement of the Commission's contention that " a fruitful and permanent settlement is

not to be had unless it is based on a good understanding between China and Japan." The *News Chronicle* did not discuss the question at all. The *Daily Herald*, despite its interpretation of the Report, specifically advocated a further attempt at conciliation. " The first step indubitably will be to make a supreme and final attempt to secure a settlement by negotiation and consent on the lines proposed by the Lytton Commission." True, like the *Times* and the *Telegraph*, the Labour daily considered the prospects of success " slight indeed." What then ought the next step to be? That, said the *Herald*, was " certainly a matter not to be decided rashly or without most careful consideration." The paper was clear only that there must be a next step, and that " fortunately, the League, facing this crisis of its fate, can also count upon the full co-operation of the United States in any measures which it may decide to take to vindicate the paramountcy of law." Here we have another example of the way in which misleading assertions about American policy continued to be made.

The *New Statesman's* remark about " a very fair compromise " would seem to have implied approval of another conciliation effort, but it did not directly discuss the issue. The *New Leader* raised the question, What next? But its only answer was " How can a League dominated by the old Imperialist Powers take effective action against one of the younger Powers for so faithfully copying their methods? " " Objectively," it might be said, the position of the I.L.P. organ was that of the *Daily Mail*. Mr. Brailsford, in his *New Clarion* article, took the line that the Commission's Report was " a brilliant and merciless *reductio ad absurdum*," which disposed finally of the " comforting illusion " that a settlement of the Manchurian question could be reached by consent. Would the League, he asked, impose it by some method of constraint? That, he thought, " we may dismiss at once. If the League had ever meant to use constraint, it would have imposed it a year ago, before Japan became involved in military and diplomatic commitments from which she cannot withdraw without humiliation." It could safely be concluded that the League in its wisdom would do nothing. Mr. Brailsford, " objectively," had reached the position of the *Daily Express*. The *Economist*, however, considered that the Report offered a possible basis for a Far Eastern settlement at the eleventh hour. This weekly's remarks, like those even of its Geneva Correspondent, plainly assumed that conciliation would be again attempted, and raised no objection whatever.

The Opposition and Liberal Press either favoured or assumed a renewed attempt to settle the dispute by conciliation on the basis of the Commission's recommendations. Failure was sometimes taken for granted and in most other cases expected, but there was either marked reticence about what should be done in that event or an assumption that nothing would be done.

3. Reception in Parliament

When we turn from the Press to Parliament, we get confirmation. The House of Lords discussed the Report on November 2nd. The Commission's work had the warm approval of Lord Ponsonby, the Leader of the Opposition. He expressed the view (also taken by the Commission) that the question, a very difficult one, could not be solved by " a mere restoration of the *status quo ante*." That both parties had been willing to be called to the Council table was described as a very great, though not a spectacular, triumph. Lord Ponsonby felt confident that the Great Powers, joining together, could solve the problem, " without any violent language, without making any nation put on the white sheet." Lord Lothian, who was chiefly concerned to emphasise the gravity of the issues involved, refrained from making any suggestions other than saying that both wisdom and firmness were required :

> wisdom in recognising the tremendous difficulties which confront both China and Japan, and wisdom in not inflaming an already dangerous public opinion in the Far East to reckless action ; firmness in never losing sight of the central fact that only by insisting on the principles of the Washington Treaties . . . and of the procedure of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact will it be possible to arrive at a just, a lasting and a peaceful settlement.

Lord Allen of Hurtwood, then a very prominent figure in the League of Nations Union, said that the Report's chief characteristics were : (1) Its realistic handling of practical detail, and (2) the sensitive manner in which it met the feelings of two Great Powers. When expressing the view that mediation and conciliation could be carried too far, he meant, apparently, that " a pronouncement of leadership " on the general issues of disarmament and security should be combined with the " arts of mediation and conciliation." Lord Cecil's remarks have a special interest in view of his criticisms in later years. He described the Report as " an absolutely dispassionate

account of the whole facts of the dispute *without passing any judgment on either party*, merely laying the facts before the world and concluding with certain suggestions as to a possible settlement. "[1] In his view, it was " an epoch-making event." Lord Lytton himself said that the partisans on each side had looked to the Report to see in what way it strengthened their case. Judging by newspaper comments, he was happy to think that both sides had found something in the Report to support their standpoint. Lord Hailsham, the Government spokesman, spoke of how very much there was to be said in favour of the case of each side.

The debate reveals a notable and general insistence upon the " two-sidedness " of the Report, and upon the undesirability of any " condemnation " of either party. All the speakers implied or assumed that methods of conciliation would be continued ; and there was no reference to the possibility of a resort to coercive action.

When the matter was raised in the House of Commons on November 10th, in the course of a debate primarily devoted to disarmament, the Labour Opposition presented a motion which (*inter alia*) urged that the Government " should maintain the principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations by supporting the findings of the Lytton Commission on the Sino-Japanese dispute." On the subject of the Report, the mover, Mr. Attlee, was extremely complimentary to Lord Lytton and his colleagues. He described the Report itself as " very detailed, very careful, very balanced." He believed that it gave " a great opportunity to vindicate the authority of the League of Nations." Mr. Attlee, however, complained that the Foreign Secretary had " said that he would not take sides," which, he thought, " was a definite encouragement to the Japanese militarists." The next Labour speaker, Mr. Seymour Cocks, had nothing to say about the nature of the Report. He spoke of discussions that would " precede judgment," urging the Government to support in every way the principles of the Covenant, the Pact and the Nine Power Treaty, and " when a decision has to be made," to give general support to the Commission's proposals rather than to any Japanese counter-proposals. It was, he said, of the highest importance that the principles of the Covenant should be " absolutely justified and vindicated." Subsequent Labour speakers (Mr. T. Williams and the Leader of the Opposition) made only incidental references to the Far East.

[1] Author's italics.

For the Liberal Party, Mr. Graham White had little to say on the subject, and, on the nature of the Report, merely associated himself with what the Foreign Secretary had said. Sir John Simon, who had followed Mr. Attlee, joined the latter in warm praise of the Report. Its moderation (he said) was very striking, and it was written with a real sense of sympathy and of true statesmanship, and, " with what is very necessary in this connection," a real sense of perspective. Referring to previous criticism of his plea that it was necessary to listen to the case for both sides, Sir John said that Lord Lytton at least had been anxious to present the question fairly from both points of view.

Mr. Mander was characteristically enthusiastic about the Report, " one of the finest documents ever put out in the history of the world." Although at one point he said that " the judgment has really been delivered " in the Report, the latter appealed to him " because it is not penal or punitive."

> Nobody ought to want to go into the past and lay blame and ask that judgment should be delivered on what has been done in Manchuria.

Mr. Mander wanted to make certain that a peaceful solution was arrived at, not to look back on the past but to look to the future. He believed that the problem would be settled if the Commission's proposals were " backed wholeheartedly and enthusiastically by the public opinion of the world." Plainly, Mr. Mander was not opposed to a new attempt at conciliation ; and specifically rejected, for that reason, a policy of " moral condemnation."

From the Government side of the House, Sir Austen Chamberlain associated himself with what had been said about the Report and Lord Lytton's contribution to it, and appealed to the Japanese statesmen to give the document fair and candid consideration. His general view both of the Report and of the procedure to be adopted in regard to it was summed up in his statement :

> The power of the League of Nations lies in its capacity to treat the parties to a dispute with perfect impartiality, with great patience, with a sympathy which can understand hopes and fears and difficulties, which will endeavour to ascertain and place before the world the facts of the dispute, and then to be impartial on behalf of the settlement which it recommends to the moral opinion of the world.

The only other speaker from that side who dealt specifically with the Far East, Mr. Nunn, considered the Lytton Report to be " probably

more wonderful in its tactfulness than in any other quality." He did not wish the Government to confine its action too strictly to the terms of the Report, insisting at length upon the necessity of taking into consideration " the whole question of good government in China " and of practical assistance to China in restoring good government there. The speech assumed not only a further effort to effect an agreed settlement but also that there was, on his suggested basis, a real opportunity of success.

4. American News

Meagre references in the British Press (confined to the *Times* and the *Guardian*) did not suggest that American reactions were markedly different. The Washington Correspondent of the *Times* reported on October 3rd that Mr. Stimson had already instructed Mr. Norman Davis (who had arrived in Paris) on the future policy of the United States. This policy was said to be " the complete acceptance of the principles of the Lytton Report, and, in particular, approval of the plan for a conference between Japan, China and neutrals on the future of Manchuria." There was here, certainly, no hint of any opposition to further efforts at conciliation. According to this Correspondent, it was believed in Washington that the Report was " so carefully drawn up " that " not even the most conservative and pro-Japanese members of the British Cabinet can refuse to accept it," and that " it will meet with the full approval even of those members of the Quai d'Orsay who propose backing the Japanese in return for Japanese support for French enterprise in Yunnan." Mr. Stimson, it was said, had frequently argued that the united diplomatic pressure of France, Great Britain and the United States " would avoid the necessity for League sanctions or any similar action." The Correspondent added that there were some in a high official position at Washington, however, who took the view that the Report was too lenient to Japan and that the Chinese were unlikely to accept.

Next day, the same Correspondent reported optimism in Washington that the British Cabinet would stand unequivocally behind the Commission's Report. The paper's New York Correspondent, after saying that the Report was " everywhere praised for its impartiality and breadth of view," quoted opinions from some of the leading newspapers in that city. The *Herald Tribune* said that had Japan

not rashly recognised Manchukuo and taken up a position from which retreat was all but impossible, " she would find in the Lytton Report far more sympathy with her own practical and legitimate interests than China can discover with her aggressive nationalism or her theoretical rights as a sovereign Power in Manchuria." The fact that it would be difficult for Japan to retreat was said to be no reason for condoning her mistakes or for making more of Chinese provocation than the Report had done, but it was a reason why " public opinion should not precipitate action in Geneva, or in Washington for that matter, which might prompt Japan to pass sentence of outlawry upon herself and break down the lines of diplomatic communication through which this problem must be solved." [1]

Judging from the summary of the Report, the *New York Times* said that it was easy to detect in it " a strong desire for conciliation between Japan and China and for co-operation by all the Powers in helping China to escape from the evils of civil war and to build up a strong and stable Government of her own." The Report's recommendations were described as " a highly valuable contribution to the work of peace and reconstruction in the Far East." In the *Guardian's* report of this paper's comments, additional points were given. The recommendations were said to be " singularly free from bias on either side," and to be " marked with great impartiality and breadth of view." The *New York Times* also rejoiced that Japan would have ample time to study the Report and the whole situation.[2]

According to reports in the *Times* on October 11th and 13th, the Lytton Report was strongly criticised in China, particularly by the régime at Canton and by other elements opposed to Chiang Kai-shek. It is also of interest to note that the *Guardian* and the *Times* both reported Soviet hostility to the Lytton Report. The line of the Soviet Press was that the Report was directed against the U.S.S.R.

[1] This last passage had been quoted on the previous day by the New York Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*.

[2] Views expressed by two other American papers were briefly mentioned. The *Times* quoted the *World Telegram*, which said that the Report confirmed United States policy in " outlawing the fruits of conquest " and so " puts on the spot " Great Britain and France, which countries were asserted to have evaded their responsibility under the Treaties and the League Covenant by supporting Japan diplomatically. The *Guardian* quoted the very different view of the *New York Evening Post*, which objected to intimations from Washington that Mr. Stimson " may use American influence on behalf of the League in support of the Lytton Report. We think that in any such case Stimson would be going far beyond any power properly mandated to him. We question his right to put a hand into the League of Nations machinery formerly rejected by our people. More than that we question his wisdom in throwing us once more into a position of hostility to Japan."

According to the former newspaper, *Pravda* considered the Report a Machiavellian device to promote a Russo-Japanese conflict combined with capitalist intervention in China.

5. Awaiting the League Council

In the House of Lords on November 2nd, the Opposition spokesman (Lord Ponsonby) asked for a statement of the Government's views on the Lytton Report. He urged the extreme desirability of this country giving a lead.

The plea received no support. Lord Allen of Hurtwood did not think the Government could make any advance pronouncement on the Commission's findings, although he suggested that it might be possible to make a public statement in regard to the general issue of "security." Lord Cecil agreed that it would not be reasonable to expect a detailed statement of policy from the Government at that stage, but urged that the Government should make it clear as early as they possibly could that they were determined to stand by the authority of the League of Nations and to do their utmost to support the Report. Lord Lytton said that nothing could be done effectively by the League unless unanimity was secured, and unanimity would be impossible if countries were to commit themselves in advance to definite statements of policy. For the Government, Lord Hailsham said :

> Our object when we go to Geneva will not be so much to make some dramatic move which will focus attention upon our leadership and initiative ; our aim rather will be, not to have a separate policy of our own but to unite with the other Powers in finding a single policy which may fairly be described as the policy of the League itself. In attempting to ascertain that policy it will be our object especially to persuade the two Governments of China and Japan to associate themselves with the policy which is so ascertained.

The *Manchester Guardian* spoke on November 3rd of Lord Hailsham as "evasive and reassuring" : otherwise editorial comment on this debate was lacking.

In the Commons debate on November 10th, Mr. Attlee, on behalf of the Opposition, wanted to know what the Government was "going to do on the Lytton Report," and whether they would "take the Lytton Report as the basis of their policy in this matter" ? Sir John Simon said that he would have had no hesitation in giving

a very straight answer were it not for the circumstance that the League Council had agreed to the Japanese request for a short interval to enable them to study the Report and to prepare their own observations on it. In view of that circumstance, said Sir John,

> it is not fair and it is not right, after you have promised to listen and to read the observations of one of the parties, to pronounce judgment before you have ever seen them.

The Foreign Secretary said he was determined not to commit his country to any judgment on the subject until he had heard what the Japanese had to say. He added :

> It is the greatest possible mistake to suppose that good is done by individual preliminary declarations.

No subsequent speaker in the debate raised any objection to the line taken by Sir John Simon. For the Liberals, Mr. Graham White thought it clearly impossible for the Government to say anything more. Mr. Seymour Cocks accepted the Foreign Secretary's refusal to deal with the merits of the dispute. Mr. Mander also agreed that the Foreign Secretary could not be expected to say " here and now " what he was going to do about the Lytton Report, but he hoped the Government would base their actions on its recommendations.

There was hardly any Press comment. The debate of November 10th had been mainly about disarmament, and, in winding up for the Government, Baldwin had delivered his deeply impressive speech on the air peril. The *Times* report made no reference to the Far East, and its editorial contained only a passing allusion to the impending meeting of the League Council. The editorials in the other national dailies were silent on the subject. On November 14th, however, Mr. Wilson Harris, in the *News Chronicle*, reverted to the topic of Manchuria after long preoccupation with other matters, and then drew the conclusion from Sir John Simon's speech of the 10th that the Foreign Secretary was going to Geneva to stand by the findings of the Lytton Commission.

6. Anti-Simon

It is noteworthy that during these first weeks of November 1932 attacks on Sir John Simon were resumed in certain newspapers of the Left. In the House of Commons, on the last day of October,

Sir John had answered a question about the Open Door in Manchuria. He did so in these terms :

H.M. Government have, so far, no grounds for doubting that the " open door " will be effectively maintained in Manchuria in accordance with the assurances given by both the Japanese Government and the Manchurian authorities.

Two days later (November 2nd), the *Manchester Guardian* published a message from its Geneva Correspondent saying that Sir John's answer had caused " considerable emotion " in Geneva, " especially in the United States delegation," owing to the reference to the " Manchurian authorities." This, it was said, was " considered to be unfortunate at a time when the Council of the League of Nations is about to consider the Lytton Report, and it sounds rather like prejudging the matter." Next day there was another report from the same Correspondent. Hitherto, he wrote, Sir John Simon had acted as intermediary between the United States Government and the League. That Government, he understood, had decided that the system could not continue :

It is said that on several occasions Sir John Simon did not correctly represent the views and intentions of the United States Government to the other delegations. In particular, it is alleged that during the session of the Council in Paris a year ago, when the United States Government had declared its willingness to withdraw its Ambassador from Tokyo if the Council decided on a rupture of diplomatic relations with Japan, Sir John Simon did not communicate this information to the other delegations. Sir John Simon's reference in the House of Commons yesterday to the Manchukuo Government as the " Manchurian authorities," which is very much resented, was the last straw.

This reaction " in Geneva " to what was surely a carefully correct expression on the part of the Foreign Secretary indicates something of the atmosphere in the " whispering gallery of Europe." It suggests that there were some among the assembled journalists and delegates eager to seize any chance, however flimsy, of discrediting Sir John Simon. What the reaction actually amounted to is another matter. Was it more than " corridor " gossip ? It is scarcely credible that the United States Government should have felt even the slightest resentment at Sir John's use of the phrase in question. But if they were resentful—and " very much " so—it is odd that Mr. Stimson has never mentioned the incident in his books. It is odd, also, that their resentment seems to have been

known only " at Geneva," and, apparently, not known to the great majority of the British newspaper correspondents there.

These considerations apply also to the allegation about the concealment of an important piece of information about the attitude of the American Government during the Paris meeting of the League Council in November-December 1931. That Government had its special representative in Paris, Ambassador Dawes. It is strange, moreover, that this allegation should have been brought forward for the first time after a lapse of twelve months. The " last straw " explanation is fantastic.

Nothing more was heard of the matter, save for a reference by Mr. A. J. Cummings in the *News Chronicle* nearly three weeks later. The *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent neither confirmed nor denied his report of an American decision to cease to employ Sir John Simon as an intermediary. Judging from his subsequent silence, the great resentment at Sir John's phrase must quickly have faded away. Nor did he, apparently, investigate further the allegation about the Paris Council meeting. Mr. Cummings mentioned this, but not the supposed " last straw " and its consequences, on November 21st in the course of an attack upon the Foreign Secretary :

> On the American side it is even alleged against him, with what degree of justice I cannot say, that when the American Government had declared its willingness to withdraw its Ambassador from Tokyo, if the League Council decided on a diplomatic rupture with Japan, Sir John failed to communicate this decision to the other delegations.

Mr. Cummings, it seems, made no effort to ascertain whether there was any truth in the allegation. Surely his American informants provided him with something more to go upon than a bare assertion, unless, indeed, he did not get his information direct from " the American side."

This particular incident has been dealt with at some length because it provides a foretaste of Left journalistic behaviour after the December meeting of the League Assembly. It was also part of a wider campaign in criticism of British policy and of Sir John Simon. On the same day as its Geneva Correspondent's " last straw " dispatch, the *Guardian* in its editorial complained that this country had " postured for too long." It went back to the Paris Council meeting and to the American Note of January 7th, 1932, in these terms :

> When the League Council met a year ago in Paris, it had the

certainty of United States support for a demand that Japanese troops should be withdrawn to the railway zone ; the British member's attitude was such that nothing was done except to appoint the Commission of Enquiry and leave the Japanese their " freedom of action " against " bandits." On January 7th the State Department warned Japan that no *de facto* situation contrary to treaties would have the recognition of the United States ; it hoped that other Governments would follow suit, but Britain " saw no reason for endorsing " Mr. Stimson because the Japanese had promised to respect the " open door." A " fence " who found a burglar working on a safe might think the principle a good one, but Britain cannot thus connive at robbery.

Despite the ambiguity in the word " demand," the reader will need no demonstration of the misleading impression conveyed about the American attitude at the time of the Paris Council meeting. Nor will he fail to note the omission of a whole series of relevant facts about the policy of the British Government in regard to non-recognition, and, particularly, the fact that the British Government had " followed suit."

This article in the *Guardian* and that in the *World Telegram* quoted above[1] show once again that on both sides of the Atlantic the habit of talking as though Great Britain and the other League States had not " followed suit " was being developed.

" To find good reasons for inaction is no policy," declared the *Guardian.* It hoped that Britain would at last discover and assert one. What did it mean by " action " ? What special meaning did it attach to the word " policy " ? " Action," it seems, ought to have been taken even if there were good reasons against it. A " policy," apparently, had to be " discovered "—certainly the *Guardian* did not suggest one. On November 17th an editorial on Baldwin's speech of the 10th, after declaring that, as all men knew, Japan had broken at least three treaties, proceeded :

> Any statesman, any Government which realised how vital it was to strengthen the force of treaties, of international good faith, of the moral authority embodied in the League of Nations, would from the first have upheld the Covenant firmly and loyally against Japan. Had that been done —and it could have been done, and the British Government could have led in the doing of it—the potential law-breakers in Europe, whoever they may be, and they are not a few, would have known that the opinion ranged against them, the opinion ranged on the side of international good faith, was vigilant and strong.

[1] See footnote, p. 266.

The right policy, it appears—the "action" required—was to "uphold" the Covenant "firmly and loyally." But how? The *Guardian* spoke of the "*moral* authority of the League" and of ranging "*opinion.*"

In another editorial on the same day, the *Guardian* again dwelt on the qualities of the Lytton Report, which, it said, was outstanding by its perfect fairness and transparent clarity. It was unanimous, exhaustive and constructive. "The whole embittered complex of Manchuria is treated with a due regard for all the arguments advanced by either side." The Japanese, the article proceeded, were letting it be thought that they would not consider any sort of compromise, but that was a bargaining attitude, and should be so regarded. Japan is "neither rich enough nor strong enough to stand against the world if the League and the United States agree upon a common policy." And, said the *Guardian*, the basis for a common policy is now before the Council.

7. The Japanese Observations

The publication of the Japanese Government's observations on the Lytton Report, and the meeting of the League Council on November 21st, led to editorial comment in most of the daily newspapers.

There was no reference to the Far East in the King's Speech, and no speaker in the House of Commons raised the subject during the Debate on the Address (November 22nd-28th). In the Press, certain divergences of opinion may be noted.

The *Daily Mail*, on November 21st, considered that the Japanese reply would convince all reasonable people that Japan had right on her side. Particularly important was Japan's reminder that China was in a state of utter chaos, without any effective Government. Japan's rights in Manchuria were declared to be essential to her security and her very existence, and for that reason Japan would never tamely surrender them. "If she did, the certain fate of Manchukuo would be to relapse into anarchy under the corrupt and cruel Chinese mandarins and ultimately to fall into the hands of the Soviet—as Mongolia has done already." The *Mail* persisted in assuming that there was a project on foot to evict the Japanese from Manchuria. The "misguided idealists," it declared, "mean to make strenuous efforts to force Great Britain into some wild scheme of economic and financial boycott of Japan, which they hope

would drive Japan from Manchuria." That would mean war, and it was therefore " of supreme importance that the bellicose pacifists at Geneva should be made to understand that in no circumstances are the British people going to be dragged into a conflict with Japan " —" their former faithful ally and present friend "—whose " mission in Manchuria is a civilising and humanising one."

The *Daily Herald*, on the same day, considered the Japanese observations a direct challenge to the League. A more definite defiance could hardly be imagined than the Japanese Government's declaration that they could " not allow either the necessity of these operations or their appropriateness to be the subject of dispute." The issue, said this paper, had widened beyond that of a Sino-Japanese dispute. What was at stake now was the future of the League and the whole of the " peace machinery " regarded with such deliberate contempt by Tokyo.

The Japanese observations produced only the brief editorial comment in the *News Chronicle* on November 21st that Japan's " flat rejection " of the Lytton Report at least showed us " where we stand." Mr. A. J. Cummings, however, discussed the position that day at considerable length. What mattered, he said, was that the League should " pass judgment " clearly and unequivocally. He declared (in heavy type) that there was no longer any weight in the argument that " a formal denunciation of Japan would provoke her to defy the League and make war upon the world "—an argument of the use of which it would be difficult to find any evidence. Mr. Cummings's way of putting it is revealing—he was writing of a " judgment," a " formal denunciation," not of the application of sanctions. Japan's economic position, he said, was going from bad to worse : she could barely sustain her forces in Manchukuo itself.

Mr. Cummings then proceeded to attack the Foreign Secretary for having pursued what he called a policy of " drift and passive connivance at Japanese aggression," and spoke of " adroit official propaganda suggesting the danger of war with Japan and thus playing upon the genuinely pacifist feelings of the British people, who are determined in no circumstances to be dragged into another armed conflict "—another revealing passage. Sir John Simon was accused of being more responsible than any other Western statesman for having muffed " the chance of making immediately and dramatically effective the machinery of peace." This chance, he said, had existed " a year ago, immediately after Japan delivered her first

military stroke at Mukden." Mr. Cummings did not say what "dramatically effective action" should have been taken at that very early stage. Nor did he give any ground for the charge against Sir John. The nearest he got to it was to mention the allegation "on the American side" dealt with above. Mr. Cummings apparently forgot, moreover, that Sir John Simon did not become Foreign Secretary until nearly two months after "the first military stroke at Mukden." The League Council, unsupported by Great Britain (the article proceeded), had hesitated and was lost. But the smaller States were now resolute; and the State Department at Washington, "savagely angry at its own early vacillations," had virtually assumed the leadership of the League. To what end the smaller States were resolute, and in what respect the State Department was giving the lead, were matters left unexplained. The context suggests that Mr. Cummings's answer would have been: "In denouncing Japan." In a telephone message from Geneva, published on November 23rd, Mr. Cummings envisaged British support of a non-recognition declaration, and, after a further attempt at mediation which was almost certain to fail, the raising "in an acute form" of the question of Japan's membership of the League.

The *Guardian*, in an editorial on November 21st, asserted once again, and in strong terms, its view of the vital importance of the Manchurian question. China, it declared, had become the symbol of much more than a territorial dispute.

> She is the symbol to the members of the League of a struggle between principles the issue of which, when their day comes, may decide the fate of any one of them. If they abandon China to the thrusts of her enemy they had best beware lest her spectre haunt them at their feasts and enter, like the blood-boltered Banquo, to push them from their stools.

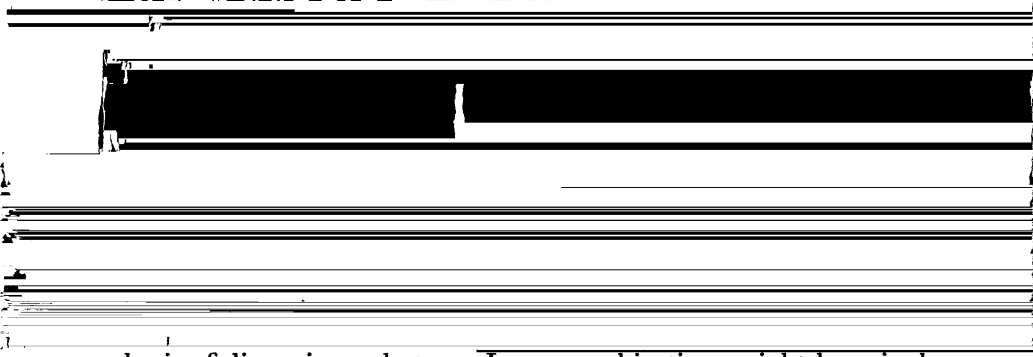
This editorial is of special interest because of its treatment of the Lytton Report. After saying that the Commission's impartiality had been everywhere recognised, it proceeded "to recall what the Report does say." And, according to the article, the Report found (1) That the Japanese operations of September 1931 were not legitimate measures of self-defence; (2) that "Manchukuo" was not the outcome of a genuine and spontaneous independence movement, and (3) that the Manchurian population regarded the "Manchukuo Government" as an instrument of the Japanese. It will be noted that this account of what the Report said was wholly one-sided. The article went on to say that Japan's position as a Great

Power relieved " no one, no people, no Government, of the task of resisting the great injustice which she has perpetrated." It assumed that the League would accept the Lytton Report, and invite both Japan and China to accept its proposals also :

> If Japan refuses, which we hope she will not do, the League will be compelled to show its united disapproval of her actions and its intention under no pretext ever to accept their consequences. In all such measures it will be supported by the United States.

United disapproval and non-recognition, therefore, were the only measures envisaged by the *Guardian* at this stage.

Two days later, November 23rd, the paper took the line in another editorial that the League must adopt the Lytton Report as



a basis of discussion, whatever Japanese objections might be raised. And, to those who were insisting upon the danger of a Japanese withdrawal from Geneva, it was urged that Japan was face to face with grave financial dangers, and could not still persist in face of a united world. On the 26th, a brief leader said that the League had had a thorough training in Japanese methods, and could not let them triumph any longer. The paper had nothing more to say editorially about measures to prevent such a triumph.

The Geneva Correspondent, however, referred on November 24th to an " interesting juridical question "—" namely, whether Japan can be held to have ' resorted to war ' by refusing to evacuate Manchuria if requested to do so or to acquiesce in the decision of the Assembly, whatever it may be ; and, if not, whether Article 16 of the Covenant (Sanctions) can be applied," and said that the texts of Articles 15 and 16 were not as clear or as comprehensive as they might be. This Correspondent also said that Germany was undoubtedly supporting Japan ; and had always done so, at any rate since the Von Papen Government came into office. Reference was made to the attitude of the German delegation at the time of the League Council's Note of February 16th, 1932.

It is interesting to note that on the 25th this Correspondent was

how he (and others) were completely unable to view even a relatively minor question of procedure with any degree of impartiality. If Sir John Simon opposed the Japanese point of view even on such a question, the *Guardian's* Correspondent immediately began to think that this betokened some significant change in British policy. If, on the other hand, Sir John supported the Japanese point of view to any degree on any point, of whatever degree of importance, then this Correspondent hastened to denounce him and his policy as pro-Japanese. The same is true, in particular, of the *Herald's* Correspondent, Mr. W. N. Ewer.

In the *Times* on November 23rd, Mr. O. M. Green had a letter in which he said that the great majority of commentators on the Lytton Report " would seem to have looked only at the parts dealing with Japan's actions in Manchuria," whereas " the sections on China's internal condition are surely of equal, if not greater, importance." He took the view that, unless the Report were taken as a whole, and as much attention given to what it said of China as to what it said of Manchuria, no permanent settlement in the Far East was possible. " That is implicit in the whole Report and in much that Lord Lytton himself has said since his return." Mr. Green was possibly stimulated to write his letter as a result of the *Guardian's* account on the 21st of what the Lytton Report had said.

The *Times* itself, on November 23rd, had an important editorial on the subject. Like the *Guardian*, it again stressed the Report's impartiality. But, unlike the *Guardian*, it did not give a one-sided account of what the Report said. There was, said the *Times*, " no facile attribution of right or wrong."

> On the contrary, the narrative of events during the long period of years in which the present dispute has been growing distributes responsibility for it *seriatim* and with complete detachment ; and the conflict is seen to be an almost inevitable struggle for power in a region which is racially Chinese but economically vital to Japan. Neither country is blameless for the violent turn which events have taken there lately ; and it is impossible that the League Council, even if it wished to do so, should pass upon one or another party a sentence of guilty or not guilty.

The *Times* held that the League's task was " gradually to establish a system which can be accepted by both sides as giving satisfaction to their respective political and economic rights." The Lytton Report had laid down the lines of such a solution. The establishment of the nominally independent Republic of Manchukuo made the

immediate application of the Report's recommendations more difficult, and the Report itself seemed to make the existence of an effective Central Government in China a condition of the establishment of its proposed condominium in Manchuria. For those reasons alone, therefore, there was much to be said for a policy of going slow. The *Times* urged that the League should realise the limitations of its power. It could not re-transform by a stroke of the pen the Republic of Manchukuo into Chinese provinces. On the other hand, its members ought most definitely to refuse to recognise the State of Manchukuo, the existence of which conflicted absolutely with the findings of the Lytton Commission, on the basis of which the League clearly had to find its solution. The League, declared the *Times*, must refuse to accept any settlement which did not meet the legitimate needs and wishes of the Manchurian population.

On November 26th the *New Statesman*, ascribing the position of the League Council to its own " poltroonery," asked what the League was to do assuming that Japan rejected its proposals. There were three alternatives. The first, " to wash their hands of the whole business," would be " infamy and imbecility." The second was " to declare solemnly that Japan has violated her obligations and that none of us will recognise her Manchukuo." The third was " to put positive pressure on Japan." In this connection, the *New Statesman* thought that the withdrawal of Ambassadors from Tokyo would be a gesture the Japanese would not take lightly, while " an emphatic announcement " that no financial assistance would be available from abroad would be " an economic sanction of some weight." These, the article proceeded, were " threats, to be sure, which nobody wants to make." But the risk of such pressure leading to war was " infinitesimal." " How could Japan afford to wage a war against a united world ? The real risk of war lies in disunion and timidity at Geneva."

The *Observer's* view next day was that the real danger lay in " an apparently widespread levity of comment in Western Europe." The clear need was for immense patience, immense care to allay anger and encourage mutual confidence between Japan and China. " Yet on nearly every hand we hear crude, foolish attacks upon Japan, uninspired by any constructive thought." Geneva needed saving from its friends. " The enthusiast who demands that the Covenant be vindicated by virtual war with Japan is the Covenant's chiefest enemy." No war could be localised. And the shortest way to war

and general calamity would be the continued " baiting " of Japan. It is difficult to understand the *Observer's* anxiety. Certainly, in this country, there was at this time no serious demand for action which might accurately be described as " virtual war with Japan." The *New Statesman* alone in the Press proposed any kind of " positive action." None the less, " baiting " of Japan was habitual in the Press of the Left, despite the nature of the Lytton Report and its proposals for a settlement, and also despite the fact that this same section of the Press continued to clamour for disarmament.

A striking example is provided by the *Daily Herald*, which, on November 28th, in an editorial headed " War Drums," attacked the " opponents of disarmament " who were " working, quietly and persistently, to stultify the popular will."

> In our own country the propaganda against reducing naval and aerial armaments is especially pronounced. This week the House of Commons is to be asked to view with " apprehension " the " serious diminution " of the Royal Navy, and yet another effort will be made to alarm the nation by the beating of the war drum. Only a few weeks ago there was in the Commons a similar exhibition by the champions of big air forces.

Mr. Churchill was singled out for criticism. His " plea for armed security " was described as " the most mischievous of all delusions."[1]

On the other hand, the Geneva Correspondent of the *Daily Express* (Mr. A. L. Easterman) said that the League would be put in the tragic position of " either calling on the world States to combine to force Japan to her knees, or to surrender its prestige and authority by having to proclaim its helplessness."

In the House of Lords, on November 29th, the day after the League Council had decided to transmit the Lytton Report to the Assembly, several speakers referred to the subject during the course of a debate chiefly devoted to disarmament. Lord Cecil said that the question was whether the parties would accept the Lytton Commission's proposals as a basis of discussion. He contented himself with expressing the hope that the British Government would offer the strongest possible support to the Commission's Report, and would do their utmost to see that it was adopted and accepted by the League. Lord Ponsonby remarked that " firm action " might be necessary. Lord Reading, in approving the Report, said he did not mean that all its findings had to be accepted either by the

[1] This was a reference to his speech in the House of Commons on November 23rd, 1932.

Government or by the League. Lord Lothian, on this occasion, stressed the " long continued weakness or disintegration of government in China."

> If we are to solve the problem of the Far East, one of the first conditions must be the creation of a modern and relatively efficient Government in China itself. I think that ought to be borne in mind, and attention should not be exclusively concentrated on the Lytton Report.

For the Government, Lord Hailsham said that all their influence would be exercised " in the direction of guiding the deliberations towards a solution, if one can be found, which shall be satisfactory to the League as a whole, to the Powers most closely interested in the problems of the Far East and to both parties to the dispute themselves."

The only editorial comment in the daily Press came from the *Daily Telegraph*, which had been silent on the subject since October 3rd. Lord Hailsham, it said, had seemed to suggest, " what is undoubtedly the case," that progress would be neither easy nor rapid :

> He did not give—and no member of the Government has given—the slightest encouragement to the view that a verdict has been found against Japan by the Report of the Lytton Commission. That view, as Lord Lytton himself has lately pointed out, is entirely erroneous, and the equities of the dispute, on which Japan has taken her stand from the beginning, are at this moment *sub judice* at Geneva.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"WHAT MATSUOKA SAID"

1. "ENCOURAGING JAPAN"

THE League Assembly met on December 6th, 1932, to consider the Report of the Lytton Commission, and on December 9th adopted a resolution referring the Report to its Special Committee of Nineteen [1] with instructions to draw up proposals for a settlement of the dispute.

In subsequent discussion of the Assembly's proceedings, there has been a remarkable concentration of attention upon Sir John Simon's speech of December 7th.

We have already noted accusations that the British Government, and Sir John Simon in particular, were "encouraging," "supporting" or "justifying" Japanese policy in Manchuria. The charge was made more persistently after the Foreign Secretary's speech to the December Assembly. As time went on, it became a prominent feature of partisan controversy. From the innumerable repetitions of this charge we select a few at random from speeches delivered in the House of Commons:

1. Sir John Simon "constituted himself the apologist for Japan . . . this Government encouraged every kind of forceful action." (Mr. Attlee, October 22nd, 1935.)

2. "When Japan invaded Manchuria, the then Foreign Secretary did not support the League of Nations against Japan; he became the spokesman for Japan against the League of Nations." (Mr. Gallacher, December 4th, 1935.[2])

3. Sir John Simon "by his speeches over here and his actions, aided and abetted the military Powers. . . . He discouraged the Soviet Union and the United States from taking any action." (Mr. Philips Price, December 5th, 1935.)

Mr. Dalton's masterly variation on this theme deserves mention:

Undoubtedly, the action taken by his (Mr. Eden's) predecessor, now

[1] Appointed on March 11th, 1932.

[2] This must not be interpreted as an accusation against Lord Reading. Mr. Gallacher, like so many others, had forgotten that Sir John Simon was not Foreign Secretary until two months after "Japan invaded Manchuria."

the Home Secretary, was not wholeheartedly pro-League, and, therefore, not altogether anti-Japanese. (November 5th, 1936.)

After the Assembly meeting in December 1932, Sir John Simon's speech became the chief "evidence" in support of the charge of "encouragement" or "justification" of Japan. Criticisms of the speech, based more particularly upon an alleged incident after its delivery, were to be even more popular perhaps than those criticisms, already examined, based upon an alleged British rejection of American offers of co-operation in resistance to Japanese aggression. It will be convenient to deal first with the supposed occurrence after Sir John spoke. That conveyed an impression which exercised much influence upon interpretations of the speech, and which widely took the place of the speech itself.

2. MATSUOKA

In any discussion of the Sino-Japanese dispute there was—and there is still—bound to be some reference to "what Matsuoka said about Simon's speech." "What Matsuoka said" is usually taken as clinching the whole matter. It has been easily the most popular debating point. That Matsuoka did say what he is alleged to have said became an article of faith. That what he said, if he said it, justifies the popular interpretation is seldom questioned.

Mr. Zilliacus was to give extensive currency to one of the most striking versions of the alleged incident. He described Sir John Simon's speech as one "which produced a feeling bordering on nausea in the assembled delegates and journalists."

> On going out of the room, Mr. Matsuoka, the Japanese delegate, was *overheard to exclaim delightedly* that Sir John Simon had said in *half an hour* what he had been trying to tell the Assembly for *weeks*.[1]

Lord Cecil, as might be expected, was on the whole more prudent when he came to write *The Great Experiment*. He said (p. 234):

> The British delegate, Sir John Simon, supported more or less by Canada, Australia and Germany, *made a forensic defence of Japan*, and, *according to the account of some of those present was formally thanked by M. Matsuoka*, the Japanese delegate.

[1] *Inquest on Peace*, p. 21. Author's italics throughout these quotations.

3. In the House of Commons

Points of this kind are not always repeated in the House of Commons however wide their currency may be outside. In the House, greater caution is desirable. But, in this instance, the matter was referred to on several occasions.

The first was on February 27th, 1933. Morgan Jones, who was sometimes a little careless, as we shall see, said in the course of his speech :

> I recall . . . the simple fact that when the Foreign Secretary spoke at Geneva on the Lytton Report the greater part of his speech was devoted, not to an examination of Japan's activities but to an examination of Chinese demerits. So satisfactory was the speech of the Foreign Secretary to the Japanese delegate at Geneva that that gentleman said that the British Foreign Secretary had stated the Japanese case more completely in *three-quarters of an hour* than he had been able to do in *eight days*.

Sir John Simon was not in the Chamber when Morgan Jones made that statement, and no further reference appears to have been made to the matter there until nearly a year later. On February 7th, 1934, Richard Wallhead, in the course of a debate on defence, said that Sir John Simon had done his best to whitewash Japan, and, he went on,

> so well did the Foreign Secretary argue the case before the League of Nations that the Japanese representative, Mr. Matsuoka, *thanked the Foreign Secretary* for having put his case before the League better than he could have done it himself.

Once again Sir John Simon was absent ; but he was present on the third occasion, some six months afterwards, on November 22nd, 1934, when Mr. Seymour Cocks said :

> In the international sphere, when one country attacks another country against the principles of the League of Nations, or when some country starts to rearm against the provisions of a treaty, and someone goes to the Government of that country and says " Are you not afraid of the consequences of breaking these international agreements ? " I am afraid that they would sometimes reply : " No, the Foreign Minister of England is a great advocate, and he can put our case far better than we can put it ourselves." That is precisely what I think the Japanese Minister or delegate at Geneva *said to the right hon. Gentleman*—

At this point Sir John Simon interrupted :

> No, he did not.

Mr. Cocks proceeded :

He said something of that kind—

Sir John again intervened :

No, he did not. It was said in the papers that he did, and I can give the hon. Gentleman the name of the paper.

Mr. Cocks thereupon said :

I quite accept the statement of the Foreign Secretary that that remark was not made, but, if it had been made, it would have been a justifiable remark.

Sir John Simon's denial of the story did not prevent Mr. Stimson from giving further currency to it when he wrote his book in 1936. It did not prevent Mr. Herbert Morrison from saying in the House of Commons on October 29th, 1937 :

Think of the China situation in 1932. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, when Foreign Secretary, played the game of the aggressor—there is no doubt about it—and he knew what he was doing, and the aggressor thanked him for his services.

Nor did it prevent Lord Cecil from making the remarks already quoted in his 1940 book. We refrain from continuing the list to include the many others, with less exalted reputations, who continued to circulate the story, despite Sir John's denial, and without mentioning that denial. It will be noted, however, that the story had several versions, and in some of them Matsuoka was not alleged to have made any remark *to* Sir John Simon.

4. The Sources

Where did the story or stories come from ? Mr. Stimson got his version from Mr. A. J. Toynbee's *Survey* for 1933. He quoted Mr. Toynbee in a footnote, as follows, and without any comment of his own :

As for Sir John Simon, he held out a helping hand to Mr. Matsuoka by drawing attention to certain passages in the Lytton Report which brought out the complicated character of the circumstances of the dispute and the weak points in the Chinese case, and which submitted, *à propos* of future action in Manchuria, that " a mere restoration of the *status quo ante* would be no solution." . . . After listening to Sir John Simon's speech, Mr. Matsuoka *was reported* to have remarked that " Sir John Simon had

said in *half an hour*, in a few well-chosen phrases, what he—Mr. Matsuoka —had been trying to say *in his bad English* for the *last ten days*."

Who "reported" this alleged remark by Matsuoka? Mr. Toynbee's reference was: "The *Manchester Guardian*, December 8th, 1932." The *Guardian*, possibly, was "the paper" alluded to by Sir John Simon. But Sir John also spoke of "the papers." In fact, three daily newspapers carried the story on December 8th.

In the *Daily Herald*, Mr. W. N. Ewer, writing from Geneva, began his message with these words:

> At the end of Sir John Simon's speech in the Assembly this afternoon, M. Matsuoka, the Japanese delegate, *said delightedly to a friend:* "Sir John has said in *half an hour* what the Japanese delegation has been trying to say for *ten days*."

The message was printed in the *Herald* under the heading: "Sir John Simon puts Japan's Case to the League. 'Better than I did myself,' says M. Matsuoka."

In the *News Chronicle* a message from its Geneva Correspondent (not Mr. A. J. Cummings, who had left Geneva some 48 hours previously, but the paper's local Correspondent) contained the following:

> The impression created on the Japanese by Sir John Simon was summed up in a remark made afterwards by M. Matsuoka, when he said: "Sir John has said in *half an hour* what I have been trying to say for *ten days*."

This was the concluding passage in a relatively brief dispatch; and the matter was not referred to in the headlines.

The Geneva Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (Robert Dell), under the headlines "Japan Satisfied with Sir John Simon. A One-Sided Speech to the Assembly. Direct Negotiation with China Advocated. Unfair Quotations from Lytton Report," gave the story in terms substantially reproduced by Mr. Toynbee, as follows:

> Sir John Simon followed M. Paul-Boncour. The best comment on his speech was made by Mr. Matsuoka (Japan), who said that Sir John Simon had said in *half an hour* in a few well-chosen phrases what he (Mr. Matsuoka) had been trying to say in his bad English for the *last ten days*.

The three Correspondents, it will be noted, all agreed on "half an hour" and "ten days." The "ten days" raise a question. To whom and under what circumstances had Matsuoka been trying to explain himself for ten days? The Assembly was only in its second

day. The League Council had met sixteen days previously, and had terminated nine days before Sir John's speech.

It is plain that none of the three Correspondents had himself heard Matsuoka make the alleged remark. None of them claimed even to have " overheard " it. Neither the *Guardian* Correspondent nor the *News Chronicle* Correspondent gave any information about the person or persons to whom Matsuoka said what he is alleged to have said. They merely said that he said it. It seems legitimate to infer that they both accepted someone else's story. True, the *Guardian* Correspondent added the words " in a few well-chosen phrases " and " in his bad English "—but this may possibly have been " merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative." Mr. W. N. Ewer, on the other hand, told the readers of the *Herald* that Matsuoka had made the remark to " a friend." It may safely be assumed, therefore, that it was not made to Mr. Ewer himself. One wonders whether or not Mr. Ewer heard the story from Matsuoka's " friend." Conceivably, he heard it from an acquaintance of that friend. Just possibly, also, the other two Correspondents may have heard it from Mr. Ewer.

In view of the incident previously recorded (pp. 268-270) and of subsequent incidents of a similar nature in which the Correspondents of these Left papers were involved, one is bound to be highly sceptical. It will be noted, further, that none of the three Correspondents suggested that Matsuoka made his alleged comment to Sir John Simon himself, still less that Matsuoka *thanked* Sir John, either " formally " or informally. Where did *that* version of the story originate? Possibly in Mr. Ewer's reference to Matsuoka's " friend " ! If so, Mr. Ewer cannot be held responsible. It is hardly likely that he would have experienced any reluctance to mention Sir John Simon by name.

No other British Correspondent at Geneva appears to have mentioned the story. But it was quickly taken up by other organs of the Left, without, it would seem, any doubt or even inquiry into its authenticity. On December 10th the *Economist* said :

> The speech was applauded by Mr. Matsuoka with the ironical comment that Sir John Simon had said in half an hour what he had endeavoured to say for Japan in the last ten days.

On the same day, the *New Statesman* wrote :

He (Sir John Simon) practically constituted himself counsel for the defence, and Mr. Matsuoka's comment on his speech was that : " Sir John has said in half an hour what I have been trying to say for *two days*."

It would appear that the *New Statesman*, puzzled by the reference to " ten " days, took it upon itself to correct Matsuoka.

A week later, in the *New Clarion*, Professor H. J. Laski wrote :

Sir John Simon spoke so much as the spokesman of Japan that its representative *deluged him with thanks*.

Possibly that was the origin of the " Matsuoka thanked Simon " version of the story. However that may be, the story was well and truly launched on its long and as yet unfinished career.

Whether or not Matsuoka made to anyone the remark attributed to him, or anything like it, the incident is instructive as an illustration of the influence Genevan gossip and journalists' tales have had upon public opinion, and of the methods by which partisan propaganda has been conducted.

Of course, the nature of Sir John Simon's speech is not affected by what Matsuoka may have thought or said about it. The speech may be attacked or defended regardless of Japanese reactions, although, it is true, Sir John's chief critics were apparently very anxious to show that the Japanese were pleased. They welcomed any evidence, however flimsy, that might confirm the charge of British " encouragement " of Japan ; hence the popularity of the Matsuoka story. But, obviously, the charge would not collapse merely on proof that the story was false. That, it will have been noted, was the line immediately taken by Mr. Seymour Cocks when he was confronted by Sir John Simon's denial. Lord Cecil, as we shall see, did likewise, although in his case the accusation against Sir John took a different form. Anyhow, consideration of the latter's speech, and of the reactions to it, is necessary.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE "FORENSIC DEFENCE" OF JAPAN

1. The Speech of December 7th

THE debate in the League Assembly on the first day (December 6th) attracted very little notice in the British Press. Reports in general were brief, and, for the most part, stressed the "call to stand by the Covenant" on the part of the speakers. According to the *Telegraph's* Correspondent, the tenor of the speeches indicated that the Assembly was in favour of the full application of the Lytton Report. He said that the language of most of the speakers was very strong, and everyone had emphasised that this was the testing time of the League. The very brief reference in the *Express* spoke of strong criticism of Japan's "aggressive" action having been made by a number of States, including Ireland, which declared for refusal to recognise the new State of Manchukuo.

The proceedings at the Assembly on the second day and afterwards received greater publicity, and, despite other preoccupations, aroused editorial comment in all the national dailies save the *Daily Herald.* The chief point of interest was Sir John Simon's speech of the 7th.

The speech seems to have been read even less than Mr. Stimson's book. Only the *Times*, among the great dailies, gave anything like an adequate report of it next day. The *Manchester Guardian* printed a full report a fortnight afterwards (December 22nd) so that its readers might judge it for themselves. Otherwise, despite all the controversy about it, the text of the speech was never reproduced by its critics. The reader will find the official text in the Appendix to this book.

After praising the Report of the Lytton Commission, Sir John Simon directed attention to two broad features of the Report, "not always observed, but very important." The first was that the Lytton Report had brought out the really complicated character of the Manchurian problem, and in this connection Sir John quoted a passage from the Report (p. 126). But he pointed out, in order to be "entirely plain," that the complications did not in the least

affect the duty to act with justice and fairness to all according to the principles of the League.

The second feature was that the Report presented a measured criticism of both sides, neither of which accepted every statement in the Report. Sir John said that

> contrary to the impression which exists in many quarters, this Report does not give a one-sided account, painting everything black on the one side and presenting it in spotless raiments of white on the other.

He quoted a passage from the Report (p. 18) which gave as contributory causes of the conflict the use made of the economic boycott by China, and the introduction of anti-foreign propaganda into the Chinese schools. Sir John further contended that a fair account of the Report would have to include the description of the deplorable condition of Manchuria in Chapter II and the objective account of the anti-foreign boycott in Chapter VII.

But, the Foreign Secretary proceeded, after all fair allowance had been given to what the Report said on one side or the other, a fact emerged which deeply concerned the League of Nations :

> the serious fact for us is this ; that when this unhappy dispute reached its climax, the methods of the League were not employed. That is the central fact for us.

Their duty, therefore, was to defend the Covenant, and " to see as far as we can that League methods are employed in the future." Sir John then asked how that objective could best be pursued. The Lytton Report, he said, gave some guidance, though it might perhaps be considered negative guidance. He then quoted the statement in the Report (p. 127) that " a mere restoration of the *status quo ante* would be no solution," and also the passage in which the reason for that statement was set out.

Urging that they must concern themselves with the realities, Sir John expressed the view that, although neither side accepted the Report in its entirety, the League must do what it could, " with firmness but with complete friendliness to both sides," to put the Report to good use, and " to draw from its pages the inference of conciliation." They could do no other than proceed on the broad bases provided by the Report. Sir John Simon repeated that he could see no other basis. They had to stand by the principles of the League, and " in a spirit of friendliness and comradeship " to " promote conciliation."

Sir John said he was not at all opposed to direct negotiations between the parties, if they gave promise of good results, but the League could assist in the work of conciliation; and he suggested that efforts should be made to add representatives from the United States and the Soviet Union to the League's Committee.

Although (he said) there was a difference between the small Powers and the Great Powers in so far as the latter might bear the greater responsibilities and the largest risks, for all alike the Covenant of the League was their constitutional law.

> It is the reason why we are here; it is the fundamental law; it cannot be set aside by some light or thoughtless gesture, because it is the very basis upon which international co-operation is founded. We are not at liberty to disregard it. We are bound to sustain it.

The Foreign Secretary urged that a practical solution should be sought, and supported his plea by quoting the Report again, as follows:

> Criticism alone will not accomplish this: there must also be practical efforts at conciliation.

And he pointed out that "No one can conciliate who is not conciliatory."

It is not easy to account for the bitterly hostile reception of this speech in certain quarters. The record shows that the speech conformed closely to the views generally expressed in this country at the time of the Lytton Report's publication. It is even more difficult to understand why Sir John Simon should have been singled out for attack.

Critics (and some supporters) drew or implied a sharp contrast between the speeches of the delegates of the four Great Powers (but primarily that of Sir John Simon) and those of the delegates of the smaller Powers. A reading of the Assembly debates (so very poorly reported in the British Press) compels considerable modification of the picture so presented. There was no clear line of division between the Great Powers and the rest; and, although some differences of importance were revealed, these were exaggerated in much of the Press comment. It is desirable, therefore, to state their nature as precisely as possible.

2. The Smaller Powers

The debate had been opened on December 6th by the delegate of the Irish Free State, who was followed by the delegates of Czecho-

slovakia, Sweden and Norway. On the 7th speeches were delivered by the representatives of Spain, Switzerland, Greece, Guatemala and Uruguay, before Paul-Boncour spoke for France and Sir John Simon followed.

The spokesmen of the nine smaller Powers mentioned were said by the Correspondent of the *News Chronicle* (December 8th) to have expressed " clear condemnation of Japan's action in Manchuria." The *New Statesman* on December 10th wrote of " a series of strong condemnations of Japan by the lesser Powers." The *Times* on the 8th described the Foreign Secretary's speech as " a useful corrective to some of the minatory utterances which have been heard at Geneva during the last two days." The *Telegraph* on the same day said that Sir John Simon and M. Paul-Boncour had intervened " not before it was time," because the Assembly had listened to a series of speeches (the first seven were listed) all expressed with considerable warmth, all in the nature of diatribes against Japan and all delivered on behalf of Governments with lesser risks and responsibilities than those of the Great Powers. This paper proceeded :

> The burden of most of these disinterested counsels offered to the League was that the Lytton Report should be " accepted." By this was meant, as the context of the speeches made clear, that the Assembly should associate itself with certain selected passages of that Report which are unfavourable to Japan's justification of certain of her activities in Manchuria since the latest phase of an old dispute began. The tone of all these strictures suggests, in fact, that they were founded upon carefully chosen extracts from the Report circulated for purposes of propaganda.

" Diatribes " was far too strong an expression. It is true that all seven opening speeches condemned Japanese actions either directly or by implication. Perhaps the most outspoken in this respect was the delegate of the Irish Free State, who said that " an endeavour to secure the interests of Japan by methods of imperialistic expansion " seemed to him to be indicated, and that it also seemed to him that the Report had made it clear that actual infringements of the Treaties had taken place. He quoted two passages from the Report, the first about Japanese control of the Administration in Manchuria, and the second (very frequently reproduced) asserting that the new " State " was the result of the forcible seizure of the area by the Japanese armed forces. The Czechoslovak, Swedish and Swiss delegates all singled out two questions, to which the Report had given " absolutely definite," " clear," " categorical " answers ;

the first whether or not the Japanese military operations in September 1931 were in the nature of legitimate self-defence, and the second whether the new "State" was a spontaneous act of the local population or the result of Japanese military occupation. Beneš, for Czechoslovakia, specifically condemned Japan for deciding "to take the law into its own hands," and for the resulting operations. There was, he said, no possible alternative conclusion but that the Covenant had not been respected. The violations were, indeed, of "exceptional gravity." The Norwegian delegate's speech could be interpreted as comprising an implied condemnation of Japan in these respects; a similar, but less direct, implication can be detected in Señor de Madariaga's speech on behalf of Spain; while Politis, for Greece, accepting the sincerity of the Japanese case, spoke of Japan's "errors" and the duty of the Assembly to "denounce" them.

However, these condemnations of Japan were not unqualified. In the first place, nearly all these speakers emphasised the complex nature of the issues. "Exceedingly complicated" was the description of the Irish spokesman. Beneš used the adjective "complex." The Norwegian delegate spoke of the "exceptional" nature of the dispute. "Complicated and delicate" said the Spanish delegate; "very complex" was the phrase used by Politis. Secondly, in some instances condemnation was not one-sided. It is true that quotations made from the Report by the Irish and Swedish delegates were, with one exception, unfavourable to Japan. To that degree the *Telegraph's* criticism was justified. But Beneš roundly condemned the "hostile acts" of China. In view of the criticisms of Sir John Simon's speech, the passages need to be quoted:

> According to the report of the Commission and to the statements of the two parties before the Council, there were two categories of acts of that nature—namely, anti-foreign propaganda, which extended even to Chinese schools and school textbooks, thus sowing the seeds of hatred against a neighbouring people; and, above all, economic boycotting —systematic, prolonged, organised, supported and, it would appear, fomented officially. Such acts should, in my opinion, be condemned.

Beneš went on, as already mentioned, to condemn Japanese action, and to contend that the results were obviously out of all proportion to the original dispute, themselves creating a new and serious dispute. But he renewed his criticism of China in stronger terms:

> I venture to say quite frankly that, in the present case, I should have

no hesitation in categorically condemning active xenophobia, which is illegal from an international point of view, and officially organised economic boycotting, as acts which are prejudicial to world peace and should be unsparingly punished. In the general solution of the dispute, proper consideration will have to be given to the complaints submitted in this connection.

Politis also spoke strongly on this point—" the first point which must be emphasised." Indeed, he used stronger terms than those in which he criticised Japan :

> Japan had serious cause to complain of China's attitude, which was characterised by the twofold fact of the unilateral denunciation of treaties and the anti-foreign agitation which found expression in systematic boycotting organised or abetted by the Government. Those facts, attested by the Commission of Enquiry, are, I think, uncontested and incontestable. They constitute a kind of aggression and a flagrant violation of international law.

How did these first spokesmen of the smaller Powers envisage the Assembly's task ? What did they suggest should be done ? Most important, were they opposed to a further effort at conciliation ? Did they propose that action should be taken under paragraph 3 of Article XV or that the Assembly should proceed at once to apply paragraph 4 of that Article ?

In the view of the Irish delegate the task was to find a just verdict on the facts and to seek a solution equitable to all the interests concerned. Beneš spoke of " our search for an equitable solution," and said that he did not wish "to stand in judgment on either of the parties to the dispute." He urged that, before adopting any recommendation under paragraph 4, it behoved them "to address to both parties a friendly, earnest and fervent appeal—nay, supplication—not to oblige us to sit in judgment upon them." It was the Assembly's duty, Beneš said, to help the two parties to settle the dispute by " sincere, frank and amicable conciliation." Only if they failed to do so (within a period which could not be unduly prolonged) would it be the Assembly's duty to take their own decisions. The Swedish delegate spoke of the Assembly's duty to find a solution " which will take due account of the permanent and legitimate interests of the parties to the dispute," and he assumed that negotiations for a settlement would be " instituted during the next few days." The spokesman of Norway, on the other hand, considered that the immediate duty of the Assembly was " to arrive,

under the terms of the Covenant, at a finding with regard to the facts and circumstances of the dispute," and in that connection suggested the adoption of the first part of the Lytton Report. That would have meant a partial application of paragraph 4 of Article XV. But the Norwegian delegate went on to express confidence that the parties would make a serious attempt at conciliation "under the auspices of the League authorities." It was, he said, their duty under the Covenant to do so, and it was also the duty of the other League members to help them in this work of conciliation. He added a suggestion about inviting "certain Powers, not members of the League, who have big interests in the Far East," to assist in "the essential work of conciliation."

On the next day Señor de Madariaga expressed a similar view, in more definite terms. The Assembly's duty, he said, was to attempt conciliation, "with, of course, a mind open to any and every solution that commands the approval of both the countries concerned, and, in particular, that will safeguard once for all the important and legitimate interests justly invoked by Japan," but, before doing that, it was necessary for the League to "lay down the law on what has passed." The delegate of Spain proceeded to argue that conciliation had to be effected on "a clear basis and on a definite ground"; that the starting point must be "our collective view of the facts"; and that the Assembly had a duty to "pronounce on the findings and conclusions of the Report." The Swiss delegate, however, urged that the Assembly should request the Committee of Nineteen to initiate conciliation procedure and supervise it. Such procedure, he said, was prescribed in paragraph 3. If, as he hoped, the dispute was settled in that way, it would avoid the necessity of resorting to the procedure of paragraph 4 *et seq.* of the Covenant. At the same time, he held that the conciliation procedure was dependent upon the prior establishment by the Assembly of certain rules, principles and fundamental premises, to form "a framework and guarantee of possible and moral negotiation." Politis endorsed this view, and he also expressed the hope that the application of paragraph 3 would suffice. The Guatemalan delegate, who followed, said that the spirit of conciliation permeated the Report and inspired its final conclusions; while the spokesman of Uruguay approved wholeheartedly of Beneš's speech, endorsing particularly the proposal to appoint a Conciliation Commission.

All the spokesmen of the smaller Powers who preceded Paul-

Boncour and Sir John Simon, therefore, favoured a further effort at conciliation. Some of them—the Irish, Norwegian and Spanish delegates—wanted first a " verdict " or " finding " on the facts and circumstances of the dispute. That appeared to imply the immediate application of paragraph 4 of Article XV. The Norwegian delegate suggested the adoption of Part I of the Lytton Report ; the Irish spokesman expressed himself in favour of " the definite acceptance of the Report " ; and that seemed also to be the implication of the Spanish delegate's speech. No doubt, in the view of these speakers, the judgment envisaged was one primarily associating the Assembly with those main conclusions of the Report which were unfavourable to Japan. The attitude of the Swedish delegate, though not so expressed in his speech, was essentially the same, as further developments were to show. The Irish spokesman, after quoting the passage from the Report that a mere restoration of the *status quo ante* would be no solution, quoted also the statement that the maintenance and recognition of the then existing régime in Manchuria would be equally unsatisfactory. He proceeded to advocate a declaration by the Assembly of intention to refuse to recognise " Manchukuo," and, later, announced the intention of his own Government to refuse recognition. The Swedish delegate also favoured a non-recognition declaration.

Other delegates — those of Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Greece—wanted action taken under paragraph 3 of Article XV. They hoped to avoid altogether resort to paragraph 4, and, presumably, to avoid a " judgment." But, at the same time, the spokesmen of the two last-mentioned of these States thought it desirable that the Assembly should lay down the general principles upon which the task of conciliation should proceed, and it is plain that they looked to the Lytton Report to provide such a basis. It may be noted in this connection that the Swiss delegate emphasised the Report's statement that a return to the *status quo ante* would not be a desirable solution.

3. The Great Powers

It is already obvious that to set the speeches of Paul-Boncour and Sir John Simon over against those of the preceding spokesmen of the smaller Powers as a body is highly misleading. In one respect only, but an important one, was there a contrast of that kind. The French

delegate uttered no word of condemnation of either party to the dispute, while Sir John Simon refrained from any direct condemnation. In other respects the two speeches provided a marked contrast only with those of the small group of lesser Powers advocating "judgment" prior to a renewed attempt at conciliation.

Paul-Boncour began by dwelling upon "a whole host of complexities such as could not be matched in any other part of the globe" and upon "the constitutional weakness of the League itself." The general idea emerging from the Lytton Report (he said) was that the future régime in Manchuria should be neither a return to the *status quo ante* nor the continuance of the existing situation. The French spokesman went on to endorse and clarify the view expressed by the second group of smaller Powers. The Assembly, he said, had two tasks. The first, "an inevitable duty," was that of conciliation: the second, which "we hope not to have to fulfil," was to make a report under paragraph 4 of Article XV. In both respects, the Lytton Report should provide the basis. The second part of that Report, therefore, should be taken as the basis for the "immediate and urgent task of conciliation." The plain implication of Paul-Boncour's argument was that the first part, "which deals with the past and with recent or remote responsibilities," should be put aside for the time being.

The only difference in the matter as distinct from the form of Sir John Simon's speech was that he, unlike Paul-Boncour, emphasised the "inference" of conciliation which, in his view, was to be drawn from the first part of the Lytton Report dealing with the facts of the dispute.

The Italian and German delegates addressed the Assembly later on the same day. Their speeches were markedly different in spirit from those of Paul-Boncour and Sir John Simon. Aloisi was plainly impatient with much that had been said. There was no point in speaking about fidelity to the Covenant. It was not the Assembly's task to "establish a gospel version of events in China or to pass judgment." He dismissed somewhat contemptuously "more or less theoretical considerations regarding our own responsibility" and "mere rigid and abstract statements." The Lytton Report, Aloisi asserted, was based from beginning to end on the idea of bringing about conciliation between the two parties; and its recommendations should be regarded as a starting-point for a settlement rather than as absolutely rigid rules. Both he and von

Neurath approved of Sir John Simon's suggestion that the United States and the Soviet Union should be asked to participate in the work of the League's committee. Von Neurath also deprecated any approach to the question " on the basis of more or less abstract principles." The League, he said, had to recognise " the vital forces which inspire nations and the natural trend of their development," and must try to divert them into peaceful channels. The Geneva Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* wrote on December 8th that some of the passages in von Neurath's speech were " repetition almost word for word of certain passages in Sir John Simon's speech," but the texts do not confirm any such impression. The further statement by the same Correspondent that " although he did not say so in so many words, Baron von Neurath clearly indicated that Manchukuo should be recognised," was clearly not without justification.

4. Other Lesser Powers

Sir John Simon was followed on December 7th by the Netherlands delegate, who held that it would be better not to come to a decision immediately on such questions as whether the Japanese were acting in self-defence or whether the Chinese boycott was a peaceful weapon. They were, he said, still at the phase described in paragraph 3 of Article XV. If their efforts to effect a settlement failed, they would be obliged to make a report under paragraph 4, but that was not their concern at the moment. This speaker, however, laid down two conditions : first, that the Lytton Report must serve as a basis for the efforts at conciliation, and, secondly, that, pending a final settlement in accordance with the Treaties, no member of the League should recognise Manchukuo.

The delegate of Denmark, also on the 7th, and most of the speakers on the 8th, added nothing of any importance to the discussion. As the Turkish delegate said, everything pointed to a procedure of conciliation in accordance with paragraph 3. Three of the speeches on the 8th, however, are of special interest. The Canadian delegate took the view that the first task of the Assembly was to exhaust the possibilities of conciliatory settlement under paragraph 3, adding that any discussion of sanctions or action against a party unwilling to accept settlement would be out of place at that stage. The delegate of Chile, after saying that it was

eminently desirable to use the conciliation procedure of paragraph 3, held that the recommendation procedure of paragraph 4 should only be employed in extreme cases, " and then with all necessary caution." He added, however, that, if circumstances demanded it, the League would have to exhaust all the resources at its disposal. Mr. Bruce, for Australia, asserted that there were two tasks : (1) To ensure the maintenance of League principles, and (2) to effect a settlement of the dispute in accordance with those principles. He declared that the authority of the League was based upon moral, not physical, force, and that its moral authority could best be maintained by " a wise and generous sympathy and understanding." He opposed any resolution expressing censure, either open or implied, because any such censure would make very difficult, if not impossible, the task of conciliation.

Both the Canadian and Australian delegates dwelt at some length on the absence of an effective Central Government in China, and the consequential fact that issues had arisen which were hardly contemplated when the League Covenant was framed. The Canadian spokesman spoke in severely critical terms of China :

> It seems to me that the institution and maintenance by the Chinese Government or with its passive approval of attempts at intimidation against the citizens of any State which is a party to that treaty, or any attempt by unilateral action to abrogate or diminish the treaty rights of any other State in or in respect of China, must be regarded as a grave infringement by China of the existing rights of other States and manifestly provocative of emergency action by such other State for the purpose of protecting such rights. In our law, we affirm as an invariable maxim of good conduct that he who seeks equity must first do equity.

He went on to say, however :

> Even if the Japanese Government felt impelled to deal suddenly and temporarily with similar conditions in a great emergency, it would now be impossible to justify the development, out of its own emergent action, of a permanent occupation of any part of a neighbouring State, or the permanent extension of its own territorial rights therein.

Mr. Bruce, on his part, was content to say that the Report showed that the rights and wrongs were neither on the one side nor on the other.

Two draft Resolutions were presented on December 7th. The first of these, proposed by Czechoslovakia, the Irish Free State, Spain and Sweden, " embodied the principal findings of the Lytton

Report against Japan "—to use the words of the *Manchester Guardian* on December 9th—and declared against the recognition of Manchukuo ; but at the same time authorised the Committee of Nineteen to invite American and Soviet co-operation with a view to ensuring a settlement of the dispute on the basis of the findings.[1]

During the debate on December 8th, Matsuoka intervened to request the withdrawal of this Resolution, which he said " condemns Japan and is one-sided," being " drafted in an accusing spirit which I deem altogether unwarranted." He added : " I am afraid that the handling of this Resolution may, I even think will, entail consequences perhaps not intended or anticipated by the authors of the Resolution." These remarks were interpreted in some quarters as a threat that Japan would leave the League if the Resolution were passed. However, no other delegation supported the Resolution, and Czechoslovakia was also associated with Switzerland in sponsoring the second draft Resolution, which was adopted without opposition, as already mentioned, on December 9th.[2]

[1] The text of this draft Resolution was as follows :

" The Assembly—

" Considering that the Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Council stated in its unanimous report that, as regards the questions pending between the two parties, every possibility of peaceful settlement had not been explored before September 18th, 1931 ; that the relations between China and Japan were those of disguised war ; and that the military operations which were undertaken by the Japanese troops after September 18th, 1931, and which created these relations, could not be regarded as measures of legitimate defence ;

" Considering that, in its unanimous report, the Commission of Enquiry stated it to be a fact that, without declaration of war, an important part of what was indisputably Chinese territory had been seized by force and occupied by the Japanese troops, and that, as a sequel to this operation, it has been separated and declared independent of the rest of China ;

" Considering that the Commission of Enquiry further stated in its unanimous report that the present régime in Manchuria could not be regarded as the outcome of a sincere and spontaneous movement of independence :

" Observes that the vast operations and the military operations which followed the events of September 18th, 1931, cannot be considered as measures of legitimate defence ;

" Observes that the régime set up in Manchuria has only been able to be carried into effect thanks to the presence of Japanese troops ;

" Observes that the recognition of the present régime in Manchuria is not compatible with existing international obligations ;

" Authorises the Committee of Nineteen to solicit the co-operation of the Governments of the United States of America and of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics for the purpose of getting into touch with the parties with a view to ensuring a settlement of the dispute on the basis of the above-mentioned findings."

[2] The text of this Resolution was as follows :

" The Assembly—

" Having received the report of the Commission of Enquiry set up under the Resolution adopted on December 10th, 1931, by the Council, together with the observations of the parties and the Minutes of the Council meetings held from November 21st to 28th, 1932 ;

(*Continued opposite*)

5. Press Reactions on the Right

The editorial in the *Times* on December 8th was headed "Conciliation—not Coercion." The view expressed about Sir John Simon's speech as "a useful corrective" has already been mentioned. The *Times* considered it "perhaps inevitable, and not wholly undesirable," that there should be plainer speaking in the Assembly than in the Council; and that Japan could not be surprised if the League had had something not altogether complimentary to say about her conduct in Manchuria. But, the article proceeded,

> more harm than good is done by vague threats of coercive action, which are not warranted by the facts of the case as found in the Lytton Report, and which indeed could only be made effective if public opinion in the other countries were profoundly impressed by the justice of the case of one of the disputants and the injustice of that of the other. The impartial and wise report drawn up by the League Commission shows clearly that faults were committed by both sides, and that in the circumstances of the present dispute, unless they are aggravated by further violence by one party or the other, a settlement must be sought not by coercion but by conciliation.

The *Times* gave the gist of Sir John Simon's speech in terms to which no exception can be taken. The procedure outlined (the article proceeded) would doubtless be criticised as dilatory; but the Manchurian dispute was one where patience was the essential condition of an agreed and peaceful settlement. The newspaper made no further editorial comment on the proceedings at the Assembly.

The Geneva Correspondent of the *Telegraph* described the Foreign Secretary's speech as a determined effort to prevent the dispute from ending in complete deadlock, and as "an impassioned appeal to common sense."

Sir John was the first speaker in this long succession of international orators to point out that the Lytton Report did not give a one-sided

"In view of the discussions which took place at its meetings from December 6th to 9th, 1932;

"Requests the Special Committee appointed under its Resolution of March 11th, 1932:

(1) To study the report of the Commission of Enquiry, the observations of the parties and the opinions and suggestions expressed in the Assembly, in whatever form they were submitted;

(2) To draw up proposals with a view to the settlement of the dispute brought before it under the Council Resolution dated February 19th, 1932;

(3) To submit these proposals to the Assembly at the earliest possible moment."

account of events in Manchuria, but made a measured criticism of both China and Japan.

This statement was formally true ; but, as we have seen, the speeches of both Beneš and Politis had made it clear that the Report was not one-sided in its criticisms. The *Telegraph* Correspondent said that in both the Council and Assembly discussions it had been assumed that the Report was a finding in favour of the Chinese claims, but this was not entirely correct. In his quotations from the Foreign Secretary's speech, this Correspondent, like the *Times* Correspondent and the editorial in the latter newspaper, included Sir John Simon's important passage, his " serious," " central " fact, about League methods not having been employed.

The editorial in the *Telegraph* on the 8th was outspoken in its approval of Sir John's speech. Its criticism of the earlier Assembly speeches has already been quoted. Its complaint that certain passages in the Report unfavourable to Japan had been carefully selected will have been noted. The editorial went on to say, with only partial justification :

> Sir John Simon and M. Paul-Boncour gave a wholly new turn to the debate by showing that they had made themselves familiar with the whole text of that very able document. Both of them were in a position to inform the Assembly that the Report was very far from laying on Japan the whole responsibility for the state of affairs under discussion ; that, as Sir John expressed it, the Report criticised in measured terms both China and Japan.

The Foreign Secretary, the article proceeded, had insisted that the proper function of the League was to promote conciliation, and to endeavour to bring about those direct negotiations between the disputants which, as the Lytton Report advised, offered the only prospect of a settlement preserving the legitimate interests of both parties—not of China alone. The *Telegraph*, like the *Times*, had no further editorial comment on the Assembly's proceedings.

On December 8th the *Daily Mail* had only a fifteen-line notice from its Geneva Correspondent printed at the foot of page 5. Its editorial comment came on December 10th, when it considered the Assembly's decision " a very sensible course," although one " not at all to the liking of our pugnacious pacifists, who are trying to involve this country in a quarrel and possible war with Japan." Sir John Simon's " wise and moderate counsel " had fortunately prevailed. The *Mail* took the opportunity of reiterating its usual

points. "In any case, the overwhelming majority of the British people hold that Japan is rendering good service to civilisation by restoring law and order in Manchuria. She means to stay there, and Great Britain has not the slightest inclination to take any part in turning her out. The real difficulty is that China is without an organised Government and in the hands of riotous mobs and rapacious war-lords."

The *Morning Post's* attitude was similar. On December 7th it was ironical about the Irish intention to refuse recognition of Manchukuo. Opinion in this country, it declared, had not been hustled into endorsing the hostile attitude towards Japan which was fashionable at Geneva. "Japan has undertaken a heavy task in establishing law and order over that vast territory, and the British people, who have had to undertake similar tasks in Egypt and in India, will heartily wish her success." On December 10th this paper's headlines ran: "Sanity Prevails at Geneva. Affront to Japan Averted. 'Wild Men' Kept in Check."

The *Daily Express* displayed little interest in the matter. Its news items were few and very brief, and its editorials during these days were all about the war debts question. Not until December 12th did it find space for comment at the foot of its editorial column, and then it did not mention Sir John Simon's speech. Its attitude was detached and, as usual, contemptuous of the League. That body, it said, had to choose between safety and morality, and "safety first" had prevailed:

> Would it pass a resolution condemning Japanese action in Manchuria? That was the problem. If it passed the resolution it might save China, but it would certainly destroy the League. If it did not pass the resolution it would abandon China but save the League. At length, after prolonged oratory and heart-searching, the League decided to save itself and leave China to her fate. "Save the League." That is a cry which we have heard from time to time. But on this occasion the League has saved itself.

The *Sunday Times* on December 11th had nothing to say at all. The *Observer* had a brief note on the Geneva debate:

> It might reasonably have been expected that the parties to the discussion would first read the Report. If they had, they would have been encouraged to believe that conciliatory ends are best reached by conciliatory means. The Report is not a one-sided condemnation of Japan, as some of the small Powers seem to assume. Moreover, there is an obvious

difficulty in small Powers demanding "action" when the action demanded would have to be taken by other Powers than themselves. We are not blind to the mistakes made by Japan. Our concern is to see as fair a solution as possible of a difficult problem.

6. The "Manchester Guardian" Version

According to the Geneva Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, December 7th had been a black day in the history of the League. The speeches of the representatives of the Great Powers had shown that Great Britain, Italy and Germany were definitely on the side of Japan, and were opposed to any action that would be distasteful to that country. The French position, he said, was doubtful. Paul-Boncour had spoken for the sake of saying nothing until at the end he had said that if conciliation failed the Assembly would be bound to make recommendations, which should be based upon the proposals of the Lytton Report. Sir John Simon, Signor Aloisi and Baron von Neurath, on the other hand, had spoken "as though any kind of recommendation on the part of the Assembly was out of the question." References to the text of the three speeches will show that none of them, in fact, discussed the point. Paul-Boncour, the Correspondent went on, had repeated "the old argument" that the League did not possess the means and the force required in such circumstances as those under discussion, whereas "the truth is that the Governments of the Great Powers refuse to take action because they are afraid that they might be obliged to use the means and the force already provided by the Covenant."

This Correspondent began a long attack upon Sir John Simon with the Matsuoka story. The speech was said to have made a bad impression "on all the delegations and in all international quarters except, of course, the Japanese and their friends, who were delighted with it." The friends of the Japanese, it follows from this Correspondent's argument, included all the Great Powers! Presumably, they also included most of the small Powers whose representatives had spoken and whose attitude was, as we have seen, substantially the same as that of Paul-Boncour and Sir John Simon. But to the *Guardian* Correspondent, and to his paper, the small Powers meant the three or four small Powers they happened to agree with. The Americans in particular, he said, were "profoundly resentful," first because of Sir John's "air of rectitude," and,

secondly, because he had quoted Abraham Lincoln in support of his policy:

> One well-known American said that Sir John Simon had praised the Japanese, had been unjust to the Chinese and had insulted Abraham Lincoln.

Leaving the "insult" on one side, this reported remark summarised two of the Correspondent's objections to the speech. His main grievance was that Sir John Simon had "picked out of the Lytton Report everything unfavourable to China and mentioned nothing unfavourable to Japan," and had given quotations detached from their context or omitting important qualifications. Not a word did the Correspondent say about Sir John's plainly expressed, and reiterated, reason for making the quotations—to demonstrate that the Lytton Report was not one-sided in its criticisms. Nor did he mention the direct and severe criticisms of China made previously in the debate by two of the spokesmen of the smaller Powers, Beneš and Politis. More important, it was quite untrue that Sir John Simon had said nothing unfavourable to Japan; and it is illuminating that at no point did this Correspondent or his paper make any reference to what Sir John had called "the central fact."

The second complaint of the *Guardian's* Correspondent was that the speech contained "several compliments to Japan," but not a good word for China from beginning to end. The one "compliment," apparently, was contained in the following passage of Sir John's speech:

> Now let us consider what prospects we have of making our conciliation useful having regard to the attitude of the parties. I recall with very great satisfaction the declaration that was made by the distinguished representative of Japan, M. Matsuoka, before the Council the other day when he said that Japan had been a good and loyal member of the League and that Japan wishes to do all that she can to preserve that attitude and to deserve that reputation. That is very good. I believe that that is the spirit which we would wish to welcome and to make use of.

That this should have been regarded as a "compliment" illustrates the spirit in which this Correspondent approached the whole matter. It is not by any means the only example of the way in which he (and his paper) seized upon any chance of attacking Sir John Simon, even if the chance was provided only by the latter's use of the

ordinary courtesies of debate.[1] In this particular case, it will be noted how a man who complained of quotations detached from their context himself ignored the context of a remark and distorted its meaning. And what is true of the Correspondent is true also of the *Guardian* itself. Here is a passage from that paper's editorial on December 9th :

Whatever opinions may be held about her [Japan's] actions in Manchuria, few would be hardy enough to deny that her pretence that she has not made " war," that she has acted only in " self-defence," that she is a " good and loyal member of the League " (a phrase referred to with great satisfaction by Sir John Simon), is a piece of cynical hypocrisy.

On December 22nd, in another editorial, we read :

The British Foreign Secretary *manifested holy joy* in Mr. Matsuoka's declaration that his country is a " good and loyal member of the League."[2] Presumably, the " well-known American " must have had this " compliment " in mind when he spoke of Sir John Simon having

[1] Sir John Simon was moved to protest on one occasion before the end of the Sino-Japanese dispute, although the incident did not relate to that dispute. On March 29th, 1933, the following letter from him appeared in the *Guardian* :

" In referring to my speech yesterday before the Disarmament Commission your Geneva Correspondent thinks it worth while to telegraph : ' He had mentioned several delegates in the course of his speech but only Herr Nadolny had the honour of being described as Sir John Simon's friend.' It is a pity that he did not listen to me before making this unfounded comment. The fact is that in a preceding passage (as the official record will show) I said, with reference to the French delegate : ' I associate myself, if I may, most warmly with what was said by my friend, M. Massigli,' etc. Such parliamentary courtesies, I hope, do not call for special rebuke, even from the most fastidious of critics. Obviously the effect of the comment is to insinuate that the attitude of the British Foreign Minister to other representatives at Geneva is not equally cordial.

" Apart from its inaccuracy, what a moment to choose for making such a miserable point ! The tradition of the *Manchester Guardian* used to be to encourage international good feeling."

The Editor of the *Guardian* appended the following note : " There was clearly an inaccuracy in our Geneva message, and we regret it. But Sir John misconceives the point of our Correspondent's comment. We took him to mean (and he confirms it) not that Sir John Simon was unfriendly to other delegations but that he was markedly friendly to the representative of the German Government. We stand, as always, for international good feeling, but we do not stand neutral between violence and its victims, and we think that the representatives of this country should not use words which could be construed as benevolence towards a Government, whether in Europe or in Asia, responsible for conduct against which civilised opinion everywhere protests. This does not seem to us a miserable or an untimely point."

[2] Author's italics. The *Guardian* continued to harp on the point in the following months. It did not stand alone. Mr. W. N. Ewer also alluded to the matter in the *Daily Herald* on December 8th : " He (Sir John Simon) recalled ' with great satisfaction ' some phrases of M. Matsuoka about Japan's loyalty to the League." On December 10th the *Economist* said : " Again, expressing his satisfaction with Japan's declarations of ' loyalty to the League,' he had no word to say with reference to Japan's blunt announcement of her claim to pursue in Manchuria her own policy and not to brook there any League interference."

"praised the Japanese." In fact, Sir John uttered no single word of praise. It is again significant that those who made such a fuss about the Foreign Secretary's "compliment" should have ignored altogether the very complimentary references, indeed the praise given, to Japan by some of the spokesmen of the smaller Powers who had preceded Sir John.[1]

In his next point of criticism, the Correspondent of the *Guardian* associated Sir John Simon and the British Government with the Governments of Italy and Germany. Sir John was said to have taken up and approved "Mr. Matsuoka's suggestion that the matter should be settled by direct negotiations between China and Japan," while Aloisi had gone so far as to say that the Assembly should settle nothing about the future of Manchuria until those negotiations had taken place. The policy of the three Governments, he suggested, was to get rid of their responsibilities by shifting the matter from the Assembly to direct negotiations which might last for years, "in flagrant contradiction with the Lytton Report, which proposes direct negotiations only when China and Japan are agreed on a solution of the dispute on the lines recommended in the report." Although, he said, the delegates of the three Governments had praised the Report, "it was very evident that they are not in agreement with it."

In fact, Sir John's acceptance of the idea of direct negotiations was conditional ("if they gave promise of good results"). Far from wishing to get rid of responsibilities, the whole burden of Sir John's speech was that the Assembly should concentrate on the task of conciliation; and he had made it clear also that he could see no

[1] Beneš (Czechoslovakia): "We have, on the one hand, a country like Japan, whose glorious history places her among the foremost nations of the world, whose national pride and dignity have led her to make miraculous efforts in all departments of social life, to the admiration of the whole world, and whose vigour and virility show that she has a future before her which holds every possibility of success, prosperity and glory."

Beneš went on to pay a handsome tribute to China also.

Madariaga (Spain): "For we all have friends in Japan, dear friends who have taken their part from the first hour in the organisation of the League, and the memory of whom has so often tempered our judgments and sealed our lips; friends and colleagues, some of them of long standing on successive Japanese delegations, whose exquisite courtesy has at all times enabled the thorniest problems to be discussed. Behind them there is a nation which has never had more claim to our respect and our friendship—a friendship which in the case of Spain is already many centuries old—than now, when Japan is passing through such a profound crisis in her history."

Motta (Switzerland): "China was one of the cradles of civilisation. The ardent patriotism of Japan, her spirit of sacrifice and discipline, and the enthusiasm with which she has welcomed new forms of progress, must command our admiration."

One can imagine what the *Manchester Guardian* would have said if Sir John Simon had indulged in any such tribute.

basis for conciliation other than that provided by the Lytton Report. A Reuter message published in the *Guardian* on the 8th stated Sir John's position correctly,[1] but the Geneva Correspondent made no reference to Sir John's case for a further attempt at conciliation, and, missing therefore the whole point of the speech, hopelessly distorted it. Nor did he refer to the unanimous support of the previous Assembly speakers for such an effort, and to the view of all but three or four of them that attention should first be concentrated on that task.

The leading article in the *Guardian* on December 9th provides a clearer indication of the paper's position. What it wanted was a " condemnation of Japan "—" censure and non-recognition." The Governments of Britain, Germany and Italy, the editorial began, had " intimated that they would support no measures which involved the condemnation of Japan." That was not so. What the British Government urged was that the Assembly should concentrate upon the task of conciliation. That certainly implied opposition to any measures which might further complicate an already difficult and unpromising task. It implied opposition to any " condemnation " of anybody at that stage, and so long as there was any hope of effecting a settlement by conciliation. The same line was taken not only by the other Great Powers but also by most of the smaller Powers. To the *Guardian* the League was " likely to suffer a defeat " because of the attitude attributed to the three Governments.

The article proceeded to speak of the attitude of " the small States " as though they all backed the proposed resolution of the four ; and to criticise " most of the Great Powers " on the ground that " when Japan threatens, they placate," whereas " if Panama were to threaten to leave the League, our great statesmen would bid her God-speed with a smile." " Does dog eat dog, or one Imperialistic Power condemn another ? " If " the smaller countries " were " forced to withdraw " their Resolution, they would " surrender the right of the League to pass judgment on an aggressor."

The editorial passed to a somewhat indirect attack upon Sir John Simon. If the latter's statement that the Lytton Report made a " measured criticism " of both China and Japan meant that it did not amount to a strong condemnation of Japan, then it was untrue.

[1] " Sir John Simon, in his speech, said it was essential to stand by the principles of the League and promote conciliation. If direct negotiations could give a promise of good results they should be encouraged by every means, and the League should assist the work of conciliation. The Committee of Nineteen would be much more effective if means could be found to add to it representatives of the United States and of Soviet Russia."

"No amount of special pleading, of carefully selected extracts, can obscure the truth, which is that the Commission, after hearing both sides and impartially stating the Japanese case, decided against Japan on all the cardinal points." After bringing in the allusion to Sir John Simon already quoted (p. 304), the editorial mentioned "rumours that this Power or that has a secret understanding with Japan," and said that, anyhow, "The pack will hunt together."

When the *Guardian* wrote: "It is said to be the desire of the Governments of Britain, Germany and Italy that the dispute should be left to direct negotiations between Japan and China" it presumably had its own Geneva Correspondent's message in mind. It did not tell its readers what Sir John Simon had actually said on the subject. The Assembly, it maintained, could at least refuse to sanction such "infamy." Apparently, however, the *Guardian* was not opposed to a further effort at conciliation, for, it said, the suggested remission of the question by the Assembly to its Committee of Nineteen, with the addition of American and Russian representatives, "should lead to good results, provided that the committee does not allow its work to be wasted in interminable discussion and that it is determined that only some such settlement as that outlined by the Lytton Commission, which is fair both to China and to Japan, can finally be tolerated." But, it added,

> whatever be done, the Assembly will at some time clearly have to make up its mind whether it will take the risk of letting Japan leave the League. It will have to ask itself what virtue would remain to the League with Japan triumphant within it and a great injustice done.

The *Guardian's* position, in short, was that expressed in the proposed Resolution of the four small States. Japan, it held, should be censured, and an announcement made refusing recognition of Manchukuo, as preliminaries to a further effort to effect a settlement. But the prospects of such an effort proving successful were considered so unpromising that the risk of Japan's withdrawal from the League would have to be taken. On what course the League should pursue in that eventuality the *Guardian* was for the time being silent.[1]

[1] On the same day, the paper's Geneva Correspondent included the following passage in his comments on the Assembly's proceedings of the 8th: "Mr. Matsuoka's speech did not make at all a favourable impression on the British delegation, especially as Sir John Simon—who was rather taken aback by the effect made by his speech yesterday—had seen both Mr. Matsuoka and Mr. Quo to-day and urged them to be moderate. Sir John Simon told them both that the British Government did not favour either side, and was out for conciliation, and that he was prepared to play the part of honest broker,

The *Guardian* did not discuss the outcome of the Assembly's proceedings until December 12th. The third leader on that day expressed the view that while nothing had been won by the decision taken, nothing had yet been lost—except time. The crisis had only been postponed.

> Some day, and it must be soon, the League has to face the question whether it will or will not itself adopt the Lytton Report, invite Japan to enter into some such settlement as the report suggests, refuse firmly to surrender China to single-handed negotiations with her oppressor, and, sooner than betray the League, allow Japan to leave it.

What then? The *Guardian's* answer, if it was intended to be an answer, is worth noting:

> When the crisis, however long delayed, inevitably comes, we must look for action to the smaller Governments, like those of *Sweden* and *Spain* and the *Irish Free State*, with whom liberty is more than a platform phrase, helped, as we hope, by the *United States* and *Russia*.[1]

One wonders what kind of "action" the *Guardian* had in mind. In retrospect, its selection of States likely to "act" seems singularly ill-judged. Did the *Guardian* at the time really think that any of these five States would "act" in any other way but in words? If so, a better illustration could hardly be provided of its divorcement from the realities of the situation.

7. Other Critics on the Left

In the *Daily Herald* on December 8th, the Geneva Correspondent (Mr. W. N. Ewer) gave pride of place, as we have seen, to the Matsuoka story. Sir John Simon's speech (he said) fully justified Matsuoka's "amazing comment," although why Mr. Ewer should have described any such comment as "amazing" if it was "fully justified" is difficult to understand. Sir John had "quietly passed over such matters as the wrenching of Manchuria from China by force and the setting up of the puppet 'Manchukuo' State." Mr. Ewer, it will be noticed, himself quietly passed over Sir John's "central fact." The Foreign Secretary was said to have amazed his audience by describing the Lytton Report as "a measured criticism of both China and Japan" (Sir John had said that the Report *made* a measured criticism):

as Sir Miles Lampson at Shanghai. He added that the British Government would uphold the Covenant. Mr. Matsuoka's speech shows that Sir John Simon's efforts had at any rate no effect on him."

[1] Author's italics.

And he then proceeded to quote from it selected phrases, torn from their context, which would have given the impression, to anyone who did not know the Report, that its main theme was a condemnation of China. Members of the Commission and its staff here in Geneva have expressed strong indignation at what they consider to be a deliberate misrepresentation of their views.

"Deliberate misrepresentation" is a description which might well be applied to Mr. Ewer's own remarks. Sir John, in fact, gave only one quotation in establishing his point that the Lytton Report was not one-sided in its criticisms.

This Correspondent dismissed the Foreign Secretary's plea that the League should "act wisely and prudently to promote a settlement." Everybody in the Assembly knew, he said, that Japan would enter into negotiations "only on the basis of the recognition of her puppet State and of the continuance of her occupation and control of Manchuria," and the net effect of the speech had been to convince the Japanese that they could safely continue to defy the authority of the League. Mr. Ewer, it will be noted, gave exclusive attention to Sir John's speech: no reference was made to the speeches of the other delegates to the Assembly. The *Herald* published no report of the speech: nor did it give any editorial notice to it. The paper also passed over the subsequent proceedings of the Assembly without comment.

The *Guardian's* Correspondent had summarised Sir John Simon's speech in these words: "In short, the whole speech was that of an advocate defending a client." The Correspondent of the *News Chronicle* wrote: "If Japan had a counsel for the defence . . . it was Sir John Simon." Though he conceded that the representatives of the other Great Powers had "voiced a moderation" in contrast with "the clear condemnation" of Japan's action in Manchuria by "the smaller States," Sir John alone (he said) had "stressed the complexity of the problem of the conditions in China as an excuse." As we have seen, nothing could have been farther from the truth. Apart from the misleading implications of the word "excuse," most speakers in the Assembly had stressed the complexity of that problem, and some of the representatives of the smaller States had done so in much stronger terms than those employed by the British Foreign Secretary. Indeed, Sir John Simon had in this respect virtually confined himself to a quotation from the Lytton Report itself and a reference to what Paul-Boncour had said on the subject.

The other criticism made by this Correspondent related to Sir John's quotations. Taken out of their setting, these carried no conviction [he said] to an audience familiar with the Report as a whole. Here again there was no recognition of the Foreign Secretary's clearly specified purpose in making his quotations (there were only four all told), and no appreciation of the connection between this and his plea for a further endeavour to effect a settlement by conciliation. The Correspondent noted that plea without criticism, merely commenting that Sir John's " one constructive suggestion " —that the United States and Russia should be invited to join the Committee of Nineteen—was " not new."

Next day (December 9th) the *News Chronicle* described Sir John's speech editorially as " altogether deplorable," but gave no grounds for its opinion. The appropriate answer to Japan's threat to leave the League, it declared, was to ignore it entirely : if Japan went she would come back in due course. The hope was expressed that the four Powers would press firmly their Resolution censuring Japan's proceedings in Manchuria : they would have the firm support, it was said, of the great mass of public opinion in this country, if not of the British Government. The *News Chronicle* did not go beyond this desire for a censure of Japan. Mr. Wilson Harris's article on December 12th, in which he wrote of the Resolution expressing " the small Power policy " and Japan 's threat to leave the League if the Resolution were adopted, seems to have been curiously belated. The *News Chronicle* had nothing to say about the Assembly's proceedings after the 9th. In this connection, it must be remembered that the main attention of the Press was being given to other matters : the developing war debts controversy, the von Schleicher Government in Germany, and, above all, the Five-Power conversations which ended the deadlock at the Disarmament Conference. For once, indeed, the Press of the Left was complimentary, in varying degrees, to Prime Minister MacDonald and Sir John Simon.[1]

The treatment of Sir John Simon's speech in the *Economist* and

[1] See, for example, the *News Chronicle*, December 12th : " Germany Returns to Arms Conference. Equality of Rights Granted. Premier's Triumph."—" . . . This result is largely due to the efforts of the British Prime Minister—who has worked throughout with great tact and with a firm will to arrive at a solution—and his colleague, Sir John Simon." In the editorial that day : " . . . for this ultimate triumph of common sense and statesmanship both Sir John Simon and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald deserve their fair share of credit."

The *Daily Herald* on the same day : " The plain man's congratulations to the statesmen on their achievement will be tempered with a feeling of astonishment, and even of disgust, that so long a time should have been needed to achieve such a result. . . . The deadlock, however, *is* ended."

the *New Statesman* on December 10th was in line with that of the dailies of the Left. Both, as noted, repeated the Matsuoka story. The former weekly felt "bitter disappointment" at the Assembly's proceedings on the 7th. The Great Powers, "with the possible exception of France, whose attitude was equivocally guarded," had adopted an attitude which gravely impaired the moral authority of the League. The British Foreign Secretary had given the lead "in this disastrous policy"; his speech read "like that of counsel for the defendant rather than the judicial summing up of a world tribunal"; and, in the *Economist's* opinion, he had dealt the League "a serious blow." Once again there was the charge that Sir John had "extracted from the Lytton Report every point which, detached from its context, appeared to tell in Japan's favour."

The *Economist* stated that Sir John had urged the Assembly to promote conciliation, and to entrust the task to its Committee of Nineteen, strengthened, if possible, by representatives of the United States and Soviet Russia. But it then went on to say that, while the Lytton Report had recommended direct negotiations between China and Japan only on the assumption that its principles of settlement were endorsed by the League and accepted by the disputants, it was "clear that the effect of Sir John Simon's proposals would be to remove the dispute effectively from the purview of the League and from the limelight of public opinion, while 'negotiations' could be infinitely protracted by the Japanese Government and Japan remain equally indefinitely in possession of the territory forcibly seized by her army in Manchuria." How reference of the matter to the Assembly's own committee could mean removing it effectively from the purview of the League the *Economist* did not explain. Nor did it allude to Sir John's emphasis upon the Lytton Report being the only possible basis.

There can be little doubt that this weekly was opposed to any further attempt at conciliation. In that respect it did not wish the Assembly to follow the advice of the Lytton Commission. Paul-Boncour, it said, "alone among the spokesmen of the Great Powers," had hinted that if conciliation failed the Assembly would eventually be bound to make recommendations on the basis of the Report; but, it maintained, to play for time in the circumstances existing was to play into the hands of Japan. What then did the *Economist* think the Assembly ought to do? It supplied no answer. Its article concluded:

However specious the arguments in favour of "conciliation" and

" patient exploration of possibilities," and however real may be the difficulties involved in bringing an aggressor to heel, the hard fact remains that the attitude of the great European Powers in this dispute is bound to alienate American opinion, shatter the faith which the minor nations have placed in treaties and conventions, and encourage throughout the world the disastrous belief that the authority of the League, if boldly challenged, will find no effective defenders.

In this passage, as in the whole article, there was the implication that " the great European Powers " had no support from among " the minor nations." More important, there was the familiar combination of an appeal to American opinion and vague talk about " bringing an aggressor to heel " and effective defence of the League's authority. The *Economist*, like the other papers of the Left, really shared Mr. Stimson's desire for a policy of " moral condemnation," and did so, no doubt, largely, and perhaps primarily, because the task of conciliation seemed to them hopeless.

The *New Statesman* said that Matsuoka's comment (the authenticity of which it took for granted) was not, of course, literally true. Sir John Simon had put the matter " more delicately " than Matsuoka. " He harped on the ' impartiality ' of the Lytton Report, emphasised the criticisms of China rather than the crimes of Japan, and concluded by arguing for conciliation on the part of the League." But this, said the *New Statesman*, in all the circumstances quite obviously meant playing the Japanese game. The League, it argued, had been conciliating for the past fifteen months. The Japanese had got what they wanted, and dared the world to touch them. This paper did not suggest or examine any alternative to the course proposed by Sir John Simon.

8. Lord Cecil in 1940

The influence of these attacks upon Sir John Simon's speech, and of the sustained repetition of them in after years, may be exemplified by Lord Cecil's references to the matter in *The Great Experiment*.

Whether that was so or not (i.e. whether Sir John Simon was formally thanked by Matsuoka or not) it was that speech which made it finally impossible to take any effective action on behalf of the central doctrine of the Covenant, as it must be of any system of international peace, that aggression is an international crime which must be prevented or arrested as soon as possible.

The words "as soon as possible" may cover much, but, leaving that point aside, what were the grounds upon which Lord Cecil attributed such decisive effect to Sir John Simon's speech of December 7th, 1932? He advanced one reason only. It was that Sir John had "made a forensic defence of Japan." Even if one were to assume the validity of that interpretation, it would surely provide an extremely inadequate basis for Lord Cecil's estimate of the effect of the speech. Let us briefly recall what happened.

Two days after Sir John's speech, as already mentioned, the League Assembly referred the Lytton Report to its Committee of Nineteen. That committee failed in its efforts at conciliation owing to the unyielding attitude of Japan, combined with the Japanese entry into Jehol province at the beginning of January 1933. On February 24th, the League Assembly unanimously adopted a report under Article XV, paragraph 4, of the Covenant. This report, prepared by the Committee of Nineteen, was an endorsement, in substance, of the Lytton Report. In Mr. Stimson's view it amounted to a judgment against Japan.

Lord Cecil, of course, approved of the Assembly's action. It constituted what he and others came to call, inaccurately, "the declaration of Japan as an aggressor." At the time of Sir John Simon's speech, Lord Cecil had apparently desired the immediate adoption of the Lytton Report's suggestions, and it may have been that he was opposed to renewed efforts at conciliation. But he does not appear to have made any direct public attack upon the speech.[1] After all, as Mr. A. J. Toynbee, an unsympathetic critic of the Foreign Secretary, stated in his *Survey* (p. 496), Sir John "had not only given warm praise to the Lytton Report; he had gone the length of practically committing himself to the proposition that the report should be taken as a basis for the Assembly's action. . . ." Certainly the speech of December 7th did not prevent the Committee of Nineteen from making the Lytton Report the basis of its proposals for conciliation. Nor, when this basis was rejected by Japan, did it prevent the adoption by the League Assembly of a report based upon the findings of the Lytton Commission. And we shall see that in the House of Commons, on February 27th, 1933, one of Lord

[1] In an address to the National Peace Council Conference, reported in the *News Chronicle*, December 10th, Lord Cecil said that he "... would like to hear that the League Assembly had entirely and unreservedly adopted the suggestions in the Lytton Report." He added: "... I trust that our Government ... will take a much clearer lead than they appear to have taken up to now."

Cecil's associates, Mr. Mander, was to congratulate the British Government warmly on the part it had played in persuading the League Assembly to arrive at its " historic, dramatic decision."

So far as League action was concerned, it was only after the adoption of the report under Article XV, paragraph 4, that the question of " arresting Japanese aggression " could arise—possibly, it could not arise even then—and Sir John Simon's speech on December 7th clearly did not make it " finally impossible to take any effective action " with that object in view. Lord Cecil himself drew no such conclusion at the time. Otherwise, he would assuredly have given expression to his view when he opened a debate on foreign affairs in the House of Lords on March 30th, 1933. On that occasion, however, he made no reference to Manchuria, although several subsequent speakers did so. He concentrated his attention on the Disarmament Conference. On May 11th, 1933, Lord Cecil spoke again in the House of Lords, and then had a great deal to say about the Far East as well as about disarmament. Referring to the Assembly's report of February 24th, 1933, he said :

> If I were to summarise the broad conclusions of that document I should be disposed to adopt the language which was used a few days afterwards in the House of Commons by the present Foreign Secretary. I do not need to trouble your Lordships with the words, because they are pretty well known. In point of fact, what the Foreign Secretary said was that undoubtedly Japan had not acted in accordance with her obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Since in this respect Sir John Simon had used substantially the same words in his Geneva speech on December 7th, 1932, as in the House of Commons on February 27th, 1933, the former can hardly be described as " a forensic defence of Japan." Nor did Lord Cecil so describe it in 1933.

If it be thought that when he made that charge in 1940 what he had primarily in mind were the passages in the Geneva speech pointing out the Lytton Report's criticisms of China as well as of Japan, it will be recalled that Lord Cecil, speaking in the House of Lords on November 2nd, 1932, had described the Report as one which set out the facts " without passing any judgment on either party." Lord Lytton's remarks on the same occasion will also be remembered.

When he spoke on May 11th, 1933, Lord Cecil did not argue that Sir John Simon had destroyed all possibility of effective action

against Japanese aggression. On the contrary, he urged that there were "many steps" which the Government could take "which would be effective to carry out a policy of that kind." It is true that Lord Cecil suggested that the attitude of the Government had been "lacking in firmness and consistency"; and he complained of some remarks attributed to Sir Francis Lindley, the British Ambassador at Tokyo, in which the latter had said, if correctly reported, that the Japanese had had much provocation for their actions in Manchuria. But Lord Cecil did not think that it had become impossible to do anything. There were, he thought, "several" practical measures that could be taken. True, he only mentioned one; and this seems to have been the first coercive step advocated by Lord Cecil in the House of Lords during the whole course of the dispute. It was that an embargo should be placed upon all imports from Japan. Lord Cecil, however, explained that he was entirely opposed to any unilateral action by this country; and also that if other nations were not prepared to act "that would indeed make a very considerable difference in the situation," although this country ought to give the lead. Thus, more than five months after Sir John Simon's speech at Geneva, Lord Cecil was still contending that effective action could and should be taken.

9. Mr. Stimson in 1936

The outcry about Sir John Simon's speech was by no means confined to the Correspondents of the British newspapers of the "Left." American journalists, in particular, also participated; and, in consequence, there appears to have been temporary concern in the State Department.

Mr. Stimson, as we have seen, had abandoned conciliation in favour of a policy of moral condemnation of Japan. In his view, as presented in his 1936 book,

> the principal objective to be kept in mind was that the League should proceed promptly and decisively to a judgment on these facts against Japan, thereby bringing to bear upon that single nation, in addition to the opinion of the Commission, all the momentum of public opinion that would go with the moral condemnation of the entire organised world in which she lived. (p. 220.)

Further efforts at conciliation, in Mr. Stimson's judgment, had little justification and no reasonable hope of success. The League

Council had tried earnestly for at least four months: and all the indications were that Japan was still "entirely obdurate and determined to pursue her own course." At the same time, Mr. Stimson recognised that it was important for the League to follow carefully the procedure set out in the Covenant, and appreciated, therefore, the provision of paragraph 3 of Article XV, and the fact that the Lytton Report had brought forward new proposals, "carefully worked out," for a peaceful settlement. "A new gesture at conciliation" might be important, but it was very unlikely to amount to more than a gesture, and there were dangers in it. Mr. Stimson thought it very likely that it would be taken as an evidence of weakness on the part of the League.

> It might well be blazoned out in the Press, which necessarily issued its reports hastily and without catching the procedural reasons for the step, as proof that the League was not going to back up the Report of the Lytton Commission. (pp. 220-1.)

Mr. Stimson's anxiety in this respect was well founded. Not only was there the particular danger to which he alluded, but there was also the fact that for some time before the meeting of the Assembly critics of the British Government had been, in Sir John Simon's words,[1] "suggesting or insinuating" that the British Government was not prepared to stand by the Lytton Report. Indeed, they were to go on doing so for over two months afterwards.

Mr. Stimson's 1936 account of the debate in the Assembly (pp. 223-4) is open to criticism at certain points. His summarisation of the line taken by the first nine representatives of the smaller Powers was substantially accurate:

> In short, these smaller Powers, while recognising the desirability of a solution by conciliation if such a solution were possible without surrender of principle, emphasised as of paramount importance the vindication of the great principles which had been violated by Japan.

However, it was a little misleading to say that "many of them" at once announced themselves in favour of adopting the Lytton Report and refusing to recognise the State of "Manchukuo." And it was still more misleading to go on to lump them and most of the later spokesmen of the smaller Powers together in contrast with the representatives of the four Great Powers, and not only to lump the latter together but also to imply that Sir John Simon's speech stood out by way of contrast.

[1] House of Commons, February 27th, 1933.

There then followed the representatives of the large Powers, France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany in the order named. The tenor of these speeches all showed a perceptible cleavage from those of their predecessors in that they were more cautious and emphasised the desirability of conciliation as distinguished from judgment.

As we have shown, the spokesmen of Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Greece had all pressed for conciliation and had all expressed the hope that resort to paragraph 4 of Article XV might be avoided altogether. Mr. Stimson went on :

> They also all indicated a certain indulgence towards the conduct of Japan in one way or another.

That might, perhaps, be a legitimate inference in the cases of Italy and Germany, but in no way can it be justified in the cases of the French and British representatives—certainly not on the basis of any distinction between them and the majority of the preceding speakers. Yet Mr. Stimson continued :

> The speech of the British Foreign Minister, in particular, emphasised the arguments in favour of Japan to such an extent that it was at once reported by the American Press as a strongly pro-Japanese speech and as evidence that the Assembly would shelve the Lytton Report.

In the light of the previous sentence, the impression is unfortunately conveyed that Mr. Stimson himself accepted the crude interpretation of Sir John Simon's emphasis, an impression heightened by a footnote, the major part of which was devoted to the quotation from Mr. Toynbee's *Survey* embodying the Matsuoka story.[1] But Mr. Stimson's next sentence read as follows :

> Though I was troubled at first, a careful study of our incoming reports and cables reassured me that the Press were mistaken in their prophecies as to the ultimate action of the Assembly, and that the speeches apparently favourable to Japan were actuated by a desire to offer conciliation in a genuinely conciliatory atmosphere.

Three important points emerge. First, the Press reports were, in Mr. Stimson's view, mistaken in their prognostications about the Assembly's handling of the Lytton Report—prognostications for which there was not the slightest basis after what Sir John Simon had said in his speech, but which, clearly enough, came as no great surprise to Mr. Stimson, being precisely what he had feared because of the haste and lack of understanding " necessarily " displayed

[1] See pp. 283-4, above.

by the Press. Secondly, Mr. Stimson came to the conclusion that the Press reports were also mistaken in their interpretation of the speech made by Sir John Simon and of any other speeches of a similar kind ; such speeches being, in his view, only " apparently " favourable to Japan. Thirdly, Mr. Stimson was convinced that the purpose of such speeches was to promote a favourable atmosphere for a further effort at conciliation.[1]

10. " Defending Japan "

When he wrote, in 1936, that the object of such speeches as Sir John Simon's was " to offer conciliation in a genuinely conciliatory atmosphere," Mr. Stimson hit the nail on the head. Other critics of Sir John missed the nail completely. They had jumped to a false conclusion, and that not only led them to twist the meaning of many of Sir John's remarks but also to ignore those of his remarks which were plainly inconsistent with their hasty and emotional reaction. Passion rendered them obtuse and worse.

That there was a case against a further attempt to conciliate may readily be granted ; but Sir John's critics in this country, while not all ignoring it, certainly did not press it. For the most part, like the four smaller Powers in their draft Resolution, they appeared to want a condemnation of Japan as a preliminary to a further effort at conciliation. Since the admittedly slender prospects of success would have been reduced to zero had such a procedure been adopted, it may well have been that they were really interested only in securing a judgment against Japan. That they were primarily interested in obtaining such a judgment is plain enough. To them, Japan was " the aggressor." When they spoke about the League " accepting " the Lytton Report, they had in mind, primarily, endorsement of the findings against Japan contained in the Report. No doubt, they also had in mind approval of the Report's proposals for a settlement. But acceptance of the Report as a whole, with its plea for practical efforts at conciliation, made no appeal to them.

Behind all this, no doubt, was the emerging view of the more doctrinaire supporters of the League that its overriding purpose

[1] In *On Active Service* (p. 99), Mr. Stimson and Mr. Bundy put the point somewhat unfairly : " . . . and Sir John Simon, in December 1932, made a speech to the Assembly which could only be taken as an attempt to conciliate Japanese opinion by emphasising out of all proportion those small sections of the Lytton Commission report upon which a defence for Japan might be based."

was to prevent or restrain aggression. Almost from the outset they had taken up the position that the merits of the Manchurian dispute were irrelevant so long as fighting continued and the *status quo ante* had not been restored. They were not enamoured of the Lytton Commission, for that reason and also because it delayed a League judgment. They had themselves already pronounced judgment. Although it had been customary for them to speak of the League as an impartial body delivering "third-party judgments," they had from an early stage displayed a most marked partisanship against the party considered by them to be "the aggressor." Even to consider the substance of the dispute was, they seemed to argue, encouragement of the aggressor and treachery to the Covenant. Although, when the Lytton Report was published, they joined in the general tributes to its impartiality, they interpreted and welcomed it as a condemnation of Japan's actions. As Sir John Pratt has written, just as they convinced themselves that Mr. Stimson wrote that the United States were prepared to apply economic sanctions, so, even if they had read the Report, they were "sure that it exonerates China and condemns Japan."

When, therefore, Sir John Simon insisted, in his speech to the Assembly, that the Lytton Report had given a *balanced* judgment, his critics were infuriated. As Sir John said later, that was his great offence. The critics wanted a simple verdict against Japan. Their attitude could not be justified on the basis of the Lytton Report. It might have been justifiable if an agreed settlement had been ruled out as impossible and the intention had been to impose the recommendations of the Report by force. But it was an indefensible attitude if an attempt was to be made to secure an agreed settlement on the basis of the Report, or if coercive measures were considered either impracticable or inexpedient.

Sir John Simon's object was to promote conciliation on what seemed to him the only possible basis, that of the Lytton Report's recommendations. Although neither party was prepared to accept the Report in its entirety, the main difficulty, of course, was the attitude of Japan. In an attempt to persuade Japan to accept the Report as a broad basis for conciliation, Sir John demonstrated that the Report had not by any means directed its criticisms against Japan alone. Following two previous speakers, but in much more restrained terms, he reminded his audience of certain passages in the Report which were severely critical of China. Such a reminder

may well have been considered all the more desirable because several of the previous speakers, by concentrating their criticism too exclusively upon Japan, had certainly not contributed to the creation of a conciliatory atmosphere. The passages in the Report which Sir John Simon referred to told, so far as they went, in Japan's favour. His critics cried out, therefore, that he was " defending Japan," " encouraging the Japanese," " delighting Mr. Matsuoka," " betraying the Covenant of the League of Nations." To them, apparently, one had to be either " pro- " or " anti- " Japan, " pro- " or " anti- " China. And to point out that Japan had had provocation, or that Japan had a case, or even that this was not a simple instance of aggression but one in which there were many complicating circumstances, was to be " pro-Japanese." It was " pro-Japanese " to point out that these things were all in the Lytton Report, the " acceptance " of which the critics themselves were demanding.

Sir John Simon, as we have seen, was said to have " emphasised " the arguments favourable to Japan. What he actually did was to emphasise that the Lytton Report made it clear that there *were* arguments favourable to Japan—that the Report was not " one-sided." That is why he got into " terrible hot water," to use his own phrase. The process is one that is only too familiar. Partisans do not like to be reminded of " the other side," and anyone who reminds them is invariably accused of favouring or defending the other side. Plausibility is given, and can only be given, to the accusation on the basis that he who endeavours to correct one-sided statements has not himself repeated those statements. That, as we have seen, was the line taken by Sir John Simon's critics in the British Press. As one would expect, it was also the line taken by Mr. Zilliacus.[1]

Even so, such a line could only be rendered plausible in this particular instance by passing over in silence other parts of Sir John Simon's speech. Any suggestion that the Japanese were thoroughly satisfied with the speech strains credulity. It is obvious that they could not have regarded it as a presentation of their case. It may be argued, of course, that in so far as it drew attention to certain points favourable to them it could not have been bettered precisely because those points were made in the Lytton Report itself. But Sir John Simon took his stand on the Report as a whole,

[1] *Inquest on Peace*, p. 21.

and his object was to make the Report the broad basis of further action by the League. Apart from the two features to which he drew special attention, (1) the complexity of the problem, and (2) the Report's measured criticism of both sides, he had insisted upon the fact that League methods had not been employed. It was this "serious," "central fact" upon which his emphasis was placed.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE BREAKDOWN OF CONCILIATION

1. DECEMBER 1932

THE task of seeking a solution by conciliation had been entrusted by the League Assembly to its special Committee of Nineteen. Its drafting sub-committee drew up, and the Committee endorsed, two draft Resolutions setting out the basis upon which it was proposed to pursue its efforts. The second of these draft Resolutions was an expression of the Assembly's gratitude to the Lytton Commission. The first reaffirmed the principles laid down in the Assembly's Resolution of March 11th, 1932 (which included the non-recognition declaration) ; decided to set up a committee (to consist of the special Committee of Nineteen) to conduct negotiations, in conjunction with the parties, " on the basis of the principles set out in Chapter IX of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, and having regard to the suggestions made in Chapter X of that Report " ; and entrusted the committee to invite the Governments of the United States and Soviet Russia to participate in the negotiations. The acceptance of these draft Resolutions by the two parties to the dispute was then sought. Conversations with them began on December 17th. On December 20th, owing to the difficulties which had arisen, primarily with the Japanese, and in order to allow the conversations to continue, the Committee of Nineteen adjourned until January 16th, 1933.

It must again be emphasised that other events and problems dominated public attention during the period. Despite the Press reactions to Sir John Simon's speech, that had been true even during the meeting of the League Assembly. It was naturally so afterwards while the Committee of Nineteen set about its task. Moreover, it was in this month of December that the war debts controversy reached its height. By way of illustration, it may be noted that the *Daily Telegraph* carried no fewer than eleven editorials on the subject between December 9th and December 24th. Among other things, the controversy involved, as a consequence of the decision of the French Chamber to default on the payment due to the United

States, the resignation of M. Herriot's Cabinet on December 15th.

The more popular daily newspapers had only brief reports, if any at all, about the activities of the Committee of Nineteen. In the House of Commons, the subject of Manchuria was inconspicuous even at question time; although on December 19th both Mr. T. Williams and Mr. D. Grenfell asked whether the Government would press for an Assembly Resolution declaring against the recognition of Manchukuo, and Mr. Seymour Cocks asked a similar question on the 20th. Mr. Eden replied on both occasions that he was not then in a position to make any statement. The matter was not raised on the Christmas adjournment.

On December 13th the *Times* published a report from its Geneva Correspondent that the Five-Power Agreement about the Disarmament Conference had strengthened Sir John Simon's plea that "to conciliate one must be conciliatory," but that "small State" opinion remained unchanged. The same Correspondent referred next day to a sharp conflict on the sub-committee between those who put conciliation first and those who considered that some demonstration in support of League principles was required. But, on the 16th, he reported that a Resolution acceptable to both points of view had been drawn up. He pointed out that this Resolution, while reaffirming the non-recognition declaration of March 11th, 1932, did not lay it down as a fact that there had been any violation of the Covenant and existing treaties, so that the case was not prejudged. Referring to the proposal to invite the co-operation of the United States and Soviet Russia, the Correspondent wrote that there was reason to hope that the form of the draft Resolution would suffice to overcome American hesitations.

The attitude of many in the "peace movement" at this stage may be exemplified by the reported remarks of Mr. Gerald Bailey, secretary of the National Peace Council, in a speech at Manchester.[1] The League, he complained, "was still hesitating to say quite definitely, without prejudicing the issue, that Japan had definitely broken her international obligations, and that it was quite impossible for the nations of the world to recognise the new Government of Manchukuo." The whole situation would be changed, said Mr. Bailey, if the League would make "that unequivocal statement." How that could be done "without prejudicing the issue" he did not explain. The Great Powers, and Britain in particular, were

[1] See *Manchester Guardian*, December 17th, 1932.

afraid (he said) that Japan would leave the League if such " a firm statement " were made, and were trying to get the Chinese to accept negotiations without any statement of the kind.

An article by Professor H. J. Laski in the *New Clarion,* also on December 17th, throws light on the spirit in which the " Left-Wing " approached the matter. It was headed : " Britain's Policy of Brag and Bluster. Points for the Prime Minister." This was followed by a quotation of the last sentence in the article : " Either he agrees with Sir John Simon's actions, in which case it is clear he has given up all his original convictions, or he disapproves of them, in which case he clings to office upon a basis it would be too humiliating to him to describe."

The article began with an attack upon Sir John Simon's speech to the Assembly. Its improved version of the Matsuoka story has already been quoted.[1] Sir John, it was said, had used the Lytton Report " as a barrister concerned at all costs to find some arguments for a client," not hesitating " to tear sentences from their context " —" a triumph of misrepresentation." The Professor's real target, of course, was MacDonald, against whom he developed an attack, indirect in form, with all the skill of a master of the craft.[2] The Foreign Secretary and foreign policy were essentially only instruments in a personal and partisan vendetta. Professor Laski's references to them are, none the less, interesting and important. Was MacDonald, he asked, " prepared to condone an act of Imperialism so naked and so shameless that not even in the House of Commons could a Tory member be found willing to do what Sir John Simon has done " ? Moreover, Sir John's " defence of Japanese Imperialism " was not a solitary act. " It fits in with the practical torpedoing of the Disarmament Conference by the National Government." Later, after a reference to the Foreign Secretary's then recent Note to Persia, the Professor labelled him as heir to Palmerston ! " The big stick for a small Power, the dovelike Note for the powerful offender—this return to the Palmerstonian tradition of brag and bluster is the keynote of the new temper in foreign affairs." MacDonald, wrote the Professor, " may not know, in the

[1] See p. 286 above.

[2] Here is a passage, which can hardly be described as " torn from its context " : " Socialists, of course, can understand that when Mr. MacDonald formed his new alliances it was inevitable that he should compromise some of his own fundamental convictions. No one can desert the party which gave him significance to lead its opponents without some sacrifice. *But it is really time that Mr. MacDonald should inform the British electorate what limits he sets—if there are limits—to the sacrifices he is prepared to make.*"

new world in which he now dwells, that Sir John Simon is regarded as the most reactionary Foreign Secretary of modern times, that, incredible as it may seem, men find themselves regretting even Sir Austen Chamberlain," but he could not escape responsibility.

The *Manchester Guardian* alone had editorial comment on the adjournment of the Committee of Nineteen. In its leader of the 22nd, it held that this was simply conceding the Japanese another delay. There was no hope whatever of Japan changing her attitude. The smaller Powers were said to desire a Resolution based upon the Lytton Report, while some of the larger Powers—" and Britain, to her shame, among them "—wanted nothing but a formula to save their faces and Japanese interests. " These long obstetric operations are absurd as well as shameful." The *Guardian* criticised the drafting sub-committee for trying to meet Japanese objections to the draft Resolution. There was no hope, it declared, of a solution under paragraph 3 of Article XV. The Assembly would have to proceed to declarations under paragraph 4. Japan might then withdraw from the League. " No one desires that, yet worse things might happen." The *Guardian* was still harping on Sir John Simon's speech. Its " holy joy " remark has already been noted. That day it printed the speech in full, and, for the first time, it quoted Sir John's passage about the Covenant. But this, it said, harmonised in Sir John's ears with " support for direct negotiations between Japan and China," and with " an anthology of extracts from the Lytton Report which must surprise its authors." Sir John had quoted passages critical of China, but not a single passage critical of Japan. " No wonder that his audience was astonished. No wonder there is satisfaction in Japan." In January, the *Guardian* ended, Britain would have to decide what sort of " loyalty " was hers towards the League of Nations.

In the closing days of 1932 reports came in of troop movements on both sides in Manchuria and North China, and of impending Japanese operations in the province of Jehol. On December 27th, the *Guardian* reported war fever in Japan and Press demands for action in Jehol. Next day the *News Chronicle* returned to the subject of the Far East after more than a fortnight's silence with an article by Mr. A. J. Cummings, whose main theme was the " fixed idea of a preventive war " against either Russia or the United States in the minds of the Japanese military caste, and the danger of Britain being dragged into another world war. After a reference

to Sir John Simon's speech as " deplorable," Mr. Cummings expressed the fear that the British Government would " cling to the view that the supreme duty of mankind is not to offend Japan." Sir John Simon, he said, seemed to have persuaded the Japanese that the British Empire was a negligible quantity and that they could do exactly what they pleased. His own view was that the less troublesome course would be to make " the League and American co-operation a reality "—whatever he may have meant by that.

On December 30th the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Herald* (Mr. Ewer) announced that Japan was preparing to seize Peking and was planning the annexation of all Northern China. In an editorial entitled " Watch Japan ! " this paper renewed the attack upon Sir John Simon, whose " policy of pleasing Japan at any price," it said, continued to be fruitful.

> Again and again during the last fifteen months the Foreign Secretary, by using every ounce of influence, has persuaded the League of Nations to do nothing that might displease the War Lords of Tokyo. Again and again he has urged a policy of " conciliation " which has been a mere pseudonym for complaisance and delay.

It had looked this month, the *Herald* proceeded, that at last the League must take action, but Sir John had once more prevailed, and the result was that a new crisis threatened. " The War Lords, convinced that they can count upon the British Foreign Secretary to hold the League in leash, to keep the ring while they press their conquests further, are planning a new offensive." The Japanese were preparing to invade Jehol ; Peking and all North China were now the object of attack. This time China would fight. There would be real war. " And no small share of the war guilt will rest on the shoulders of the men whose complaisance has encouraged and stimulated the jingoes of Japan." The *Herald*, it may be noted, was completely silent about the nature of the " action " which it apparently desired the League to take.

2. SHANHAIKWAN

On January 3rd, 1933, after confused incidents, the Japanese occupied the walled town of Shanhaikwan, immediately south of the Great Wall. The Far East came back to the columns of the *Daily Express*, even, on two occasions, to its front page, although there was no editorial comment. On the 3rd, both the *Daily Mail* and the

Manchester Guardian had leading articles on the subject. The former paper seemed to think that the Japanese version of the incident was probably correct. The Chinese troops, it said, were apparently the aggressors ; and the trouble appeared to be mainly due to the Chinese war-lord, Chang Hsueh-liang, expelled with his brigand forces from Manchuria, who had been concentrating troops with the obvious intention of attacking the Japanese. The *Guardian*, on the other hand, had no doubt that the Japanese were the aggressors, and that the incident was following " classic lines."

The *Mail* thought that since Chang Hsueh-liang had paid little attention to Japanese warnings he might possibly be imagining that the League of Nations was about to take some violent action against the Japanese. If so (it said), he was preparing for himself a bitter disappointment. The Manchurian question was under consideration by the Committee of Nineteen, and that body must be well aware that no European Power had the slightest intention of going to war with Japan in order to restore anarchy and misgovernment in Manchuria. The *Guardian*, on its side, urged that the Committee of Nineteen should meet earlier than arranged, but that in any event there could be no further temporising. The Japanese might withdraw from the League, but that was by far the lesser of two evils. " A strong unanimous report must be drawn up to show the world that nothing that Japan has done or will do by armed force will be acknowledged. The support of the United States is certain for this line of action. It is the only one which can preserve the League's prestige and make a basis for a genuine settlement." " Action," to the *Guardian*, did not apparently involve any coercive measures, and seemed to be envisaged as a preliminary to a further effort to reach an agreed settlement.

Two days later (January 5th) the *Guardian* emphasised the line taken in the French Radical and Socialist Press of warning to Japan.[1] The United States, it said, had not and never would change their attitude, the absence of an official protest being due to the fact that they were awaiting an effective President. Italy had no reason to stand inactive. These things, said the *Guardian*, Japan must know ; and she must also know that, despite her " good friends " among the British Press and even in the British Cabinet, " the

[1] Reuter's Correspondent reported that Blum had declared in the *Populaire* that France should take the lead in denouncing the aggressor and breaking off official relations with her, thus proclaiming that she did not recognise a *fait accompli*.

British Foreign Secretary may be forced by past convictions and a growing wave of feeling in the country to take a stand at last for justice and the League." But the *Guardian* was more than doubtful whether Japan would be warned. The Japanese Army, it said, was drunk with power and thirsted for more. It would be trusting in miracles to hope that a halt would be commanded. In any event, the article declared, the League Assembly could delay no longer ; Japan had overstayed the patience of her closest friends ; and the Committee of Nineteen must " meet and act and face the consequences."

In an editorial on the previous day (January 4th), the *Daily Telegraph* sincerely hoped that the fighting on the border of Jehol province would have been either stopped or localised by the time the Committee of Nineteen met on the 16th. In its opinion, it would be lamentable if the Committee were to be deflected from its true mission—" that of seeking to reconcile the view of Tokyo and Nanking on the future status of Manchuria, with the aid of such of the recommendations framed by Lord Lytton and his colleagues as might still be given practical and effective shape at the present juncture." The paper was doubtful whether any good would result should the Committee be driven by the trend of events to abandon that helpful task.

These remarks of the *Telegraph* were said to be prompted by " the far from discerning zeal with which some of the smaller League States and certain sections of public opinion in this country are urging the League to take drastic action, and the British Government to propose or support such action, against Japan." Apart from other considerations, the realities of the situation had to be faced. The League had no means of imposing its will by coercive action in a region as remote as the Far East :

> America, moreover, has made it perfectly clear that, while she might welcome and endorse a condemnation, on legal and ethical grounds, of Japan's occupation of Manchuria, she would not encourage any talk of " sanctions," and could not be expected to participate in their application.

The *Telegraph* also thought it a fair assumption that the requisite unanimity would not be forthcoming at Geneva for any report calculated to wound Japan and compel her withdrawal from the League. If Japan were once outside the League, the threat of a Japanese march on Peking, and a real Sino-Japanese war, would

" take on a substance it does not possess at present." Britain, at any rate, had no reason (the article concluded) to embroil herself with an old and proud friend and former ally, " who is rightly regarded as the main bulwark against Bolshevism in the Far East." Here the *Telegraph* was using the favourite argument of the *Mail.*

Despite what the *Telegraph* said, it is not easy to trace any pressure in this country for " drastic action," if by that phrase was meant " coercive action." The *Times* of the 3rd had, it is true, reported a speech made by Lansbury at Upton, West Ham, in which he had denounced the " cynically outrageous " behaviour of the Japanese Imperialists, and had spoken of the League as appearing to be " hopeless and helpless, and stricken with a kind of palsy." Lansbury said it was probably true that the League could not make war on Japan, and personally he did not desire them to do so, but " there was a much more effective weapon than war, and that was the weapon of leaving Japan entirely alone, cancelling business, giving no loan, and, above all, supplying her with no ammunition or armaments of any kind." Perhaps the *Telegraph* had this speech of Lansbury's in mind, but it appears to have been an isolated utterance. Such pronouncements as were made in the following week or two could not be described as demands for " drastic " action.

On the Left, the *New Statesman* (if it be legitimate so to classify the almost unclassifiable), made no demand for coercive measures in its comments on January 7th. It described the situation as one of the utmost gravity, and said that Japanese action certainly looked like an insolent challenge to the world, but it would be wise not to overlook the possibility that the Japanese soldiers in Manchuria had acted on their own authority and that they, if no one else, regarded the incident as a purely local skirmish. This weekly went on to point out that Jehol had been included in the new State of Manchukuo, and the Japanese, therefore, might argue that the attack on Shanhaikwan should not be regarded as a new act of aggression against China. If so, the *New Statesman* hoped the Japanese would be speedily enlightened. They had now to deal with the Assembly, which had taken a stronger line than the League Council. Moreover, an invasion of Jehol raised a simpler issue than did the position in Manchuria, which was " immensely complicated by the great Japanese interests there and its loose attachment to the rest of China." Japan might find she had united the

powers of civilisation against her, and " the threat to withdraw from the League would be an extremely feeble retort to condemnation by the League for a breach of the Covenant."

The *Daily Herald* next day (January 8th) had no such doubts as the *New Statesman.* The attack on Shanhaikwan was a new aggression against China, a new defiance of Geneva, deliberate, and deliberately timed. As had become its habit, the *Herald* devoted its article to Sir John Simon. His policy, it said, had throughout been to turn a carefully blinded eye to the realities. Once more Sir John's Geneva speech received notice. This time it was again " the compliment," presented on this occasion, however, as evidence of " complacency," but given an equally distorted meaning. " It is to be hoped," said the *Herald,* " that the newest affront will at least shake his complacency and his childlike faith that Japan is ' a good and loyal member of the League ' and is showing ' a spirit which we would wish to welcome and make use of.' " The paper went on to say that if Sir John could at last be persuaded to face realities, the League might yet assert its authority and save its prestige. How this was to be done the *Herald* did not positively say. It did say that the League would perish if it continued " meekly to condone international crime after crime." But here certainly was no demand for coercive action.

On January 11th there appeared in the *Times* a letter from Lord Cecil, in which he urged that the Lytton Report should be adopted and the parties to the dispute called upon to enter into a conference upon the basis of its findings. If the Assembly acted with vigour and courage (he said) then he did not believe that either party would venture to refuse. " If either of them did, the members of the League would have to take counsel with other countries as to the best way of protecting the peace and order of the world." It is not at all surprising that a correspondent[1] should have said that " a statesman of Lord Cecil's standing might surely be a little more definite in his advice." In the event, to him unlikely, of Japan (or China) refusing to participate in his proposed conference, Lord Cecil did not suggest any coercive action on the part of the members of the League. All he suggested was that they should " take counsel " with " other countries," presumably with the United States and Soviet Russia. Lord Cecil, however, went to that extent beyond the League of Nations Union, whose General Council on January 13th

[1] Lt.-Gen. Sir Alexander Gordon, the *Times,* December 16th, 1932.

contented itself with a plea that the Lytton Report should be adopted and a hope that " the combined might of world opinion " might in that way persuade the parties " to come into a conference on the basis of the Report."

Nor was any clearer guidance forthcoming in the " Statement by Prominent People " [1] published on January 14th. The distinguished persons urged that if Japan should refuse to accept the Lytton Report's principles of settlement, the Assembly ought, with the utmost speed possible, to issue a report under Article XV, paragraph 4, which, they presumed, would explicitly declare against recognition of Manchukuo. They further considered that " the Assembly, without undue delay, should examine the situation in the light of these decisions with a view to seeing what further action is required."[2]

In its notes on January 14th the *New Statesman* said that there was little sign of the Great Powers in the League, with or without the United States and Soviet Russia, being ready to propose or to do anything effective, and, it added, " to do anything effective becomes more and more difficult as the months slip by and Japan's arrogance grows."

" A Correspondent " had two articles in the *Manchester Guardian* on January 13th and 14th :

Whatever may be the real motives of the pro-Japanese policy of the British Government, which is considered by many Americans to be unfriendly to the United States, those who advocate the capitulation of the League of Nations to Japan profess to be guided by respect for " realities." The " reality " on which they particularly insist is that the League has not the power to take any effective action against Japan and that an attempt to take such action would be futile. Its only result, they

[1] Professor S. Alexander ; G. N. Barnes ; Margaret Bondfield ; J. R. Clynes ; Lord Davies ; G. P. Gooch ; A. D. Lindsay ; Professor Gilbert Murray ; Dr. Cyril Norwood ; Sir Arthur Salter ; H. Wickham Steed ; H. G. Wells ; the Archbishop of York ; and the Bishops of Bradford, Ripon and Salisbury. See *Times*, *Manchester Guardian* and *News Chronicle*.

[2] The form of this memorial incurred the displeasure of the *News Chronicle*. In an editorial entitled " Speak a Little Louder, Please " on the same day, this paper said that there was no doubt what the memorial meant to anyone who studied it at all carefully. " It denounces the (Japanese) recognition of Manchukuo and calls upon the League Assembly to accept the situation created by that denunciation and consider what is to be done about it." But why, asked the *News Chronicle*, must this plain message be wrapped up, as it is, " in a mass of semi-technical diplomatic verbiage " ? Although the leading article went on to say that the memorial really expressed the views of the man-in-the-street, " in language which leaves him merely perplexed," the *News Chronicle* did note in its news columns that this group of " well-known public men and women " made " no proposal for action."

say, would be that Japan would leave the League, continue to defy the rest of the world and . . . would be given " a free hand in China."

Those who argued in this way, said " A Correspondent," failed to recognise certain realities. First, Japan could not in any case leave the League for two years, and if it were decided that she had violated the Covenant could not leave it at all, although she could be expelled. Secondly, Japan's financial and economic situation was such that " if the members of the League and the United States did no more than forbid the exportation of munitions to Japan and prevent her from obtaining any loan or financial aid it would be almost impossible for her to hold out." " A Correspondent," having examined Japan's financial and economic situation, came to the conclusion " that the excuse made for the unwillingness of the European Great Powers to take action in the matter of Manchuria is not valid." In this last sentence, it may be noted, the United States was omitted.

So far the only coercive measures suggested (and suggested by very few) were bans on the export of munitions and on any financial assistance to Japan.

Commenting on January 8th on the Japanese occupation of Shanhaikwan, the *Observer* considered it clear that the military were again the ascendant factor in Tokyo's actions. Whatever difficulty there might be about Manchuria, there was no shadow of doubt that Japan had no legitimate scope within the Great Wall. The paper thought it too late in all probability for an exercise of sweet reason, " although the best hope lies in direct Sino-Japanese accommodation." On January 15th the *Observer* dealt editorially with the situation along the Great Wall. The nature of that situation, it said, was clear. Japan had determined to eliminate from Manchuria every trace of Chinese authority and had decided that Jehol must be included within Manchuria in that sense. Japanese power was concentrated upon the consolidation of Japanese authority on the mainland from Korea to the Great Wall. That, said the *Observer*, was the essential fact, and it had to be faced. It was " the most formidable, the most dangerous fact in the world to-day " ; and it was impossible for realistic minds to feel any conviction that the Japanese objective would be bounded by the Wall itself. A temptation and an opportunity for Japanese expansion over the mainland had been created by the weakness of China and the common helplessness of the foreign Powers. The opportunity had

been deliberately taken. " Tokyo is aware that Great Britain, Russia, the United States and Germany are all in their several present circumstances incapable of resistance."

The *Observer* held that to moralise was to waste emotion. So far as Manchuria was concerned, Japan had been " at last exasperated into direct remedial action," and, " as often happens in such cases, she has gone beyond her initial aim or desire, and has turned a reasonable cause into one that may, if further prosecuted, draw upon her the concentrated condemnation of the whole world." This weekly maintained that the best thing the Western Powers could have done a year before would have been to encourage a direct accommodation between China and Japan. That " expedient " had now become more difficult, but even more necessary. Moral proclamations against Japan were worse than useless—provocative. League of Nations sanctions were totally impracticable. " There is nothing to be done except simply to recognise that Japan, right or wrong, can do what she will, and to concentrate upon an attempt to dissuade her from piercing the Great Wall." The *Observer* added that recognition of Manchukuo must be resolutely refused. In the end, the Japanese people might respond to reason ; but they might be blinded by abuse. If Japan were to commit the " crowning blunder," the inevitable result would be the certain doom of Japan herself.

The *Times*, in an editorial on January 13th, gave its attention primarily to the situation resulting from the renewal of hostilities at Shanhaikwan. Little doubt remained, in its view, that the ultimate object of the Japanese forces was to obtain control of Jehol, the strategic and political importance of which it emphasised. The immediate concern for the outside world, the *Times* declared, was that the fighting should as far as possible be localised and should in no case spread into China proper. In stressing this point, the *Times* used language which suggested that continued Japanese control of Manchuria, as well as the expansion of that control over Jehol, had to be accepted for the time being :

> Once it is admitted that Japan intends to remain for the present military master of Manchukuo—and, whatever the justice or injustice of the Japanese case, there is no other working basis on which to consider the Manchurian problem—it cannot reasonably be supposed that the Japanese commanders will remain indifferent to the attitude of the Governor of Jehol. When Manchukuo proclaimed itself a State, its

boundaries were drawn to include that province ; and this arrangement was merely the maintenance of an administrative change previously made when it was detached from the Province of Chihli, lying south of the Great Wall.

The Chinese representatives at Geneva, said the *Times*, were apparently urging the Nanking Government to fight stubbornly for the recapture of Shanhaikwan. There was some ground, it suggested, for thinking that the change in Chinese policy which would be involved might be made as a deliberate bid for the assistance of the European Powers ; but, if so, the proposal might at once be condemned as a serious miscalculation. The Japanese authorities were understood to have proposed that Shanhaikwan should be made a neutral zone. The *Times* proceeded : " It will indeed be a matter of profound concern to all Powers if fighting spreads south of the Great Wall to the neighbourhood of Peking and Tientsin." They could hardly remain inactive any longer ; but " everything would depend upon which party had made itself responsible for so disastrous an extension of hostilities "—a warning, in short, to China as well as to Japan.

The Geneva Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* promptly took this *Times* leader as clear evidence that British policy was " more pro-Japanese than ever." The inspiration of the leader, he declared, on January 16th, was " evidently semi-official." It had caused " great emotion " in Geneva :

> It confirms what has been learnt from other sources—namely, that the British Government, alarmed by the danger to which important British interests are exposed by the Japanese military measures, is trying to buy off Japan at the expense of China.

This Correspondent " understood " that the British naval authorities at Shanhaikwan unsuccessfully attempted to induce the Chinese to agree to the Japanese proposal that Shanhaikwan should be neutralised.

The *Guardian* itself, in an editorial on the same day, said that " Japan's supporters in the English Press " did not pretend that the Japanese action at Shanhaikwan was anything but a step to the seizure of Jehol, but that their only anxiety was " to pass by on the other side, dragging their country with them." At the end of this leader the *Guardian* introduced some comments on British policy with the following sentence :

> It is said that at Geneva there is bewilderment about the nature of

British policy ; hence the constant suggestion that there is some secret understanding between Britain and Japan.

The *Guardian* said that there might well be bewilderment. Since September 1931 the British Government had pursued " a policy of masterly and ignominious drift which has served all too well the purposes of Japan."

What is the reason ? Some say it is that we have great interests in the East which are exposed to Japan's hostility. Are we now gaining Japan's favour ? There is no sign of it. Shall we benefit by incurring the disfavour of China, as we are doing ? Or by sedulously acting apart from the United States, as we have done ? Or, most of all, by facing Japan in isolation, as may yet happen, instead of with the rest of the world, as we might do ?

The reader will note in this passage a characteristic use of assumptions about " the rest of the world," rendered plausible only by equally characteristic use of ambiguous expressions such as " facing Japan " ; the continued suggestion that the British Government, instead of seeking to act in co-operation with the United States, was doing the opposite, " sedulously acting apart " ; and an apparently complete inability to understand the nature of British policy, leading to (or accompanied by) indulgence in unfounded suspicions and a readiness to accept or to give currency to the rumours and " suggestions " emanating from the whispering gallery of Europe.

On the following day (January 17th), the *Guardian* linked British policy with the *Times* leader of the 13th :

Whoever are inspiring British foreign policy to-day, they rouse a mighty echo in a mighty section of the Press. To quote the most considered of these big crustaceans, " realists " must " admit that Japan intends to remain for the present military master of Manchukuo " ; that is for them the only " working basis on which to consider the Manchurian problem." Upon this basis they desire to " localise " the conflict which is threatened in Jehol—that is, to give the Japanese a free hand for just one more aggression. Their shells are proof against appeals for justice or respect for treaties, but even they might be expected to consider that Japanese aggression is about as likely to succeed in the long run as Æsop's frog ; these erstwhile trumpeters of " Anglo-Saxon " amity might be asked whether the friendship of the United States is worth preserving ; these partisans of " old and tried alliances " might consider what the Japanese Press says about Britain, how Manchukuo has closed the " open door."

It was on the same day, however, that the *Guardian* published a message from its Geneva Correspondent about the meeting of the Committee of Nineteen on the 16th. Sir John Simon's attitude on that occasion (which will be dealt with later) did not square with the interpretation of his policy which had been given by this paper and by its Correspondent. We shall see what explanations they offered. For the time being it will suffice to note that when the *Guardian* discussed the situation editorially on January 18th it resorted to the device of suggesting that the British Foreign Office was speaking with " two voices." On the subject of Shanhaikwan and Jehol, with which we are at the moment concerned, the *Guardian* took the line that the Foreign Office was offering Japan a " deal." Shanhaikwan, it said, had alarmed those Foreign Offices which wished to " localise " the conflict in Manchuria but thought that " it will be a matter of profound concern to all Powers if fighting spreads south of the Great Wall to the neighbourhood of Peking and Tientsin "—a quotation from the *Times* article of the 13th. The *Guardian* considered it impossible to think that they did not use pressure or make promises to obtain a halt from the advancing Japanese. The alarm resulting from Shanhaikwan was proper enough. There was and remained real danger of a big extension of the fighting to the Chinese province of Hopei. Enormous British interests, the article went on, were involved in this particular district.[1] The British Government, therefore, had acted with great rapidity. " A hint was given to Japan to take care before embarking on another adventure in North China : Japan was also told that she should ' localise ' her operations in Jehol. Being interpreted it would appear that the British Foreign Office was offering Japan a ' deal,' provided that ' fighting should in no case spread to China proper.' "

3. The Committee of Nineteen

The Committee of Nineteen reassembled on January 16th, as arranged. Four of the chief British dailies had leading articles on

[1] " The Kaiping mines, with their own treaty port at Chinwangtao, include the largest single colliery in the world ; their annual output of about 5 million tons is larger than the annual output of Cannock Chase ; the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company which owns them is in turn controlled by British subjects. The company has so far managed to survive and make considerable profit. A Japanese advance along the railway line would cut communications with its inland mines and might result in the destruction of its wharves and port at Chinwangtao."

the subject that day. The *Express*, writing on the Foreign Secretary's departure for the meeting, thought that this was the best thing he could do—to discuss it at Geneva. In this paper's view, of course, that meant doing nothing. China, it said, had been invaded before, and every time had absorbed the intruder. For Britain to intervene would be " utter madness." Our business was to trade with China and Japan ; to protect the lives and properties of our nationals ; " and to defend our honour if the need arises." To the *Express*, " our honour " would not apparently have been involved by any mere breach of the Covenant. " We should beware of the sentimentalists who seek to advance their pacifist ideals at the price of involving our sons in a foreign quarrel not of our concern."

The *Mail* declared that " well-meaning sentimentalists " were once more urging the Government " to adopt a policy in the Far East which would mean war with Japan." They were asking, it said, for " drastic action," demanding that the Committee of Nineteen should report against Japan and take a line " which could only be carried out by the application of overwhelming force against her." By prejudging the issue and threatening a friendly Power, our sentimentalists were rendering a peaceful settlement more than ever difficult ; they were leading the Chinese to imagine that they would receive military support from the European Powers and from the United States, " when the fact is that none of these Powers has the slightest intention of embarking on a great struggle in the Far East." The *Mail*, as previously, argued that Japanese control of Manchuria was essential for the protection of Japanese interests. If Japan were driven out, the probable result would be annexation of Manchuria by Moscow, for the country would revert to the Chinese war lords, " and their régime of systematic exploitation and extortion, which cannot last." If the League did its duty, declared the *Mail*, it would remind the Chinese that the first necessity was " to create an Administration capable of enforcing order and fulfilling the obligations of a civilised State within Chinese territories."

Discussing Sir John Simon's departure, the *Daily Telegraph* presented a picture of the Foreign Secretary in striking contrast with that customarily drawn by his critics, and one much closer to the truth :

Idealist as he has always been and strong supporter of the League of Nations, he tempers enthusiasm by a strict regard to what is practicable

and what is not. Neither he nor the National Government for which he speaks is likely to allow its zeal to outrun its discretion in respect of Manchuria.

The *Telegraph* added that that was the general attitude of all the Great Powers, on which the brunt of responsibility would fall if the conciliatory methods hitherto pursued were replaced by " another method of treatment which in the last resort brings into view the application of ' sanctions ' "—a change " vehemently desired," it said, by some people.

The *Telegraph* agreed that the inclusion of Jehol within the " independent " State of Manchukuo would be another blow to the League's prestige, but the League would remain " even if it had to be recognised that in some circumstances and in some places its power to check aggression is strictly limited."

It is known to all the world—and not least to Japan—that the leading European Powers have no intention of resorting to " sanctions " against Japan for the sake of restoring Manchuria to China, and that the United States—the chief complainant—will have no resort thereto, either in association with the League or independently on her own account.

The article pointed out that the American non-recognition declaration had " caused no perceptible deflection of Japanese policy." The *Telegraph's* conclusion was that when threats were useless because unreal, conciliation alone remained ; and it was still hopeful that a conciliation procedure might be agreed upon.

The *Guardian*, on the other hand, was now plainly opposed to any prolongation of conciliation. " The policy of Japan has been to consolidate her position in Manchuria while the League practised ' conciliation ' : the policy of the League has been to practise ' conciliation ' while Japan consolidated her position in Manchuria." Conciliation, declared the *Guardian*, was right when the Lytton Report was first published because Japan and China had both to be asked to accept it as a basis of settlement ; but to prolong conciliation indefinitely while Japan inflicted violence after violence upon China would only announce the failure of the League.

If conciliation has to go on interminably, it had better be subjected to a Five-year plan so that we shall all know where we are, and Sir John Simon, who seems to have discovered the long lane that has no turning, might draw it up.

The *Guardian* considered that the point had been reached at which

the Assembly must accept the Lytton Report and recommend its application, whatever the consequences :

> For there is no escaping the dilemma. Either Japan yields or the League. If Japan refuses to budge, the League certainly suffers defeat. But she only suffers moral defeat if Japan, besides refusing to budge, remains within the League.

When the Committee of Nineteen met on January 16th nothing was forthcoming from the Japanese delegation, who informed the Committee that they would be submitting fresh amendments to the draft Resolution within forty-eight hours. The Committee decided to adjourn until the 18th, but they did so only after intimating that, if necessary, they would proceed as rapidly as possible to apply paragraph 4 of Article XV. On the 18th the Committee found the new Japanese amendments unacceptable, but they offered to waive their proposal (to which the Japanese had strongly objected) to invite the United States and Soviet Russia to participate in the negotiations if the Japanese would accept the rest of the draft Resolution. On the 21st the Japanese delegation signified that they were not prepared to accept the draft Resolution on that basis, and submitted fresh proposals. After considering these, and the amendments submitted by the Chinese, the Committee of Nineteen came to the conclusion that it was impossible for the time being to present a conciliation formula acceptable to both parties. They decided, therefore, to begin to prepare a draft report under paragraph 4 of Article XV, while intimating that during the preparation of this report they would remain at the disposal of the parties for any further proposals it might be desired to submit. The effort at conciliation had failed, but had not yet been finally abandoned.

It is interesting to note that the more popular dailies paid little attention to these proceedings. There was little or no editorial comment in the *Express*, the *Mail*, the *News Chronicle* and the *Herald*. The last-mentioned paper, indeed, did not discuss the Manchurian question in its editorial columns from January 8th until January 24th. Among the chief newspapers, discussion of the matter was confined to the *Times*, *Telegraph* and *Manchester Guardian*. Throughout the period, moreover, Parliament was in recess.

To the *Guardian*, the forty-eight hours adjournment of the Committee of Nineteen was, apparently, only " giving the Japanese another delay." It has already been noted that the clear indications at the meeting of the 16th that the Committee of Nineteen's patience

was becoming exhausted, and particularly the attitude of Sir John Simon, placed the *Guardian* in something of a dilemma. Editorially, it did not comment on what its Geneva Correspondent called " a welcome symptom of firmness to which we have not been accustomed hitherto." Nor did it refer to what he had to say about Sir John Simon.[1] The Correspondent understood " from a good source " that " even Sir John Simon's attitude was to some extent modified this afternoon."

Still persisting, as we shall see, in their attacks on British policy, both the *Guardian* and its Geneva Correspondent endeavoured next day (January 18th) to explain the line taken by the Foreign Secretary. To the Correspondent, it represented a sudden change of attitude :

> The change in the attitude of the British Government shown by Sir John Simon's remarks at the meeting of the Committee of Nineteen yesterday is still the subject of general comment. It is denied in British official quarters that there has been any change, but it is evident that there has been one, and it is also clear that it was sudden. Hitherto British policy has been to drag on the conciliation procedure as long as possible, and in British official quarters it was hoped to prolong the negotiations for a couple of years or so.

Having misinterpreted British policy, the Correspondent's " sudden change " explanation was at least plausible, but it was to involve him in further difficulties. He had at once to explain this alleged change and its suddenness.

> The tendency here is to attribute the change to pressure from the United States, and it is connected with the visit of the American Ambassador in London to the Foreign Office. Whether there is any foundation for this view I am unable to say, but in any case it is the fact that the American Ambassador urged on behalf both of Mr. Hoover and of Mr. Roosevelt that there should be an end of the dilatory tactics and that the League should proceed to a definite report on the dispute between China and Japan.

On the previous day—the same day on which the above dispatch was written in Geneva—the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Telegraph* wrote " on high authority " that there was no truth in the

[1] " Sir John Simon proposed that the Chinese delegation should also be told that the conciliation procedure would not be continued indefinitely, and that unless it succeeded very shortly the Committee would proceed to draft a report under paragraph 4 of Article XV of the Covenant. Public opinion, he said, was becoming disturbed at the continued delays."

reports that President Hoover had instructed the American Ambassadors in London and Paris to press for the abandonment of the "conciliation" procedure by the League for a policy of a more drastic type.

Editorially, on January 18th, the *Guardian* did not present its Correspondent's theory of a change, sudden or otherwise, in the British attitude. As already mentioned, it wrote of the "two voices" of the Foreign Office. The one voice was that which, the *Guardian* suggested, was offering Japan a "deal" in order to prevent the extension of hostilities to Northern China and so to protect British interests there. The other voice, apparently, was that of Sir John Simon, although the *Guardian* was plainly reluctant to commit itself too far in regard to the Foreign Secretary. The article spoke of "the virtual ultimatum" presented to the Japanese on the 16th. The Japanese, it argued, had "in fact" rejected it, and that "must be too much even for Sir John Simon"—

> The League Committee has been pushed by Japan's intransigence until it stands upon the water's very edge. It must at least appear to drink, whether it likes it or not. What can the subtle spokesmen of the greater Powers do now to save their teeth from being set on edge?

The tone of the discussion at the Committee of Nineteen's meeting on the 16th afforded some comfort, the article proceeded, to those who had ceased to hope for anything from Sir John Simon and his colleagues. "Whatever their desires, these distinguished statesmen were irritated by Japan's expenditure of valuable time." But, more important, the assault on Shanhaikwan had stiffened world opinion, and the statesmen were feeling the stiffening. After denouncing as wrong and foolish attempts at any deal with Japan, the article concluded with the assertion that, whatever had been the motives of the British attitude on the 16th, "Britain must act upon Sir John Simon's brave words"—and the words then quoted were those used by Sir John in his so savagely criticised speech of December 7th, 1932!: "The Covenant of the League of Nations is our fundamental law.... We are bound to sustain it."

4. An Incident

The treatment by the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent of one feature of the effort to devise a conciliation formula merits notice as an illustration of his methods.

His message in the *Guardian* on January 14th mentioned reported negotiations by Sir Eric Drummond, the Secretary-General of the League, with the Japanese. In commenting on this report, he said that it was clear, in any case, that a strong effort was being made in certain quarters, " at the instigation, no doubt, of the British Government," to avoid any condemnation of the action of Japan.

The matter was raised when the Committee of Nineteen met on the 16th. What had happened was that the Japanese had consulted Sir Eric Drummond about the phrasing of a conciliation formula they were then considering. In the course of his dispatch that day (published on the 17th) the *Guardian* Correspondent said that the Japanese had " estranged even their warmest supporters by their conduct in regard to Sir Eric Drummond," but he gave no indication of the nature of the conduct complained of. Later in this message, he discussed the raising of the matter at the Committee's meeting. Sir Eric Drummond had explained " that he had no responsibility in the matter, that he had been asked whether a particular formula would be more likely to be acceptable to the Committee than another, and had given advice as he would to any member of the League. Mr. Lester thereupon asked that an official disclaimer to this effect should be issued to the Press, but Sir Eric Drummond objected on the ground that he did not wish to be mixed up in polemics." The *Guardian* Correspondent, instead of accepting Sir Eric's explanation, found it " difficult to understand " why he " should object to an official denial of an inaccurate report " ; and later suggested that " possibly the real responsibility for what happened is to be traced to London."

The message from this Correspondent published next day (January 18th) included the following sentence :

> There is only one conclusion to be drawn from Sir Eric Drummond's refusal to deny publicly his responsibility for the proposed modification in the texts adopted by the Committee of Nineteen.

In the *Times* that day the message from its Geneva Correspondent spoke of " a good deal of criticism of the part played by Sir Eric Drummond with M. Hymans (the President of the Committee of Nineteen) in attempting to work out a conciliation with the Japanese." The *Times* Correspondent considered it clearly unreasonable to complain because Sir Eric had given the assistance which, as Secretary-General, he was bound to give ; and continued :

It has also been stated that Sir John Simon interfered in the matter. There is no foundation for this complaint. It would have been improper for Sir Eric Drummond to consult the Foreign Secretary about the formula, and there was, in fact, no consultation on the subject between them.

The *Guardian* Correspondent made one further reference to the matter. It was a gem of its kind. In a message published on January 23rd he said :

I understand that Sir Eric Drummond categorically denies that he consulted the British or any other Government about the matter. Nobody has ever doubted his good faith in the matter. The doubts were about the wisdom of his action. As was said in last Monday's paper, he was the victim of the Japanese, who treated him badly.

5. The Press and the Proposed Report

When the Committee of Nineteen decided to go ahead with the preparation of a report under Article XV, paragraph 4, the *Guardian* (January 23rd) abated none of its criticism of the League Powers in general and of the British Government in particular. The mills of the League ground slowly, it said, because so many of the millers were busy throwing grit in the machinery. Indeed, if it had not been for Japan herself, the mills might very well have stopped altogether. But the hand even of the British Government had been forced at last, " though whether it was danger to British coal mines or danger to mere justice that moved it is not known." Anyhow, " to Japan be the credit for the new firmness of the League." Not that the *Guardian* had much confidence in this " new firmness." The Committee's decision had been reached by " a tortuous path." The League had now apparently set its feet in the straightforward path of the Covenant, but would it persist in it ? The *Guardian* feared that strenuous efforts would be made " to weaken the Assembly's report, to remove from it anything that suggests a censure of Japan, and to leave things as they are." It implied that such efforts were likely to come from Britain, for it proceeded to criticise " the advocates of Japan in the British Press," and ended with the assertion that, since the broad issue between right and wrong was inescapable, " the League Assembly should now, with or without the support of the British Government, begin by saying that Japan is in the wrong."

The question of the nature of the Assembly's report had been raised in the *Guardian* by its Geneva Correspondent as early as the 18th. He expected considerable difficulty. Sir John Simon's view, he said, was that the Committee should simply recommend the Assembly to adopt the Lytton Report, but some members of the Committee held that the report should contain a judgment on the conduct of Japan, " which is exactly what Sir John Simon wishes to avoid." In this dispatch the Correspondent of the *Guardian* unintentionally exposed the misinterpretations (and in some cases, perhaps, the distortions) of the Lytton Report current among Sir John Simon's critics. They had erroneously or wishfully assumed that the Report had adjudged Japan to be " the aggressor." They had accordingly clamoured for the adoption of the Report and accused Sir John Simon of obstruction. Whatever might be the case with the general body of Sir John's critics, the *Guardian* Correspondent had now either discovered or been compelled by the course of events to recognise that the Lytton Report was, from his standpoint, inadequate. Belatedly, he explained that " it was not the function of the Lytton Commission to pronounce such a judgment " on the conduct of Japan, although they indirectly condemned that conduct. If the Committee of Nineteen simply adopted the Lytton Report, he said, it would recommend the settlement of the conflict on the lines set out in the Report, and Japan had rejected that settlement. In the light of that fact, he argued, the Committee had to make such recommendations as might be deemed " just and proper," and these " would naturally include proposals for bringing Japan to reason."

In the dispatch which appeared on January 23rd, the *Guardian* Correspondent " understood " that Matsuoka had been confident that the conciliation procedure would continue. The Japanese, the Correspondent said, " were saying openly that it would be all right when Sir John Simon returned to Geneva," but he thought they might now at last understand that a change had taken place in the attitude of the Committee of Nineteen and in that of the British delegation. The Correspondent referred to the opinion of " one of the best authorities here on Far Eastern affairs " that Japan might yet accept the settlement proposed in the Lytton Report. At any rate, he added, the result of the Committee's new firmness was that the Japanese were no longer talking of leaving the League or withdrawing their delegation from Geneva. " Much would have been

avoided," he concluded, " had the Great Powers consented to call the Japanese bluff long ago."

The *News Chronicle* had an editorial on January 18th in which it urged that there should be no further " transparent shuffles " designed solely to give Japan further time in which " to commit further acts of aggression against her helpless neighbour." If Japan refused to evacuate Manchuria and submit to the League's judgment (the article said), she should be promptly expelled from the League. On the 23rd an editorial welcomed the abandonment, as it put it, of the Committee's " hopeless task of conciliating Japan." The only result of the long-drawn-out attempts at conciliation had been to give Japan time and opportunity. The *News Chronicle* hoped the Assembly would lose no time in taking action which would " force Japan either at this eleventh hour to make her submission " or else withdraw from the League.

The *Telegraph*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* viewed the developments at the Committee of Nineteen with anxiety, and were critical of the Committee's handling of the matter. The former paper, in an editorial on January 19th, criticised in particular the Committee's decision on the previous day, i.e. the offer to withdraw the proposed invitation to the United States and Soviet Russia if the Japanese would accept the remainder of the conciliation formula. The feelings of the Japanese Cabinet, ruffled by the " brusque presentation of a time limit," were unlikely to be smoothed down by the Committee's single concession. The *Telegraph* emphasised the fact that Japan had from the first objected to the terms of the Committee's draft Resolutions; and there seemed but faint reason for believing that, in return for one point, she would yield all the others deemed by her no less vital. The crucial difference lay in the refusal of the Committee " to recognise or to accept without formal recognition the 'independent' State of Manchukuo." The *Telegraph* said that the Committee had contrived to put Japan in a decidedly invidious position. " They have made it more difficult for her to accept while offering to meet one—but only one—of her strongest objections."

The *Telegraph* blamed " the small States." They had " forced the immediate issue with a vengeance." Saner supporters of the League looked beyond to the far larger issues which would rise on the horizon when the League set about drafting the report under paragraph 4 of Article XV, " the only purpose of which is to lead

on to action of a far more serious kind." " In that action, whatever it might be, most of the small countries, whose representatives have been so zealous to end the conciliation phase, would have no part or lot."

Yesterday's proceedings carry their own condemnation. Their rectification will be left to the Great Powers. If Japan leaves the League —and there are people so inconceivably foolish as to talk of " expelling " her—the League will suffer incalculable damage until she returns. There is no question of endorsing all her acts or defending her conduct throughout this lamentable imbroglio. But she has been dealing with an undisciplined State in chaos and collapse and one alike unable to prevent her nominal subjects from doing wrong and unwilling to give redress for the wrongs done.

This paper's Diplomatic Correspondent, on the same day, severely criticised the policy of " some of the smaller States " at Geneva, which, he said, had produced considerable annoyance in British circles. He expressed surprise, in particular, at the attitude of Beneš. Czechoslovakia had no navy which could contribute the tiniest warship to the policing of Chinese waters or the enforcement of an economic boycott in the Pacific. No doubt, he said, Beneš was apprehensive lest, should the League fail to protect China against what he apparently held to be a Japanese aggressor, it should fail similarly to protect Czechoslovakia if she were the victim of an attack. But Beneš had chosen a most irrelevant test case. There was no real analogy between anarchic China and his own well-ordered country. " Moreover, the power of the League to act in the Far East bears no relation to its power to act in Europe." The Correspondent considered it strange that these elementary facts should have escaped Beneš and his colleagues.

" Scrutator " dealt at length with the Manchurian problem in the *Sunday Times* on January 22nd. He criticised the " school of Liberal thought which champions the cause of China against Japan with the same intense moral fervour that Gladstone used to invoke against Turkish atrocities "—people to whom " Japan is black and China is white, and there are no neutral colours." To " Scrutator " this was " another form of Imperialism, moral in its terminology, but none the less cowardly, because it refuses to face the risks and tries to cut through hard facts with sentiment." Manchuria, he declared, was not a simple moral issue, but perhaps the most complicated practical problem in the whole range of

foreign politics. " Sir John Simon's attitude of trying to untie knots which may have been tied too tight for his fingers is not heroic," but it might be " the best and wisest in the difficult circumstances."

The first main fact, in " Scrutator's " view, was that Japan would fight a third war for Manchuria rather than have her position there challenged. The second fact was that Manchuria was no more China proper than the French possessions in Cochin China. " Scrutator " declared that the Lytton Commission showed itself much fairer minded and less prejudiced in temper than some of its principals in the League Council. He did not appear to object to the Committee of Nineteen's specific offer to Japan on the 18th, but he made two general criticisms of the League. The first was that it had made a great mistake in applying purely juridical methods to urgent practical problems like that of Manchuria, and by neglecting " the long historical non-justiciable element " in the Manchurian case it had placed itself in a false position in relation to Japan. The second and more serious criticism was that some members of the League Council, notably representatives of new nations, had " stressed the case against Japan and forced the League into opposition in the hope that if the League could beat Japan the victory would increase their own security in a European crisis." That, concluded " Scrutator," was " interested, not equal and impartial justice, unfair to distant Manchuria and unfair to this country, on whom—not on Czechoslovakia—would fall the dangerous responsibility of failure."

The *Observer*, writing on the same day on " High-Minded Errors," considered that Geneva's handling of the Japanese problem would gain in many ways from a keener sense of realities. Although Japan's methods in some directions could not be recognised, some critics could not see beyond the vindication of " a rather vague China." Their partisanship was the very thing " to drive a sensitive Power into excesses of self-will." Considerable regions, said the *Observer*, were indebted to Japan " for a Government that, whatever its shortcomings, *is* a Government, and not a mere theory, floating above a landscape of brigandage." The situation was deplorable, but it was not a drama with a single " villain " ; and juridical fervour was injudicious where juridical remedies were not available.

Only in the *Times* among the chief newspapers was anything like wholehearted support forthcoming for the Committee of Nineteen ; and only there also was the nature of British policy properly

understood. A leading article on January 17th said that the difficulty in devising a conciliation formula had been due almost entirely to Japan's objections. The most patient efforts were being made to meet the Japanese objections, and rightly so, since in this particular dispute the League's business was definitely that of conciliation. The *Times*, however, considered it most unlikely that a formula acceptable to both China and Japan could be devised " unless its wording was so attenuated as to deprive it altogether of directive force." The League, it declared, could neither compromise with its principles nor take refuge in vagueness. It had to formulate and proclaim the settlement it believed to be most suitable. It certainly could not immediately enforce a settlement, but it could presumably rely upon its members to use all the diplomatic means at their disposal in order to make its recommendations ultimately effective. This rôle, said the article, was doubtless less ambitious than some champions of the League would desire, but neither economic blockade nor financial boycott would in the least help Manchuria to obtain a good Administration. In the view of the *Times*, the League's function should be advisory, though authoritative: and it was wholly unnecessary to assume that because the League was unable to impose an ideal settlement in the Far East by force it must always be sterile in action, or to assume that because Japan was the country that took the initiative in military operations it was therefore entirely in the wrong. Neither condemnation nor condonation was necessary. The future mattered more than the past, and the soundest course for the League to pursue was—with the consent of the parties to the dispute, if possible, but if not, without them—" to hold up a settlement to the world which will serve as the rallying point of public opinion and the objective of international diplomacy."

A clear statement of the British view was given by the paper's Geneva Correspondent on the 18th. In that view, there were two questions for the League, and these should not be treated together, as the second did not arise until the first had been answered. The first was: Can a basis for conciliation be found, as required by Article XV? The answer to that question would shortly be known. Only if it was in the negative should the League deal with the second question, namely, What report should the Assembly make?

If, unhappily, conciliation fails it can be said emphatically that Great Britain, as Sir John Simon declared on December 7th, will act as a loyal member of the League. Respect for the Covenant is

fundamental to British policy. The Covenant must be upheld and Great Britain will co-operate to the utmost in seeking an equitable solution. The attitude of the British Government to the Lytton Report should not be doubted. Sir John Simon has said—also on December 7th—" we must have a basis, and I can see no basis except that which this Report provides."

As we have seen, Sir John Simon's critics would not have gone so far astray if they had studied his speech of December 7th calmly and fairly.

On January 23rd a message from the same Correspondent recognised that the League could now do little to bring about a settlement, and had to concentrate upon preserving the principles of the Covenant. He considered it certain that there would be a stiff fight over the drafting of the report. The view of the League enthusiasts was that Japan's action in taking the law into her own hands must not be condoned, indeed, must be unequivocally condemned.

Others, though equally anxious to uphold the Covenant, are not convinced of the practical wisdom of passing moral judgments, especially when these can have no direct effect on the immediate problem ; and would like to keep the report to findings of fact and recommendations upon which a settlement might be—or might have been—obtained.

The *Times* dealt editorially with the position on January 24th. It again defended the League's handling of the matter. It maintained that a policy of active intervention would " almost certainly have produced far more catastrophic results than the passing of three or four Manchurian provinces under the direction of Japan."

League action could only be effective if, on the facts of the dispute, as found impartially by its own agents, one disputant or another were adjudged to be wholly in the wrong, and if the volume of condemnatory opinion were strong enough in a sufficient number of countries to make the Governments of those countries ready to sacrifice human lives, material, trade and money in taking action against the " aggressor." Threats of action by the League in any other circumstances would be no more than bluff. The requisite conditions for action have certainly not existed in the case of the Sino-Japanese dispute.

The *Times* held, therefore, that the League had very properly confined itself in this case to a policy of conciliation ; and, since the two parties had temporarily refused to be reconciled, all the League could now do was to draw up the lines of a settlement which

in its opinion would be at once feasible and just. Although the door to conciliation was by no means definitely closed, the League had passed for the moment from paragraph 3 to paragraph 4 of Article XV. As for possible action against any State failing to comply with the recommendations of the report, it would be time to consider that when the report was presented. In the view of the *Times*, the solution clearly had to be found along the lines of the Lytton Report, and it seemed "wholly unreasonable" on the part of Japan to have refused so far to accept the Lytton Report as the basis of a settlement. The *Times* emphasised that the drafting committee would have a difficult task in trying to reconcile the Lytton Commission's recommendations with the present and probable future facts of the situation.

It is at any rate certain that it is no part of the duty of the States in the League, whether collectively or individually, to pass moral judgment upon one or other of its members. Their business is to devise a solution which is likely to be practicable in the near or distant future, and which is in consonance with the principles of the League.

6. The Press and the United States

It will not be overlooked that during these first months of 1933 the United States was awaiting the change of Administration due to take place on March 4th. The outside world had had no indication, when the New Year came in, of what American policy would be after that date. Mr. Stimson had a long interview with Mr. Roosevelt, the President-elect, on January 9th. According to the former,[1] Mr. Roosevelt generally approved his Manchurian policy, and promised to do nothing to weaken the effect of any further statement the Hoover Administration might have to make. No public intimation of this measure of agreement was forthcoming until the 17th.

We have already noted the suggestion of the *Manchester Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent on the 17th that pressure had been brought to bear by the American Ambassador in London to secure the abandonment of the conciliation procedure; and also the denial of such reports by the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* on the same day. The latter Correspondent further argued that President Hoover would certainly never intervene in such a manner, the United States having repeatedly discouraged the idea that she would co-operate with the League if it were to

[1] *On Active Service*, p. 123.

launch out on a " sanctions " policy. He pointed out that America had even refrained from a démarche in Tokyo similar to that made by the British Ambassador for the protection of British interests in Northern China. In his view, the United States might at most agree to appoint a delegate or an " observer " to the suggested Committee of Conciliation, but the President might even hesitate to commit his country to that extent. Mr. Stimson, in his 1936 book, certainly confirmed the fact of hesitation. He did not want the United States to join in the conciliation effort, since he had small hope of any successful outcome ; but, on the other hand, he did not wish to decline the offer, " for fear of discouraging the others in their difficult task." However, he was " saved from the necessity of decision " by Japan's objection to the invitation.

On January 17th, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued the following statement :

> Any statement relating to any particular foreign situation must, of course, come from the Secretary of State of the United States.
>
> I am, however, wholly willing to make it clear that American foreign policy must uphold the sanctity of international treaties.
>
> That is a corner-stone on which all relations between nations must rest.

This statement, which gave great satisfaction to Mr. Stimson, attracted relatively little comment in this country. The Washington Correspondent of the *News Chronicle* interpreted it as giving London and Paris another chance to join Washington " in flatly refusing to recognise any spoils of conquest Japan may wrest from China," and asked whether the British Government would accept this invitation " to stand with America in moral opposition to Japanese aggression." The New York Correspondent of the *Guardian* said that the statement was interpreted as supporting Mr. Stimson on the " Hoover-Stimson doctrine " as it applied to the Far East. It had come on the heels of a notification sent to United States diplomats abroad that there had been no change in the Hoover-Stimson doctrine which pledged the United States not to recognise territorial or other changes achieved by force. This Correspondent went on to say that, despite Roosevelt's statement, it must not be assumed that the United States was committed indefinitely to the Hoover-Stimson doctrine and regardless of the actions of other Powers :

> The plain and obvious truth is that the United States does not intend to remain permanently as *the only nation effectively challenging Japan's action.* As Americans see it, their Government is now doing the work the League

should be doing, and doing it not only without the League's aid but with all but the open opposition of the League's two strongest members—Great Britain and France. Mr. Roosevelt's advisers are fully alive to the potential dangers of a situation where Japan can regard the United States not only as her chief opponent but virtually as her only one.[1]

The Correspondent concluded by saying that Roosevelt would be as pleased as the President if the League were to " take action supporting the American position."

These two dispatches illustrate the persistence in the United States (and in this country) of the connected myths that the United States had taken up a position in regard to non-recognition beyond that taken up by the League States ; that the latter had indeed refused to support the non-recognition doctrine ; and that this doctrine was an " effective challenge " to Japan.

Editorially, the *Guardian* said on January 18th that the President-elect had gone out of his way to strengthen Mr. Stimson's hand, and that his statement should dispose of those who had suggested that the United States was contemplating a reversal of policy.

In the *Times*, there were two messages from its Washington Correspondent on January 18th, as well as a New York report of the Roosevelt statement. The first of these reported that the Senate had overridden President Hoover's veto on the Philippine Independence Bill. Mr. Stimson had strongly opposed this Bill because of the disturbance it would effect of the " political equilibrium " in the Far East, a consideration to which, said the Correspondent, Congress was indifferent " just now." The second message reported the coincidence of this event with an announcement in the Press that the State Department had reaffirmed the validity of the Notes to Japan and China (the non-recognition Notes) of January 7th, 1932, and had done so with the substantial agreement of the President-elect. The source of this news was, apparently, London ; and its disclosure, said the Correspondent, was obviously unwelcome to the State Department. There was no doubt, he continued, that Roosevelt had indicated his approval of the Notes, and there was some reason to believe that it was the only positive indication of agreement he gave in the course of his interview with Mr. Stimson. But it was, nevertheless, somewhat embarrassing to find Executive influence unavailing in one matter affecting the Orient on the same day that it was invoked in another.

[1]Author's italics.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE ASSEMBLY'S REPORT

1. Drafting the Report

THE task of preparing the draft report under paragraph 4 of Article XV was entrusted by the Committee of Nineteen to a sub-Committee of Nine. During the preparation of the document, the Japanese delegation submitted fresh proposals to the Committee of Nineteen. These were not acceptable to the Committee, but, in order to clarify the situation, the Committee asked Japan on February 9th, 1933, if she accepted, as one of the bases of the contemplated conciliation, the principle in Chapter IX of the Lytton Commission's Report regarding the establishment in Manchuria of a large measure of autonomy consistent with the sovereignty and administrative integrity of China. The Japanese delegation replied on February 14th expressing its Government's conviction that the maintenance and recognition of Manchukuo constituted the only guarantee of peace in the Far East, and that the whole question would eventually be solved between Japan and China on that basis. In view of that negative reply the Committee of Nineteen came to the decision that it had exhausted all possible efforts at conciliation. It thereupon completed its approval of the draft report for submission to the Assembly on February 21st.

Events of far-reaching importance occurred in these weeks before the League Assembly met. On January 30th both the French and German Governments fell. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany ; a Pyrrhic victory many thought at the time, but, none the less, one which immediately increased the anxieties of European statesmen, and which was soon, by its rapid and ruthless exploitation, to dominate the European scene. It was in these circumstances that the Disarmament Conference resumed on February 2nd ; and, in this country, the disarmament crusade assumed a new urgency and intensity. Meantime, the economic depression was rapidly worsening in the United States. The war debts issue remained a major preoccupation. Before the Assembly met the League was called upon to deal with a war between Peru and Colombia, as

well as with the continuing hostilities between Bolivia and Paraguay. And in Manchuria itself the Japanese military authorities demanded that all Chinese forces should evacuate the province of Jehol.

2. Geneva Whispering and Left Criticism

In this country the House of Commons resumed its session on February 7th, but, until the meeting of the Assembly a fortnight later, the subject of the Far East received little attention there. Press comment remained largely confined to the *Times*, *Telegraph* and *Guardian* until the substance of the draft report was known.

Criticism of British policy and of Sir John Simon continued in the customary quarters. In the earlier stages of the preparation of the draft report, particularly, the whispering gallery of Europe was as busy as ever. On February 6th the *Times* was moved to protest against what it described as "a curious whispering campaign" against Sir John Simon at Geneva :

> The air has been full of knowing explanations of the Machiavellian motives behind British policy. It has been asserted, for example, that the British Government has agreed to support Japan in Manchuria in return for a compensatory free hand in Tibet ; that we "made a deal" with the Japanese as the price of their withdrawal from Shanghai ; that the Foreign Secretary has tried to bully the representatives of the small countries in the Committee of Nineteen into accepting the new régime in Manchuria as an accomplished fact.

The "sudden change" in the British attitude which the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent had insisted upon in mid-January had not prevented him and others from immediately renewing their criticism in regard to both past events and the next stage of the League's proceedings. As soon as they thought conciliation to be finally disposed of, they turned their attention, as we have already seen, to the draft report.

In reviewing this criticism, it is important to note what course of action the critics themselves favoured. The *Guardian* Correspondent, it will be remembered, wanted a "judgment" on the conduct of Japan, and, therefore, held that a mere adoption of the Lytton Report would not meet the case. He also appeared to assume that the recommendations he desired the Assembly to adopt would include "proposals for bringing Japan to reason."

The *New Statesman* discussed the matter in characteristic fashion

on January 21st, and again a week later. "The hope—or the pretence—that the Japanese might be 'conciliated' had died hard," it declared, "but dead it now is." Japanese intransigence had proved too much "even for their good friend Sir John Simon." Their attitude was, in short, "Hands Off" to everybody :

> What the Japanese have got they will keep ; what they are grasping at—the province of Jehol—they will get to-morrow ; the remainder of their programme they will complete as and when it suits them. The Covenant and the Kellogg Pact are thus reduced to scraps of paper ; the Lytton Commission becomes a farce ; the League of Nations itself means about as much as a teddy-bear to a burglar. That is the situation which fifteen months of humbug and cowardice have produced.

"And what now?" asked the *New Statesman.* "The League must at least say something, even if it does nothing. It can, for what that may be worth, demand respect for the Covenant." Possibly, Sir John Simon might be forced to agree to a report condemning Japan. The *New Statesman* hoped that might happen, "even though he cannot undo all the harm that he has done by his complaisance hitherto." However, it recognised that "reproof from Geneva" would not solve the problem ; and the outlook at the moment was black.

> None of the Great Powers in the League is prepared to take any effective action, and even if the Americans were, which is doubtful, they would not act alone.

It seemed to the *New Statesman* that the most that could be expected was "a solemn censure of the Japanese aggression." Japan might then leave the League. In any event there would be more fighting. Perhaps, when the resulting damage began to look disastrous, "the statesmen of the world will make another effort to do what they ought to have done, and could have done with almost certain success, twelve months and more ago." What this was the *New Statesman* did not specify.

This pronouncement on January 21st provides an admirable specimen of this weekly's methods. Too realistic to ignore the practical difficulties in the way of coercive action, it consistently refrained from specifically advocating such action (which it probably did not favour anyhow), and yet indulged in scathing denunciation of statesmen for not having taken "effective action," suggesting that they could have done so successfully at some vaguely indicated

time in the past or that they might do so at some equally indefinite time in the future.

On January 28th the *New Statesman* defined the immediate issue as :

whether we are to have a clear insistence on respect for the Covenant and treaties, and a clear condemnation of violence and aggression, or an anæmic resolution which will in effect be a surrender to the Japanese claims.

The great majority of the States members of the League wanted the former, it declared, and unquestionably American opinion was with them :

Great Britain hankers after the latter, and we may expect to see Sir John Simon continuing to fight for it. We hope that in his final effort to saddle this country and the world with a load of mischief he will be in a minority of one—or one and a half, for Portugal has now, for some odd reason, come out on his side.

The *New Statesman* went on to speak of Sir John Simon's " fawning on Japan," and declared that we appeared to the world " either as cowards or as cynical abettors of violence."

This was in the course of an attack upon the British Government and its supporters in the Press for being blind to both British prestige and British interests (neither of them notorious objects of this weekly's solicitude). Those who had stood for the principles of the League, it was said, had been derided by the self-appointed champions of Japan as " idealists," fanatics crying " *fiat justitia, ruat coelum* " ; but, " in fact, they are realists, pointing out that, in this case at any rate, it is only the triumph of justice that will save the heavens from falling." What, then, did the *New Statesman* propose should be done to save the heavens from falling ? In all its remarks on this occasion, the only suggestion was " a clear insistence on respect for the Covenant " and " a clear condemnation of violence and aggression." That, apparently, would suffice to secure " the triumph of justice," unless, indeed, all that was required was to refrain from supporting the Japanese ! —for the *New Statesman* went on :

The *Daily Mail* tells us that we must support our " loyal friends the Japanese." Here, indeed, is schoolgirl sentimentalism ! For in return for that support we may count on Anglophobia in China, trade boycotts, more and not less armaments, dissensions with other Powers, notably the United States, and a grand fillip to militarism all over the globe. Are these British interests ?

The characteristic negativism of the *New Statesman* is again exemplified. Exemplified also is the familiar technique of seeking to identify the Government (or the Opposition, as the case may be) with certain organs of the Press.

Moving from the intellectuals of the Left to the official Labour daily, an editorial in the *Herald* on January 24th said that the British Government seemed still to be inspired " by a timid reluctance to do anything, by a desire to push the League into inactivity, and to leave the Japanese adventurers a free hand in Manchuria and Northern China." This remark was occasioned by Mr. Eden's suggestion on the previous day " that the Assembly should make a report which would be a mere endorsement of the Lytton Report with the vaguest reference to subsequent events, and that—as regards the future—it should merely recommend Japan and China to reach agreement on the basis suggested by Lord Lytton and his colleagues." To the *Herald* that would have been a mere evasion of responsibility. Fortunately, it said, the British delegation had found no support—" save from the ever-obedient Portuguese." None the less, the *Herald* was very cautious :

> How far the League will go, how far it is wise that it should go, are matters for the coolest decision. But it is to be hoped that the refusal to wash its hands in the spirit of Pilate is, and will be, definite and final. Whatever the League may do it cannot abdicate.

In the *News Chronicle* on the same day (January 24th) Mr. Wilson Harris welcomed news that the Committee of Nineteen had instructed its sub-committee to provide in its report for the non-recognition of Manchukuo. That meant, he said, that on " the one vital point " the League was " standing firm." Undeniably, a serious situation might thus be created, for Japan might " take the law into her own hands," push forward with her operations against China and defy anyone to interfere. That, however, would not mean that the League's policy would stand condemned : there was one justification for it which held good no matter what might happen—" Here stand I : I can no other." Mr. Wilson Harris held that the League was right, " of course," in trying conciliation first, but the dispute had now been dragging on for sixteen months. It was " fully time and more than time " that the League should make " its stand "—it was fully time that the British Government should make it plain that it was before all things the friend of the League. The Government, he said, was not being asked to go to

war; nor to blockade Japan; but only "to declare" that no nation could be "allowed to achieve its ends by force." Mr. Wilson Harris, it appeared, asked only for a non-recognition declaration.

There was avowedly "plain speaking" in the editorial columns of this paper on January 28th. To try to "conciliate" Japan was said to be worse than a waste of time: it had always been very doubtful, but to persist in it would be "criminal foolishness." The concern of the League, said the *News Chronicle*, was "to make it clear that its own position and its own principles are wholly unaffected by Japan's cynical buccaneering." It should at once declare its unconditional acceptance and support of the Lytton Report. "What may follow as a result can be considered later." That may all have been plain, but it certainly did not go very far.

Three days later (January 31st) another editorial accepted as accurate a report that Great Britain considered it inadvisable to raise the non-recognition issue in the Committee of Nineteen's draft report; asserted that a rumoured Chinese proposal to impose a 100 per cent. tariff on imported British cotton and piece goods was a "direct result" of this (a quick Chinese reaction!); said that British policy at Geneva was "making the British name a synonym throughout the world for cowardly vacillation"; and spoke of the "desperate determination" of the "new Esau" to exhibit himself to the world as "the champion of treaty breakers and the advocate of imperialist aggression." In the early days of February 1933 the *News Chronicle* was more concerned with the Disarmament Conference than with Manchuria; but on the 7th an editorial linked the two problems together in an illuminating way. Supporting what it described as Sir Herbert Samuel's definite (though not, it said, as definite as it might have been) call for a drastic policy of disarmament, by this country as well as others, it attributed the imperilling of the League's authority "almost entirely to the cowardly vacillation of the policy of the British Government as expounded by Sir John Simon."

The *Guardian* was unusually quiet about the Far East in the closing week of January, doubtless owing to other preoccupations. The editorial columns were silent on the subject from January 23rd until February 4th. Its Geneva Correspondent reported on January 24th that Mr. Eden had raised certain objections to the form of the draft report prepared by the Secretariat, and thus had taken "a line which shows clearly what the policy of the British Government

is." On January 31st, he reported "from an authoritative Chinese source" that the British delegation were using strong pressure to prevent any definite obligation not to recognise Manchukuo from being included in the recommendations. The Chinese, he said, were convinced that this reported action on the part of the British Government was "the fulfilment of an undertaking given to the Japanese to induce them to evacuate Shanghai."

In the editorial on February 4th the *Guardian* said that the Chinese had not asked that any of the League Powers should take hostile action against Japan; but were asking that the League should say plainly whether the Covenant had been violated and by whom, and should add (what ought to follow automatically) that the League cannot recognise a state of things brought about by the aggressor in violation of the Covenant. The *Guardian* said that this was the least the League could now do. When it said that the League had not so far pursued this course, no doubt it had in mind the first main demand attributed to the Chinese; for it proceeded:

> The League has already said, in March, in general terms, that it cannot recognise a change of status brought about by violation of the Covenant; it has now to say that the State of Manchukuo (a bogus State in the judgment of the Lytton Commission), having been brought about by Japanese aggression in violation of the Covenant, cannot be recognised now or hereafter by any member of the League and cannot be accepted as a basis of settlement.

The League, urged the *Guardian*, should put the full force of its moral support behind China, recommend the lines of a fair settlement as had been done in the Lytton Report, and insist on taking an active share in the settlement. Japan could, of course, withdraw from Geneva, but the League could not give way.

It will be noted that the *Guardian* had nothing to say about coercive measures; and, indeed, in this leader it began to entertain hopes that the Japanese would not carry out the threat to withdraw from the League. Perhaps, it said, something had changed at Geneva. "Strange as it is, the Japanese are still there." Could it be that when it came to the point Japan was not so anxious as had been thought "to stand in isolation, with her distressed peasantry, her dwindling treasury, her numerous Communists, surrounded by a disapproving world"? Moreover, it was said that the British Government was changing, was "disposed at last to abandon finesse for firmness and compliments for courage." Now was the

time, declared the *Guardian*, if the British Government intended to support the Covenant "with something more than words," if it had abated "what has sometimes seemed to be its deliberate policy of non-co-operation with the United States," and if it had realised that it would be better "to face the Japan of the future along with the rest of the world than to face her in isolation."

3. "Telegraph" and "Times."

During the closing days of January and the first week of February, the *Telegraph* had no editorials on the Far East. Its Diplomatic Correspondent said on January 24th that British circles emphasised Mr. Eden's "fruitless endeavour" to prevent the Committee of Nineteen from indulging in "unnecessary strictures on Japan." Mr. Eden had suggested that the Committee's report should be confined to a statement of the facts, but he had been "rather cavalierly overruled by the majority, led by the representatives of some of the smaller States." Next day, the Geneva Correspondent said that several of the smaller Powers desired a categorical condemnation of Japan, while the Great Powers did not want to condemn Japan out of hand. On the 31st the Diplomatic Correspondent again stressed the feeling in British official circles that no good purpose would be served by "academic pronouncements, which cannot alter the facts, and could only serve to drive Japan out of the League." He added that "the violent course favoured by the representatives of the countries with no responsibilities in the Far East" would not secure the necessary unanimity.

On February 2nd the *Telegraph* published an article by Mr. J. B. Firth, who said that conciliation had failed, and had probably been foredoomed, but that the "intemperate zeal of the small States" had made failure certain. Any report drawn up would, he declared, be academic. "It will not issue in strong action for no Power means to act." Manchuria would remain Manchukuo. People were saying that the guilt would be heavy on the Great Powers, and, of course, on Great Britain in particular; but that, said Mr. Firth, was talking folly:

> There is not a Power which dare embark on such a perilous crusade but would lose its popularity overnight at the first call for either money or men.

The case of the United States, he said, was typical. No Power

disliked the course of events in the Far East more than America; but all that President Hoover had threatened was "non-recognition":

> There was a time when the highest ecclesiastical authority would not "recognise" that the earth was round. But the earth went on spinning, with or without recognition, just the same.

No provision was made, said Mr. Firth, for "a proletarian nation like Japan to expand in a peaceful and orderly way," yet the more intemperate champions of the League insisted on judging her present conduct by narrow juridical considerations, in spite of the Lytton Report. He urged that Russia as well as Japan coveted economic and political control of Manchuria. Soviet Russia had not accepted permanent defeat there. That was the real background to Japan's "aggressive" policy. Her military chiefs had seen their chance and taken it. Mr. Firth ended by saying that Great Britain had "as little practical concern in the plains of Manchuria or the mountains of Jehol as in the mountains of the Moon."

The *Times* also refrained from editorial comment during the same period until February 6th. On the 2nd, alone apparently among the great dailies, it published a strong denial by the Foreign Office of the report that the Government was working to secure a free hand for Japan in Manchuria in return for a free hand for itself in Tibet. The latter had never been an ambition of the British or Indian Governments. The statement added that Sir John Simon had made it quite plain at Geneva that, "in the event of conciliation failing, his Majesty's Government will be prepared to see the Lytton Report adopted."

In its editorial on February 6th the *Times* said that, since the latest Japanese proposals had been found unacceptable, the Committee of Nineteen would proceed to complete the draft report. The Committee had been compelled a fortnight previously to recognise that its efforts to work out a conciliation formula had failed for the time being. But, the *Times* contended, it had been clearly desirable that, so long as the faintest possibility of agreement remained, nothing should be done to destroy it. That was why Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden had encouraged the Japanese delegates to make further endeavours to meet the Committee, and they were right to have done so.

The *Times* considered it necessary "in common fairness" to insist that there was nothing sinister or improper in Sir John Simon's

intervention ; and protested, in the terms already quoted, against the campaign of whispering at Geneva. There was not the very slightest ground for any one of the assertions to which it had alluded. British policy had been clear, consistent and in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant. Least substantial of all, said the *Times*, was " the suspicion which has arisen, especially in the minds of delegates of the smaller States, that in the last resort Great Britain would not stand by the Covenant." Sir John Simon's Geneva speech was again quoted. In view of the many threatening elements in Europe the Government desired a practical disarmament agreement and a strong League. By taking a practical view of the League's powers and responsibilities it sought only to strengthen its authority.

Once again the *Times* insisted that the peculiar conditions of the Manchurian conflict made it extremely difficult for the League to intervene effectively :

> At first, even before there had been time to establish the rights and wrongs of the case, there was a tendency among some of the smaller States—who would not have had to bear the burden—to assume that attempts should be made to coerce Japan by the application of the economic sanctions prescribed by Article XVI of the Covenant ; but that bellicose tendency—which would have been disastrous for every one, and most of all for the League itself—was happily frustrated.

The League, the editorial declared, had followed the right course, that of inquiry and conciliation. It had never had the power, even if it thought right, to coerce a Japan determined to follow her own course. Conciliation had failed ; and the Assembly now had to make its report and recommendations. The latter might or might not ultimately serve as the basis of an agreement, but what was of immediate importance was that the principles of the Covenant should not be compromised in the Assembly's report.

4. The Report under Paragraph 4

The Far East attracted wider and increasing Press comment towards the middle of February 1933 as a result of the complete breakdown of conciliation, the approval of the draft report under paragraph 4 by the Committee of Nineteen for submission to the Assembly, and the imminence of serious fighting in Jehol.

In the *Guardian* criticism of the British Government almost

disappeared for the time being. As we have seen, its leader of February 4th had referred to suggestions of a "change" in Britain's attitude. Two days later, a message from its Geneva Correspondent said that a "welcome change" in the Government's attitude had been evident for at least a fortnight. He had announced the supposed change, it will be remembered, over a fortnight previously, but had apparently overlooked it in the interim. Now he came back to it because of the line taken by Mr. Eden in regard to the new Japanese proposals. Nobody, he said, had spoken more strongly against any further concessions than Mr. Eden, who had, indeed, taken the lead in this respect on the Committee of Nineteen. Similarly, the Correspondent developed the view expressed in the editorial of the 4th that the Japanese were giving way. The relative firmness of the Committee of Nineteen, he said, had already had a salutary effect on the Japanese. Their tone had "completely changed." No more threats were heard of leaving the League, but rather protestations of a desire for conciliation. It was not impossible that the Japanese Government might yield. The Japanese delegation were now visibly alarmed at the danger that Japan might be isolated. "Many of those formerly opposed to strong action by the League now admit that they were mistaken and say that Japan would have yielded in September 1931 had the Council, i.e. the great European Powers, been firm from the first." The Correspondent understood that the British delegation were now in favour of including in the report a judgment on the merits of the case and a reference to the non-recognition of "Manchukuo." "Indeed, Mr. Eden's whole attitude yesterday greatly pleased the advocates of a definite pronouncement by the League."

On February 7th the same Correspondent reported that the League members would act together in refusing recognition, and that Russia and the United States would be asked to co-operate. "It was remarked," he said, "that the League was now going further than Mr. Stimson suggested in his declaration last year . . ."—an interesting indirect exposure of the myths about the United States, the League and non-recognition. On February 11th the Correspondent was rather more cautious about the Japanese attitude. The Japanese, he said, appeared to have dropped for the time being any idea of retiring from Geneva, "probably because they have discovered that nobody cares whether they retire or not." He added that opinion was gaining strength at Geneva that the

expulsion of Japan from the League might in certain circumstances become desirable, if not necessary.

An editorial in the *Guardian* on February 14th said that it was, perhaps, the nervousness running increasingly through Europe which had led to " the welcome firmness that is now being applied for the first time to the Japanese aggressor ; unexpected firmness, but not the less welcome, both from the British Government and from Germany. . . ." The Committee of Nineteen's report (the text of which was not available) appeared to the *Guardian* to be " such as a loyal defence of the Covenant demands."

It accepts the Lytton Report. It conveys a strong condemnation of Japan. It proposes to both parties a settlement ; the principles of the Lytton Report would furnish the foundation, the organs of the League would carry out the negotiations since the League itself has the duty of repairing the breach made by Japan in the undertakings of the Covenant.

It was irrelevant, declared the *Guardian*, whether or not Japan resigned from the League. The Covenant had to be upheld. Perhaps the *Guardian's* view of the situation was expressed in a Low cartoon reproduced by this paper on February 18th. It portrayed a very tiny mouse, " Jap," G-r-r-r-ring at a very large cat, " World Statesmanship."

When the *News Chronicle* discussed the draft report of the Committee of Nineteen on February 13th, it had no criticism to make. It described the report as a " reaffirmation of the findings of the Lytton Commission, coupled with a demand for the immediate withdrawal of the Japanese troops within the railway zone and the prompt opening of negotiations between the disputants under the eye of a ' Negotiations Committee ' on which Russia and America are to be represented." The verdict, said this editorial, was against Japan, who, however, could still escape the consequences by accepting the verdict, the alternative being " to defy the opinion of the civilised world and to take the consequences." What these consequences should be or were likely to be was a question passed over in silence for the time being.

Similarly, no criticism of the draft report came from the columns of the *Daily Herald.* An editorial on February 13th was more concerned with " the next step " than with the report itself. It did say, however, that the report left no doubt that Japan had violated her Covenant undertakings ; alluded to non-recognition ; and, while saying that the League had laboured in vain to bring about

conciliation, and was making a last attempt to get a settlement by negotiation, it was certain that the negotiating committee for which the report provided would never meet. Mr. W. N. Ewer, the Geneva Correspondent, had previously reported that definite co-operation between the United States Government and the League in regard to the report was assured ; and said that the only American criticism was that the conclusions did not go far enough—" somewhat plainer and stiffer language " would have been preferred. An editorial had described this " united front " between Geneva and Washington as an event of first-rate importance.

By February 4th it appeared to the *New Statesman* that " the attempt to kow-tow to Japan " had been defeated, and that the Tokyo Government was seriously discussing withdrawal from the League. But, in its notes on this occasion, the *New Statesman* was primarily interested in the Disarmament Conference. Japanese withdrawal from the League, it said, would not necessarily involve withdrawal from the Conference. The *New Statesman* hoped Japan would stay, because their presence at the Conference, " however odd it may seem in all the circumstances," could not do any harm, and their absence might prove an obstacle to such agreement as might be reached. On the following week, as we shall see, the *New Statesman* discussed future action at considerable length. It described the draft report on February 18th in a single sentence as " an unequivocal censure of Japanese aggression."

At the other extreme, the *Express* did not discuss the draft report. The Far East, however, came back into prominence in its columns, primarily because of the likelihood of new and more intensive warfare in Jehol, but also because of the likelihood of a Japanese breach with and withdrawal from the League. These matters were front-page news in the *Express* on January 14th and 18th. The *Mail* also had nothing to say about the draft report ; but in an editorial on February 6th it had roundly described the Committee of Nineteen's action in rejecting Japan's proposals as " foolish," involving either the disruption of the League or the precipitation of a new war in the Far East. The *Morning Post*, referring to the rejection of the Japanese proposals on the same day, hoped that the League of Nations was not going to make the mistake of " putting the good boy in the stocks." It considered that, while it was to Japan's interest to support the movement for Manchurian independence, that movement was " native to the country " and " a natural revolt

against intolerable conditions." Chinese misgovernment, it declared, was the root of the trouble, and Manchukuo was an honest and patriotic revolt against it. This paper also ignored the draft report in its editorial columns.

On January 19th the *Observer* asked what precisely was the value of the report? The answer it gave was :

> It puts on permanent record the facts of the dispute from the League's point of view and within the framework of the League's competence to deal with them. It also records the fact that Manchukuo has not so far been recognised by any other State except Japan : and the League's "opinion" that such recognition would be incompatible with the Resolution of March 11th, 1932. That is all.

It was the *Observer's* view that "this most sinister dispute has been mismanaged from beginning to end ; or rather till now, for the end is not yet." This view was based, it seemed, on the contention that the League had not really encouraged conciliation, since Japan from the outset had wanted to negotiate direct with China, and the League had encouraged China to refuse such negotiation.

The general attitude of the *Telegraph* towards Manchuria was much the same as the *Observer's*, but this paper expressed an approval of the draft report unqualified save by an insistence that nothing more could be done. By the Assembly's adoption of the report, said an editorial on January 13th, "honour will be satisfied." That, at least, would be the view taken "by those who have held from the first that the proper course for the League in this affair was a strict adherence to the role of conciliator and the formation of a rigidly impartial judgment upon ascertained facts." The *Telegraph* declared that those who had taken a different view, who had been clamouring for the adoption of a violently one-sided attitude towards the dispute —"for a course of League policy which should proceed from censure to threats, and from threats to the application of 'sanctions' against Japan"—and who had thus "insanely simplified one of the most complicated affairs ever presented at the world's bar of equity," would not approve the report. They would not like it "because it endorses the findings and conclusions of the Lytton Commission of Enquiry, whose report, presented four months ago, is one of the ablest and most level-headed documents of recent times."

The new report, like the other, declares that Japan has gone beyond her legitimate rights in Manchuria, while pointing to the fact that she had been exposed to a long course of provocation and denial of treaty

rights on the part of China. It condemns, as did the Lytton Report, the erection of the State of Manchukuo ; and it adds that no member of the League should give formal recognition to that State. But it recognises that there can be no question of a simple return to the *status quo ante*— that is, to anarchy — in Manchuria ; that the situation calls for an autonomous régime, under Chinese suzerainty, capable of protecting the interests not only of the Chinese population but the very extensive and vital interests of Japan.

The *Telegraph* added that since China, as the Lytton Report pointed out, was " totally incapable in her present state of impotence of playing her own part in such an arrangement," it was clear that the Japanese Administration must continue for an indefinite period. But meanwhile, the new report urged that Japan and China should enter into direct negotiations for a settlement, and that the League should be ready to offer its assistance. That, the *Telegraph* insisted, was as far as the League could go.

The *Times* discussed the matter on January 14th. The League's recommendations, it said, had followed the main lines of the Report drawn up by the Lytton Commission. In summarising the recommendations, it specifically referred (as the *Telegraph* had not) to the League's belief that Japan's legitimate interests could be effectively protected without the occupation of Manchuria by Japanese troops, and to its refusal to regard the State of Manchukuo as having been truly self-created or its independence as being real. The *Times* emphasised the fact that the report " enjoined " all members of the League, and invited non-member States, not to recognise Manchukuo ; and also the importance of all Governments with Far Eastern interests formally binding themselves to follow the same policy in regard to recognition. The League, the editorial concluded, had held up, as it were, a model solution, the immediate realisation of which was impossible, but which constituted the goal of a common policy. The draft report, another editorial declared on January 18th, was a " temperate, just and well-considered document." Whatever its effect might be, it would stand on record as the deliberate opinion of the League States on a dispute of major importance.

Notwithstanding the *Telegraph's* very pertinent comments on the point, it will be noted that the newspapers of the Left as well as those of the moderate Right (i.e. those supporting the Government of the day) both considered the draft report satisfactory. As in the case of the Lytton Report, this agreement was to some extent deceptive,

although the underlying differences could be detected without much difficulty. The Press of the moderate Right regarded the inevitable adoption of the draft report by the Assembly as the final decision of the League, in the sense that any further action would be confined to implementation of the report. The Press of the Left, however, entertained the hope that the report might be the prelude to further action of some kind. Although, as with the Lytton Report, both groups showed a tendency to interpret the document to suit their own viewpoints, this tendency was much more conspicuous on the Left. Even where other features of the document were mentioned, the stress was laid upon what was called the " verdict " against, or the " condemnation " of, Japan. As time went on, indeed, the report came to be interpreted in Left circles exclusively as a censure of Japan, even as a declaration that Japan was " the aggressor." On the other hand, the Press of the moderate Right gave in general an accurate interpretation of the nature of the report, which, as Mr. Stimson was to say, in substance " adopted fully and without modification the findings of the Lytton Commission of Enquiry " and " recommended a solution following the lines of the report of that Commission.[1] It is interesting to note also that the Press of the Left raised no objection to the proposal in the draft report that negotiations should be opened between the parties to the dispute if and when they accepted the Assembly's recommendations, that these negotiations should take place with the assistance of a committee appointed by the Assembly, and that the United States and Soviet Russia should each be invited to appoint a member to the committee.[2] This may have been due in some instances to a

[1] *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 227.

[2] There were, however, differences of interpretation, for which the language of the report provided scope. The *Manchester Guardian*, in its editorial on February 14th, objected to the interpretation in " one of the London newspapers " on the previous day, which, it said, had been " concerned to argue that China and Japan will be invited by the report to enter on direct negotiations, with the League committee assisting from outside." That, said the *Guardian*, was not so. Direct conference between " the aggressor and the victim " was what Japan had desired from the first, and would be a betrayal of China and the Covenant. If Japan accepted the report, the negotiations would take place " in and through the committee of the League." The *Guardian* obviously had in mind the remark, mentioned above, in the *Telegraph's* editorial of the 13th, that the report urged Japan and China to enter into direct negotiations and that the League should be ready to offer its assistance. Neither paper, it would seem, was correct. The report recommended " the opening of negotiations between the two parties," but the preliminary condition was acceptance of the Assembly's recommendations, and the Secretary-General of the League was to take " all suitable steps for the opening of negotiations " within a month of acceptance by the two parties. As for the negotiations themselves, the report said that they were " to take place with the assistance of a committee set up by the Assembly," and, " in order to enable the members of the League, after the opening of the

conviction that nothing would come of the proposal, but this was plainly not the whole explanation, and it is a fact of importance that the report presented to the Assembly, and adopted by that body, still left the path of conciliation open.

5. Sanctions?

Despite the *Manchester Guardian's* brief phase of optimism about Japanese reactions to " the new firmness," even in that quarter the hope that Japan might accept the draft report under paragraph 4 was faint in the extreme. In the almost certain event of Japanese rejection, what was to be done? What views were held in this country about " sanctions " in the period before the Assembly met?

At the beginning of February 1933, as we have seen, the *Guardian* itself was demanding only " moral support " of China, a judgment against Japan and non-recognition of " Manchukuo." On the 11th its Geneva Correspondent reported that the ultimate application of Article XVI was " undoubtedly contemplated as a possibility " by the members of the Committee of Nineteen. The editorial of the 14th said that if Japan refused to change her policy or relax her hold—and she was actually threatening to extend her military operations—then " the League, acting in concert with the United States and Russia, will have to consider what further measures may be practicable to assist the victim of aggression." China, it added, might be forced against her will into a war of self-defence. On the 15th, the paper's Geneva Correspondent pointed out one of the difficulties. There was " much to be said for the opinion that a state of war cannot be considered to exist between China and Japan because diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries continue." He added that Article XVI did not, as was sometimes supposed, oblige any member of the League to make war on a Covenant-breaker. The obligatory sanctions were financial and economic, and, he said, " a financial and economic boycott would soon bring Japan to reason."

On February 6th the *News Chronicle* had a message from its Geneva Correspondent. He had discussed the situation with

negotiations, to judge whether each of the parties is acting in conformity with the Assembly's recommendations," the committee was " to report on the state of the negotiations." This proposed procedure certainly did not rule out direct negotiations between the parties, but the important point was that any such negotiations were to be on the basis of the Assembly's recommendations.

Matsuoka, who had expressed the view that a second world war might break out if Article XVI were to be applied against Japan. He quoted Matsuoka as follows :

> If you force an economic boycott against Japan what would be the result ? It might be more cruel than war. You may be killing babies, robbing them of food, and condemning the Japanese nation to an inferno —such hardships as the average person does not dream of.

Subsequent evidence suggests that these " grave words " were not without effect on readers of this newspaper. On February 15th, in face of the threatened Japanese operations in Jehol, an editorial raised the question, " What is the rest of the world going to do about it ? " What, in particular, was America going to do about the nitrates and other explosives Japan was buying from her ? No answer was vouchsafed. No suggestion was made as to what the rest of the world, and America in particular, ought to do about it.

Lord Cecil had had an article in the *Daily Herald* on January 30th. If, he said, the League Assembly demanded that Japan should stop her military escapade and enter forthwith into conference with China on the basis of the Lytton Report, the League members " must be ready to take the necessary action to make that decision effective." If they did (i.e., presumably, if they took the necessary action), Lord Cecil was convinced that the United States would not fail them. He invoked the lesson of Shanghai. " What the leaders of the civilised world achieved for Shanghai, they can, with a little faith and courage, achieve for Manchuria."[1]

In its editorial on February 13th, the *Herald*, which had no doubt at all that Japan would refuse to accept the report, would continue her military operations, and would withdraw her delegation from Geneva, maintained that the situation could not rest there. " The League and the Powers " would be faced " by a continued and developing ' recourse to force,' by a continued and developing violation of the territorial integrity of a member of the League." They could not, held the *Herald*, " acquiesce even under protest," and the next step, though it might be a grave one, would in due course have to be taken. What next step the *Herald* had in mind was not disclosed.

[1] This seems to be in line with the argument, already examined, used by Lord Cecil in 1940. If that assumption be made, then, of course, the criticism of that argument applies. But there can be little doubt, especially in view of Lord Cecil's remark about the United States, that he did not contemplate in 1933 that anything in the nature of military action would be " necessary."

Farther to the Left, the *New Clarion* had ignored the Far Eastern question altogether since the close of 1932. On February 11th, however, Professor Laski mentioned it again in its columns, but only as part of an attack on the Government.[1] On the 18th, " The Tyke " thought that the report might lead " to that definite action which should have been taken a year or more ago." The League's only course, the writer declared, was to follow up its " uncompromising report." The isolation of Japan could be made effective by imposing the sanctions authorised by the Covenant. " With Japanese finance already crippled with heavy military expenditure, economic sanctions, and if necessary a trade boycott, would be enough to break the back of Japan's ruthless imperialist policy." These brief notes ended with the remark that if war in the Far East was to be avoided, and League policy was to prevail, " the courageous risk of implementing the Covenant must be taken." Although we have here a straightforward demand for economic sanctions (without reference to the United States), it was, as such, an isolated and inconspicuous instance in a weekly which only occasionally noted the existence of the Manchurian problem.

The *New Statesman* had a main article on the situation on February 11th. The League was, it said, preparing at long last to pass judgment on the aggressor. Almost incredible patience had been shown, but there were limits " even to the superhuman endurance of Sir John Simon." The article then embarked upon a long attack upon " the Tory Press " for its " stream of canting arguments in favour of Japanese *Realpolitik* and British acquiescence." Most of this was directed against the popular " Tory " newspapers.[2] After saying that Japan's intransigence had forced the League's hands ;

[1] After holding the Government responsible for the lack of success at the Disarmament Conference, Professor Laski asserted that Sir John Simon had " done more than any man since 1918 to destroy the prestige of the League by his scarcely concealed support of Japan in her rake's progress of imperialistic crime," and that by his attitude Sir John had " done more to destroy the position of this country as the leader in the effort for peace than any man in our time." For once, Professor Laski overlooked his *bête noire*, MacDonald.

[2] That is to say, against the *Mail* and the *Express* and their satellites. For example : " Then there are the appeals for gratitude and loyalty to ' our old friend Japan '—the speciality, this, of the *Daily Mail*—coupled with abuse of Geneva. And, finally, we get pure snivel. ' Far stronger,' we are told in one evening paper, ' than any economic urge is the sentimental reason for Japan's interest in Manchuria. . . . *One hundred thousand Japanese families mourn the loss of members killed in the Russo-Japanese war. The dead lie buried in Manchuria. Their graves are sacred.*' We refrain from commenting on this—save only to observe that the italics are not ours, and that the same article contains one still more priceless gem. It tells us of ' the pride which every Japanese takes in the fact that King George is a Field-Marshal of the Japanese Army, and that the Emperor of Japan is the third consecutive Japanese Emperor to be a Knight of the Garter.' Oh, Fleet Street ! "

that the statesmen at Geneva had now willy nilly to defend the principles about which they had been so timid ; and that it was deplorable that they could not bring themselves up to this point a year or more ago ; the *New Statesman* asked what Japan would do in these circumstances.

Its answer was that it was highly improbable that she would either capitulate or immediately run amok. It claimed that it had never shared " the fear of offending Japan which has so obsessed the British Government." It had certainly thought of the strength of the Japanese Navy, of Singapore and Hong Kong.

> But we refuse to believe that the maddest militarist in Japan would contemplate blowing up Hong Kong as a riposte for a vote of censure on his country. We do not believe in this danger of an attack on Hong Kong, even if the vote of censure led on to economic sanctions.

The Japanese, the article said, were far too shrewd to pit themselves against the world and to ensure their own destruction by a childish escapade. What they might be prepared to do ultimately, the *New Statesman* did not know ; but what they wanted at present was plain enough. It was to continue their encroachment on China without embroiling themselves with the League Powers or with the United States or with Soviet Russia. They might very well think they could do that, despite the disapproval of the League, and provided that the disapproval went no farther than a pious resolution. The question of sanctions, the article went on, would then have to be faced. From the moral point of view the matter could not be left there. On grounds of expediency, however, the *New Statesman* had no doubt that every effort would be made to avoid worsening the situation. If that meant real pressure to reverse the Japanese policy and to reach a fair settlement, well and good. " We do not want to see all the sanctions of Article XVI rigorously and instantly applied." But if the Japanese persisted in rejecting every offer of mediation, " if they have enough arms and ammunition of their own, without importing them from Europe, to go on fighting in China," then sanctions would not worsen the situation, but would be the only means of saving it.

On January 18th the *New Statesman* held that war on the grand scale was imminent, and it would be impossible for the League, without utterly stultifying itself, to deny that the advance of the Japanese armies constituted an act of war. " In that event, Article XVI and sanctions will be on the *tapis*." The *New Statesman* believed

it was still possible to stop the Japanese career of conquest " by diplomatic and economic pressure," but if the League Powers and America had not the stomach for that an era of disaster in Asia must be expected.

Confronted by what it believed to be the likelihood of " a new and intensive warfare " in the Far East, and by what it considered the consequential danger that Great Britain might be involved in the application of sanctions against Japan, as also by Hitler's references to the Polish Corridor, the *Daily Express* demanded, in an editorial on February 14th, the withdrawal of Great Britain from her commitments under the Covenant and the Locarno Pact. On the 20th, on its front page, a double-column article announced " The Truth about the Far East " It declared the League's embarrassment to be complete and humiliating. Japan would not recede from her position in Manchuria, and nothing would deter her from invading and holding Jehol, a province which (the article proceeded to explain at considerable length) was of vital importance strategically and economically to Japan. There was nothing to stop her.

The United States of America lie prostrate, panic-stricken, and dismayed that they should be the victims of depression. They are incapable of dealing with their own grave internal position, to say nothing of a foreign situation of this magnitude. In other circumstances America could go to the help of China, as it should for its own future safety.

As for Russia, Japan had nothing to fear from that quarter, for the Soviet Republics had neither the desire nor the capacity to fight. The Japanese forces would advance to the line of the Lan-ho River, and would then stop, since the barrier against China would then be complete and unassailable, and the final occupation of Manchuria would be accomplished. " This will mark the end of the war in the Far East." The *Express* certainly did not seem unduly worried about " sanctions," for it did not mention them in this article.

The *Daily Mail* took its usual line in an editorial on February 16th. If the Chinese persisted in their refusal to evacuate the Jehol province, bloodshed would be inevitable. The Japanese could not withdraw from Manchukuo, the independence of which was the only guarantee of peace in the Far East. The League, it maintained, could give no such guarantee. Moreover, recent events had " presented a glorious opportunity to the pacifist hot-heads here who, in the name of peace, are demanding measures which could easily lead us into war with Japan." The danger was that the League

Assembly might be stampeded into adopting against Japan the punitive measures of Article XVI ; and this country must use all its influence to prevent such a catastrophe. Great Britain, the article concluded, had no quarrel with Japan and must not be drawn into any military adventure in the Far East. The *Morning Post*, on February 6th, referred ironically to a report that the Swiss delegate had hinted at the application of Article XVI. No doubt, it said, the Swiss Navy would play a notable part in the blockade involved. On the 21st this paper urged that the League would best serve the interests of peace by making it clear to China, without any further delay, that there was no prospect of League intervention on her behalf. To the *Morning Post*, it was highly desirable that a strong Power like Japan should be wedged between the U.S.S.R. and her line of advance into China.

The *Observer* maintained its opposition to any coercive measures. As already noted, its line on February 19th was that all the League could do was to " record facts, make recommendations and encourage conciliation." There could be no question of its using force. A resort to force by the League would have many results, " some tragic, some comic," but, first of all, it would kill the League itself. The non-recognition of Manchukuo, in the *Observer's* view, might count some day as a factor in the settlement. In the meantime there was only one wise object for Geneva and for all serious people— " to eliminate hatred in the Far East, not to breed it." There must be no " anti-Japanese cult."

The *Times* and the *Telegraph* also continued to oppose "sanctions." Both alluded on February 6th to the raising of the matter at Geneva. The Geneva Correspondent of the former paper said that there had been some discussion of Article XVI and its sanctions, but that it had been purely academic. Unofficial reports, he added, stated that more serious attention had been given to including among the recommendations " an embargo upon the export of arms to Japan and to Manchukuo, and the non-recognition and non-registration by the League of any treaties concluded by Japan with Manchukuo." The *Telegraph's* Diplomatic Correspondent said that some of the representatives of the smaller Powers had suggested the imminence of League sanctions against Japan ; and that the assertion had even been made that the application of such sanctions should follow " automatically " in the event of non-acceptance by Japan of the report, an assertion which had been promptly

challenged on legal grounds as well as from the standpoint of political expediency and practical considerations.

On February 13th the *Times* Correspondent reported that though Article XVI might still be talked of in bashful whispers, it was looming larger in the background of the dispute. The *Telegraph*, on that day, had contended that after the Assembly had adopted the report the League could do nothing more :

> It will have exhausted the possibilities of conciliation. It will have placed the responsibility for illegitimate acts in Manchuria. The suicidal madness of proceeding from this to the levying of economic war upon one party to this deeply involved dispute will, no doubt, have its advocates ; but the League will have done the utmost that is called for by any rational interpretation of its functions and powers.

That was the plain implication also of the *Times* editorial on the 14th, though no specific reference was made to sanctions. Sir John Fischer Williams had discussed the legal position in a letter published in that newspaper on January 26th. He argued that as things stood no question could arise of the application of the economic and still less of the military sanctions of Article XVI. The Lytton Report, he pointed out, did not declare that either China or Japan had " resorted to war in disregard of its covenants," and the question could hardly be raised in relation to the events of the previous autumn and winter. Sir John thought it legally possible for the League Council, by a vote, unanimous save for the State affected, to declare Japan to be no longer a member of the League on the ground that she had violated—if the Council should be of that opinion—Article X, by not having respected the territorial integrity of China ; but there was no probability of any such development.

6. Lord Lytton

On February 15th there appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* a report of what was described as " an important pronouncement " by the Earl of Lytton, made on the previous night when he had been the guest of the Japanese Students' Association of London University. The report was as follows :

> " I regard economic sanctions as a peculiarly cruel form of war," said Lord Lytton, " and I don't believe in going to war to enforce peace. I don't think it is called for, and it certainly was not in the contemplation of my colleagues when we were carrying out our investigation or making our report.

" I think there is only one course the League can take, and that is to lay down clearly and definitely what in its opinion are the limits within which a Sino-Japanese settlement can be arrived at consistent with the obligations of the Covenant of the League.

" The League," declared Lord Lytton, " must say what the obligations of the Covenant are and what action is consistent with them. Having done that, the only thing the League can do is to say :

" ' We offer the chance with both hands of using the machinery of the League to settle the dispute. If you don't take advantage of that we can only wait until the day comes when you will take advantage of it.'

" To say the League can adopt the bellicose pacifist system and use the big stick to compel another member to accept its particular view I don't think is effective at all."

A solution of the Sino-Japanese dispute could be found, Lord Lytton thought, within the rules and under the terms of the League Covenant.

The *Mail* quoted the sentence about " the bellicose pacifist system " in its editorial on the 16th. No allusion to what Lord Lytton was reported to have said was made in the *Telegraph's* editorial on the 15th, probably written previously. A Correspondent at Geneva had that day reported that there was talk of raising the question of " sanctions " if Japan refused to comply with the League's recommendations, and quoted an observation of Mr. Eden's said to have been made in committee, as follows : " We have no strength that we can use to make our recommendations prevail." In its editorial the *Telegraph* discussed again the question what more, " if anything," the League could or should do when the Assembly adopted the report, and Japan, as would certainly happen, flatly repudiated the verdict and refused to enter into negotiations. Punitive measures against Japan, it said, would be demanded in the Assembly by States which would not be involved in spending a shilling or imperilling any national interest in the least. The *Telegraph* argued that economic sanctions meant a trade boycott. That, at any rate, was the main matter, though there were other steps, such as the cutting off of all financial assistance. A blockade was necessary if there was to be an effective boycott, and a blockade was an act of war.

It is also an act in which the principal part would be borne by the Navy of Great Britain. Now it may very well be that Switzerland or Ecuador would regard with complete composure the making of war by this country against Japan. But for ourselves there are imperative reasons for refusing to consider any such course, and therefore for

refusing our consent, in the councils of the League, to the application of sanctions in its name.

The *Telegraph* conceded that cases might be imagined in which this country would raise no such opposition, but this was not one of them. In the opinion of most, there had been no unprovoked aggression. Such interest as we had in the matter was of the remotest. The "automatic" application of sanctions was a fiction. "It depends on what is thought to be desirable or practicable in each case." And, the *Telegraph* went on,

> there is a further cogent reason in the fact that the Government of the United States—whose interest in this dispute is far greater than our own—has already rejected the principle that its disapproval of Japanese policy commits it to any anti-Japanese action. At all other points the League has shown an anxious desire to secure American co-operation in the handling of the Manchurian problem. On this point, surely, it would be more vital than on any other.

The editorial concluded that after the report had been read by the Assembly there was no more that the League could do or should do.

On January 17th Lord Lytton spoke at Manchester. His speech was fully reported in the *Guardian*, and briefly but fairly in the *Telegraph*. He began with a criticism of the partisans of both sides in the dispute. Partisanship, he declared, was of no use. Japan's case against China was a strong one; but *vis-à-vis* the League Japan's action was impossible to defend. There was a solution, Lord Lytton declared, but "it must be the world's way, and not China's way, nor Japan's." A conciliation body would be set up "that will keep the door open to both parties and invite them to come and use our services and good offices." Lord Lytton dealt with the charge that the League had been weak and pusillanimous:

> Well, if patience and conciliation are a sign of weakness, the League will always be weak, because that is its function and duty, to be infinitely patient and always conciliatory.

There was, however, a limit to the League's patience, and the conclusion had now been reached that there was for the time being no prospect of finding a settlement by agreement, and, therefore, the League had proceeded to make its report, as it was bound to do. The question now was whether the parties would accept the League's report and what would happen if they did not.

Lord Lytton then referred to the report of his speech to the Japanese Students' Association. Although it was a private meeting,

and the Press were not present, he had no objection to his remarks being published, since he had said nothing he would not say in the hearing of the whole world. But, he said,

the manner in which I was reported has conveyed an inaccurate impression of what I said. I was asked a number of questions, to which I replied, and my replies were pieced together so as to give the idea of a connected statement, but the questions to which I was replying were omitted. I am not complaining that anything was attributed to me which I did not actually say, yet the impression created by the report was that I had expressed the opinion that if the report of the Assembly were ignored there was no further action which the League could take. That is certainly not my opinion, and I want to take this opportunity of correcting that impression.

If either of the parties in this dispute refuses to accept the proferred assistance of the League and acts in a manner which contravenes the Covenant, then the resources of the League are by no means exhausted. I did express the view that going to war to enforce peace seemed to me no remedy, and I did say that a universal economic blockade which would cut off all imports from Japan was not only cruel in its operation, because it would penalise the innocent population rather than the transgressing Government, but that it would almost certainly precipitate an actual state of war.

But there are many other forms of pressure which could be exercised, such as an embargo on the sale of arms or the refusal of financial assistance to a defaulting State, or the withdrawal of diplomatic representatives.

I am not saying that any of these steps should be taken at present or at any particular stage, because, obviously, it must be for the responsible Governments to decide the time and the manner of exercising pressure. I only want to make it clear that I do not exclude these from steps which may be taken if and when necessary.

Since Lord Lytton admitted that he had made the remarks attributed to him, objecting only to the form of the report, it is a little difficult to understand his contention that an incorrect impression had been conveyed of his opinion about further action by the League. What he had said on the matter was plain and unqualified. He apparently meant that, replying as he had been to questions, he had not correctly expressed his view. The alternative, but less satisfactory, explanation would be that his view had been to some extent modified in the short interval. In an editorial on the 18th the *Times* seemed to lean to this latter explanation. At any rate, it contrasted the statement in the Manchester speech with that made on the previous occasion ; said that the League had performed the

duty which Lord Lytton in his earlier utterance had said was the only course it could take for the time being ; and went on to argue that it was doubtful whether even the temporary occupation of Jehol should be regarded as creating a new situation.

The *Times* held that if the pacification of the Manchurian provinces was to be completed—an undertaking to which the existing Japanese Government, rightly or wrongly, was far too deeply committed to be able to withdraw at once—it was clearly necessary to check the incursion of soldiers and bandits from Jehol.

If the League has not intervened by force to prevent the occupation of the " Three Eastern " provinces, it would be inconsistent and unreasonable to attempt to exercise force to prevent the extension of the process to a province that has for some years been regarded as part of Manchuria, and has all along been included in the State of Manchukuo by its creators.

But, of course, Lord Lytton had repeated his plain repudiation of any attempt to exercise force ; and had again spoken strongly against an economic blockade, partly on the ground that it would " precipitate an actual state of war." Indeed, the extreme caution with which he spoke at Manchester about " the many other forms of pressure," and the particular forms he specified, indicate that if Lord Lytton had modified his views at all the modification was not considerable.

The general tone of the Manchester speech was such that it was hardly likely to be acceptable to the *Guardian*. Its editorial on the 18th indirectly reproved Lord Lytton for deprecating partisanship and stressing the complexity of the Manchurian problem. The dispute, it said, was now past partisanship, and the moral issue was simple. The report about to be submitted to the League Assembly was " a strong condemnation of Japan—strong enough to close Japanese stock exchanges—and also a summons to her to negotiate through the organs of the League a settlement loyal to the treaties which she signed." The *Guardian* severely criticised the English newspapers which were saying that after the report was adopted nothing must be done, and that the report would " fall on the rock " and " wither away, and a good riddance." By condemning Japan, the leader proceeded, the League had maintained its self-respect but did not maintain the Covenant. Nor would it convince the world that its writ ran " so long as Japan remains the master of Manchuria."

If Japan refuses to accept the assistance which the League now offers, then, acting together with the United States and Russia, the League

must consider what measures it can take to make it impossible for Japan permanently to stand her ground. Lord Lytton mentioned one such possible measure last night. What scandal would it not be if the members of the League fortified the Covenant-breaker against the victim by the supply of arms?

The *Guardian*, it will be noted, was at least as far as Lord Lytton himself from demanding application of the sanctions of Article XVI. Lord Lytton, after all, had mentioned three possible measures. It is significant that the first of them should have been an embargo on the supply of arms, and even more significant that this should have been the only one of the three to which the *Guardian* drew attention.

The *Telegraph*, in its editorial of the 18th, claimed Lord Lytton as a supporter of its main contention. Whether Japan left the League or not, it said, the question of what further action the League could now wisely take would have to be faced. "There has been no dying down of the clamour raised by those zealots of the League who are its worst enemies." "Clamour," our review of the Press shows, was far too strong a word to use if it was intended to mean a clamour for sanctions. However, the *Telegraph* said that the zealots would be well advised to note what Lord Lytton had said at Manchester:

> He had never, he declared, denied that there were some measures the League could take in the hope of enforcing its authority. But what he did set his face against was the much discussed economic boycott and blockade, which would not only be cruel in its operation but would "almost certainly precipitate an actual state of war." That point has been urged with the utmost emphasis in the *Daily Telegraph*. Lord Lytton's is welcome support for the principle that making war to obtain peace is folly.

After a silence of nearly a month, the *Sunday Times* had an editorial on February 19th. It stressed the importance of the Committee of Nineteen's report, which meant that aggression was condemned in the name of civilisation, and not merely aggression in the abstract but a specific act of aggression. It considered that the moral results were bound to be important; "indeed, it is the moral results alone upon which the League can safely rely." The editorial raised the question of the League's next step if, as was expected, Japan declined to accept the report's recommendations. Much, said the *Sunday Times*, would depend upon the attitude of the United States and Russia. If Japan found herself utterly isolated

and unfriended, she might be impelled to reconsider, " not immediately, perhaps, but when enough time has elapsed for the full impact of censure to be felt and for the difficulties of a campaign on Chinese territory to be better appreciated." This, said the article, was only a hope ; Japan was likely to retire from Geneva, and there looked like being heavy fighting in China. What, then, would the League do ?

Lord Lytton has spoken strongly against the cruelty and danger of an economic blockade. The League must consider wiser alternatives. A ban on the export of arms to the Far East and on foreign loans might produce salutary and even rapid results : such possibilities are for scrupulous consideration. But it is, as we have said, the moral judgment that matters. This country, at any rate, would have no part or lot in military sanctions.

Mr. Churchill had also spoken on February 17th in the Queen's Hall, but what he had to say about the Far East[1] appears to have attracted no comment in the Press, save for a few lines in the *Manchester Guardian's* editorial next day, ending with the contemptuous phrase " fortunately he is powerless." Lord Lytton was in a different category. Primarily owing to his chairmanship of the League's Commission of Enquiry, but also to his association with the League of Nations Union, at whose meetings he was in great demand as a speaker, his views received much publicity (more than that accorded to any other public figure) at this time. Undoubtedly, they exercised considerable influence upon public opinion, but there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that in his extremely cautious and wavering approach to the question of sanctions he merely expressed, while confirming, the attitude prevalent among the interested members of the British public during this final phase. Certainly, the comments on his Manchester speech indicate a remarkable approximation in the views of the various sections of the great central body of opinion on the question of what action, if any, the League should take, whatever their differences might be in other respects. Already the reader will have noted a tendency to bring to the forefront the proposal for an arms embargo, and it was upon this proposal, in its various forms, that public attention was largely concentrated in the few days before and in the days following the meeting of the League Assembly.

[1] See pp. 564-5 below.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE ARMS EMBARGO CAMPAIGN

1. A "Safety First" Proposal

IN the week of the League Assembly's meeting, Press and Parliamentary interest in the Far Eastern problem reached a height unparalleled save at the most dangerous point of the Shanghai episode. The final critical stage confronted the League. There was, of course, no doubt that the Assembly would adopt the report prepared by the Committee of Nineteen. That Japan would reject the report was equally certain. Doubt existed only about the Japanese attitude towards continued association with the League. The Assembly met formally to receive the report on February 21st, and adjourned until the 24th. The report was then adopted. The decision was technically unanimous, Japan voting against and Siam abstaining. Matsuoka thereupon withdrew from the Assembly with the rest of the Japanese delegation.

During the week beginning on February 20th the *News Chronicle* had an editorial on the subject each day, the *Guardian*, the *Herald*, and even the *Express*, each had three leaders, the *Times* and the *Telegraph* two. Nearly all the chief newspapers had editorials on February 27th, when the House of Commons debated the matter, and all save the *Mail* carried leading articles on the following day.

The outstanding topic was that of the proposed arms embargo, although most of the newspapers of the Right entered into the discussion belatedly, in response to the campaign which was so intensively developed. Why was it that public attention came to be centred on this particular proposal? The answer is that to ban the export of arms appeared to be the one measure likely to have some effectiveness which could be safely applied. It met the needs of those who desired that some further action should be taken, but who were anxious to avoid becoming involved in military operations, and who, therefore, were opposed to, or highly reluctant to embark upon, any measures which might have that result. It could be supported by those who wanted "sanctions" of some kind, and also by those who were opposed to "sanctions" of any kind. Pacifists and

" sanctionists "—or, if it be preferred, pacifists bellicose and non-bellicose—could unite in demanding " an arms embargo," provided they did not go into details. Even " realist " supporters of the League, who were neither pacifists nor " sanctionists " in this particular case, could join in the demand or give it serious consideration. So it happened that those who hankered after the application of sanctions came to include " an arms embargo " among the measures they suggested ; indeed, to put it in the forefront of their demands ; and finally to concentrate exclusively upon it. So it happened also that the British Government directed its attention to the proposal as a possibly feasible measure, and that the question dominated the debate in the House of Commons on February 27th. But, at the root of it all, there was the simple hatred of armaments as the instruments of war, strengthened by the long-inculcated belief that armaments were the chief cause of war, of which the disarmament crusade was the outstanding expression.

All this is only another way of saying that to speak of " the proposal for an arms embargo " is highly misleading. There were in fact several proposals, and, naturally enough, they got mixed up. The resulting confusion, as we shall see, was considerable. Was the embargo to apply only to Japan ? If so, it would be a " sanction," and might incur undesired Japanese reactions. Was it to apply to China as well ? If so, it was essentially a pacifist proposal, and had nothing to do with " sanctions." Moreover, what about the Covenant ? Would such a measure be any hindrance to Japan ? Might it not, indeed, be advantageous to her ? Was an embargo of the one type or of the other to be applied by Great Britain unilaterally ? Or was it to be applied only collectively, by international agreement ? In the latter case, was Great Britain to " give a lead " ? —and, if so, what sort of lead ? In any event, were arms from this country to continue to be exported for use in the Far Eastern fighting ?

2. The British Initiative

We have seen that a ban on the export of arms to the Far East had been proposed in the earlier stages of the Manchurian dispute, more particularly at the time of the Shanghai fighting, when the suggestion had received much support. In the autumn of 1932 the idea again

became prominent.[1] With new hostilities in Jehol impending, the revival of the suggestion evoked rapidly increasing backing.

The matter was raised in the House of Commons on February 15th, 1933, when Mr. T. Williams asked

whether, in view of the resolution before the United States Senate proposing to authorise the President to make an international agreement for an embargo on arms and munitions of war, H.M. Government are willing to state their readiness to co-operate in such action ?

Sir John Simon replied as follows :

On the initiative of H.M. Government an exchange of views has taken place between the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States, France and Italy with a view to an agreement between them to prohibit the export of arms and munitions of war to Bolivia and Paraguay, in anticipation of any prohibition of a more general character that may be arranged through the agency of the League of Nations. Efforts to bring about early action by international agreement are being continued, but have not yet succeeded.

The purpose of the resolution mentioned by the hon. Member is to empower the President of the United States to proclaim illegal the export of arms to such countries as he may designate after securing the co-operation of such other countries as he may consider necessary. While the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate have reported favourably on this proposal, the resolution has not yet been adopted by the Senate.

The Official Report proceeds :

Mr. Williams : Do we understand that H.M. Government would be willing to co-operate with the United States Government to extend the suggested limitation and restriction beyond Paraguay and Bolivia ?

Sir John Simon : As I have already said, H.M. Government took the initiative in this matter and made communications to the other Governments. I think the Bolivia and Paraguay case is a very good case to take, and, if we could establish an arrangement about that, I should have hopes that it would spread.

Mr. Williams : Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the possibility of extending this very wise provision to apply to the case of Japan and China ?

[1] On November 22nd, for example, the *Guardian* published a statement on behalf of the Union of Democratic Control suggesting that one form of action at least which would seem to follow the condemnation by the Assembly of Japan as a treaty-breaker and aggressor would be an embargo on the sale of arms and munitions. The statement was signed by Lansbury, H. G. Wells, Sir Stafford Cripps, Bertrand Russell, G. P. Gooch and W. Citrine.

The reader will have noted the implication in Mr. Williams's question that some initiative was being taken in the United States, and the further implication in his supplementary that what was required was a willingness on the part of the British Government to co-operate with the American Government. The first fact in this connection was that the American Government had not the power to impose any embargo on the export of arms, and was seeking to obtain such a power ; whereas the British Government already had the requisite power, since no arms could be exported from this country without licence. The second fact, which the Foreign Secretary apparently had some difficulty in getting his questioner to grasp, was that it was the British Government which had taken the initiative in trying to secure an international agreement to prohibit the export of arms to Bolivia and Paraguay, but that its efforts had so far been unsuccessful.

In the *News Chronicle* on that same day, February 15th, there was a message from Washington that the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives had on the previous day approved a resolution authorising the President to place an embargo on the export of arms to nations at war or threatening war, after having amended the proposal by limiting the embargo to North and South America.

Sir John Simon's statement of the 15th was alluded to in an editorial in the *Daily Herald* next day. This article began by saying that events were rapidly moving towards fresh slaughter between Japan and China in Jehol ; that neither country was self-supporting in the matter of munitions ; and that both were being helped by the Great Powers of " civilisation," including this country. It then referred to a Parliamentary answer disclosing that, in the year 1932, thirty-one licences to export arms related to material destined for China and forty-one for Japan. When bloodshed recurs, said the *Herald,* " it will be a solemn, a shameful reflection to the British public that Japanese and Chinese are killing each other with weapons supplied by this country." Sir John Simon had announced, it went on, that the Great Powers were conferring on an agreement to prohibit the export of arms and munitions to Bolivia and Paraguay. " That agreement should be extended " (it had not been reached, of course) " to cover Japan and China and other belligerents, actual or potential."

The *Herald* was demanding an embargo on the export of arms to

both countries. As we have seen, Lord Lytton, in his Manchester speech on February 17th, referred to an arms embargo as a possible measure by which to bring pressure to bear upon a Covenant-breaking State; and the *Guardian* mentioned it on the 18th as a possible measure to be taken against Japan. In a speech at Bristol on the 19th (reported in the *Guardian* next day) George Lansbury, the pacifist leader of the Labour Party, apparently went further and urged an economic blockade of Japan. At any rate he is reported as having said that we had to say to Japan, "Not a pound of grain, not a hundredweight of raw material, not a single thing to enable you to carry on this war." The Executive Council of the League of Nations Union, for its part, passed a resolution urging the British Government to seek the assent of all arms-producing Powers to an international agreement prohibiting the export of arms to countries defaulting in their treaty obligations.[1]

3. The Stimson Memorandum

It is an illuminating commentary on the paucity of the information about American affairs given in the British Press that no newspaper appears to have mentioned at the time President Hoover's special message to Congress in January 1933 emphasising the urgent need of granting more authority to the President for the control at his discretion of shipments of arms from the United States, or the joint resolution then introduced in the Senate—the resolution referred to by Mr. Williams in the House of Commons on February 15th.

Similarly, Mr. Stimson's memorandum submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives about this resolution does not appear to have received any attention in the British newspapers at the time. However, the London Correspondent drew attention to it in the *Manchester Guardian* on the 18th, and on the 20th that paper gave it great prominence. It was described as a "remarkable declaration," and reproduced.

In this memorandum Mr. Stimson's object was to show that action taken under the resolution would not "sacrifice American neutrality and so involve us," although later he contended that real

[1] The Welsh Council of the L.N.U. was reported in the *News Chronicle* on February 3rd to have petitioned the Prime Minister: (1) For entire acceptance of the Lytton Report; (2) for an embargo upon the export of armaments and munitions to Japan by League members, and (3) urging that, in the event of Japan persisting in her refusal to accept the Lytton Report, the League members should sever diplomatic, financial and economic relations with Japan.

neutrality in a large-scale war was almost impossible. He wrote that in the case of a war between two foreign countries, an embargo would not be employed, of course, unless there were general co-operation and united opinion among the principal world Powers who could supply munitions.

> If there was no developed public opinion or international attitude, it is obvious that the employment of the measure by this country would be fruitless and improper.

If, however, such a public opinion did exist, then either the world would co-operate in refusing supplies to both nations or there might be a situation in which all the co-operating Powers agreed, after investigation and consultation, that one side or the other was the aggressor. Mr. Stimson proceeded :

> It is becoming evident in recent years that this condition is much easier to realise than used to be believed . . . there are situations to-day in which there can be a general verdict far beyond previous anticipation. The verdict of the League of Nations on this subject, for example, as shown by recent events, is a perfectly practicable procedure.

Then followed a passage which was to be often quoted when the memorandum became known in this country :

> If the League or any other comprehensive group of important States had mutually arrived at such a verdict the participation of the United States in a general arms embargo would be not merely practical and sound but practically necessary to preserve our national dignity and standing as a peaceful nation.

Mr. Stimson concluded by questioning the possibility of neutrality in a large-scale war ; and denying that there ever was a right in the belligerent to buy arms.

The conclusions drawn from this memorandum in " Left " and L.N.U. circles are also illuminating. They illustrate either an astonishing ignorance of the Constitution and politics of the United States or an equally amazing capacity to forget the nature of American Government and parties—unless, indeed, one is to assume that the persons concerned were trying to deceive themselves and others.

In the *Guardian*, on the same day as that paper published the memorandum (February 20th), a message from its Geneva Correspondent said that an arms embargo against Peru was not impossible " in view of Mr. Stimson's statement that the United States would

join in an arms embargo against any State declared by the League of Nations or by any important group of Powers to be guilty of aggression." Mr. Stimson, of course, had made no such statement. This Correspondent was far from being the only person who, apparently, overlooked the fact that Mr. Stimson's statement was an attempt to persuade the United States Congress to authorise such action, and who, apparently, failed to realise that Mr. Stimson was in no position to commit his country in the manner inaccurately attributed to him. The *Guardian* itself, in an editorial on the following day (February 21st), also wrote of " Mr. Stimson's declaration that the United States would join in an arms embargo against any State declared the aggressor by the League." This leader urged the necessity of League co-operation with the United States in regard to the hostilities between Peru and Colombia. It reproduced the old and false suggestion that the League had not sought sincerely to co-operate with the United States " in the earlier stages of the Sino-Japanese dispute," and declared that it " should not miss another opportunity."

The *News Chronicle*, in its editorial of the 20th, took the same line. On that day this paper began its campaign for an arms embargo against Japan. This campaign was conducted editorially every day until (and including) the day of the debate in the House of Commons (February 27th), with a liberal use of the slogan " No More Arms for Japan " inset in heavy type. In this first article of the 20th, the ambitions of the Japanese military caste were said to comprise a " preventive " war against America or Russia or both. An embargo on the export of arms to Japan—an " absolute and prompt " embargo—was declared to be the first step in defending civilisation against Japan's challenge. It " ought to be taken immediately."

> It is certain that America would cordially support this action as the very least the situation demands. Mr. Stimson has said so.

The *News Chronicle* then gave the quotation which has been set out above. It plainly did not grasp that while Mr. Stimson might consider a certain course of action to be " practical and sound " and " practically necessary " it did not at all follow that " America " would agree with him. The article proceeded to say that an arms embargo was the first point on which Britain and America should " unite for energetic action," and that it was " a melancholy reflection that British-American co-operation could at an earlier

stage have averted altogether the appalling conflagration with which the world is now threatened."

Lord Cecil was rather more cautious in a letter to the *Times*, published on February 21st. He quoted first a statement made by "the Democratic President-elect" on January 11th, 1933, as follows :

> I have long been in favour of the use of embargoes on arms to belligerent nations, especially to nations which are guilty of making an attack on other nations . . . that is, against aggressor nations.

This statement also appears to have passed unnoticed by the British Press at the time. Lord Cecil then quoted the sentence to which we have drawn special attention from Mr. Stimson's memorandum. He went on :

> These very important pronouncements make it clear that both parties in the United States stand for participation in an arms embargo against an aggressor State and that the *Republican* Secretary of State declares that in this connection a decision by the League of Nations as to which is the aggressor is for practical purposes conclusive !

In fact, of course, the two pronouncements made nothing of the sort clear. President-elect Roosevelt was not the Democratic Party ; nor did President Hoover and Mr. Stimson constitute the Republican Party ; and had both "parties" agreed with them that would not have ensured for them the support of the United States Congress.

The *Daily Herald*, on February 20th, did not editorially refer to the arms embargo proposal, nor to the Stimson memorandum. "The only hope," it declared, of stopping operations on a vast scale in the Far East was "for the Assembly of the League to speak out." "Japan's bluff *must* be called, and her people told that what she proposes to do is contrary to all the undertakings and obligations inherent in the Covenant and the Kellogg Pact." The *Herald* was even a little optimistic. It was not certain even yet that the war party in Japan would win the day. "Wiser heads than the Jingoes are beginning to wonder whether a break with the rest of the world is worth the candle." But the League must show no sign of weakening. "Let the League speak with real authority and the warmongers may be beaten yet."

The Geneva Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (in his message published on the 21st) suggested that there was also

optimism at Geneva. Most people, he said, doubted whether Japan would really retire from Geneva ; and some people even thought still that the Japanese Government might accept the conciliation resolution of December 15th at the last moment. The theory that Japan was bluffing, and that the bluff could be called by plain speaking on the part of the League, still had wide support, it would seem, among the League zealots.

But, on that day (the 21st), the news came from Tokyo that the Japanese Government had instructed its delegates to withdraw from Geneva if the Assembly should adopt its Committee's report. The *Telegraph*, in its editorial, emphasised the magnitude of the trouble threatened by the withdrawal of Japan from the League, all the greater because " a state of undeclared and localised war between Japan and China " appeared to be on the point of passing into a more desperate phase, which might lead to a formal Chinese declaration of war, an attack upon the Japanese settlement at Tientsin and the involvement of other Governments. A Japanese resignation from the League would shatter what hope remained of a measure of success for the Disarmament Conference. Naval disarmament, at least, would recede into an indefinite future. The *Telegraph* still entertained faint hopes that Japan would not actually quit the League, but insisted that, in any event, " the suicidal folly of attempting measures of coercion against Japan in the League's name is utterly out of the question." What the League must do was to preserve the influence it might in due time exert as a peacemaker. This article made no allusion to any proposed arms embargo.

The *Times*, however, had another letter from Sir John Fischer Williams on the 21st in which he referred to Lord Lytton's Manchester suggestion that pressure might be exercised to induce Japan to accept the Assembly's report by an embargo on the sale of arms and other measures. He pointed out that the sanctions of Article XVI did not apply to a mere refusal to accept a report under Article XV. If, therefore, the League members were prepared to take measures for the positive enforcement of such a report, it would be a new and important departure, since they would be committing themselves to support a policy of peaceful change, the report containing proposals for a change in the existing legal order. Sir John added that a new forward move of a military nature by Japan would raise directly the question whether she had " resorted to war " within the

meaning of Article XVI, but that question had not been the subject of direct consideration by the League.[1]

The *Times* itself had no editorial on the Far East on the 21st. The *News Chronicle*, however, developed its campaign. The findings of the Assembly's committee constituted " a complete and uncompromising condemnation of the whole Japanese case." Japan was said to stand " self-convicted as a quite deliberate breaker of the Covenant," and such action could not be allowed to go unchallenged. " The very least the States of the League can do is to prohibit absolutely the supply of arms from their territories to Japan." The League might have to go further, but " it must do this *first and at once*." The case of China was different, said the *News Chronicle* ; China was buying arms solely in self-defence. This paper's proposed embargo was, therefore, to apply to Japan only ; and was to be imposed by the League States—not this time by Britain and America —and imposed immediately.

4. Pressure in the Commons

In the House of Commons, also on February 21st, the Leader of the Opposition asked for information about the position in Jehol and about the " proposal for an embargo on arms exported to Japan or China." On the latter point, Sir John Simon replied :

> I may point out, in the language employed by President Hoover in a recent message to Congress, that " for one nation alone to engage in such prohibitions while other nations continue to supply arms is a futility." The matter, therefore, in its wider aspect involves international questions of complexity and difficulty, and I can make no further statement at present.

Lansbury then asked whether the Government would be prepared to enter into negotiations with the United States and other Governments on the subject of an embargo if the Press reports that

[1] In a reply published on the 23rd, Miss Freda White said that Sir John Fischer Williams had mistaken the ground upon which an arms embargo was being advocated. The report had defined Japanese policy as contrary to Japan's obligations under Articles XII and X of the Covenant. " To supply arms and materials of war to Japan, as well as petrol and the raw material of explosives, is actively to join in the destruction of the territorial integrity of China." States permitting such supply, she argued, were " accessories to the violation of Articles X and XII " ; and once the League had adopted the report, " it will clearly become incumbent on League States not to aid Japan with arms or loans." This letter implied that the arms embargo would be applied not in order to bring pressure to bear upon Japan but in order to avoid a violation of the Covenant by the other members of the League. It also implied that the duty to avoid such a violation rested upon each member individually.

fighting had begun in Jehol proved to be true. Sir John replied :

I might remind the right hon. Gentleman that I informed the House on Wednesday last that H.M. Government have been in communication with and have had an exchange of views with certain Governments with a view to prohibiting the export of arms and munitions of war in connection with a South American matter. The message of President Hoover to which I have referred urged that legislation should be enacted by the United States Congress to enable the Executive in special cases to place the United States in line with other nations who may be willing to take action of this sort in the event of military conflict. But no such legislation has yet been passed. I must not anticipate the decision of the Government, but it appears to me that these matters must be considered internationally, and I should have thought that it was at Geneva that discussion would take place.

Lansbury then said that the only point he wished to press was that " either to-day or on an early day " the Foreign Secretary " ought to state what is the mind of the British Government on this subject and whether we are now prepared to co-operate with President Hoover or his successor on this subject." Once again one is struck by the persistence of the assumption that the United States Government was willing and able to do something and that the question was whether or not the British Government would co-operate. Sir John Simon tactfully endeavoured to show again that this was not the position. He replied :

I think I have already shown that we have been very willing to discover from the United States what co-operation is possible. I quite agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the matter is very important and that it is urgent, and, while I must claim time for us to consider it in all its bearings, it is quite right that a statement should be expected from the Government at an early date.

That, however, was not the end of the supplementary questions. The Official Report goes on :

Major Nathan : May I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether the statement which he has just made to the House is to be interpreted as meaning that H.M. Government do not propose to take immediate steps to prevent the export from this country of munitions of war to, or for the use of, Japan ?

Hon. Members : Or China.

Sir John Simon : I hope the hon. and gallant Gentleman will not find that the answers which I have just given are in the least obscure. In case he has not understood them, however, I will repeat a portion of them.

It would appear to me that until the draft report has been considered by the Assembly of the League and until the nations represented in the Assembly of the League have expressed their view of the report, it would not only be premature but quite improper to make the sort of declaration for which the hon. and gallant Gentleman asks.

Major Nathan : In view of the answer given by the right hon. Gentleman, I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely : " The refusal of H.M. Government, in view of the operations of war begun in Jehol this morning, to take immediate steps to prevent the export from this country of munitions of war to, or for the use of, Japan."

The Speaker ruled that the matter did not come under the provisions of the relevant Standing Order, and refused Major Nathan leave to move the Adjournment. While Major Nathan wanted " immediate steps " to place an embargo upon the export of arms to Japan, the Leader of the Opposition, it will have been noted, made no such demand, and in his original question had referred to a proposed embargo on arms exported " to Japan or China."

Whatever clashes had taken place in Jehol, the Japanese had not in fact launched their campaign ; perhaps because the League Assembly had adjourned until the 24th. It was reported on the 22nd, however, that the Government of Manchukuo was delivering that day an ultimatum to the northern Chinese authorities.

The *Manchester Guardian*, in an editorial on the situation, described the invasion of Jehol as " a military operation conducted by a free-booting Power in order to guarantee its earlier acquisitions." It had less excuse, said the *Guardian*, than the invasion of Manchuria. The seizure of Jehol would not solve Japan's problems, however. " If she goes farther, she may yet find her Moscow."

The *Express* said that, unfortunately, events had outstripped argument. The Japanese military machine had been set in motion. China would be beaten. Jehol would be added to Manchukuo. " The war-shattered Western world," said the *Express*, " will give all its sympathy to the under-dog." Only Russia would look on with no emotion save relief that the hostilities were well south. As for Great Britain, " let us keep calm, and remember that the capital of Great Britain is London and not Geneva." For, the leader said, there would be " incidents," and the danger was that " the belligerency of our professional pacifists and the rousing of passions as the

Japanese advance takes its course" might create an atmosphere in which a sense of proportion would be difficult to maintain.

The *Mail* carried a middle-page article by "A Far Eastern Expert" giving a fair historical survey of the dispute, which concluded with the statement that the League of Nations had now confronted Japan with a tremendous problem: "To ask her to surrender to a disrupted China the position she has built up in Manchukuo is to ask her to accept a paralysing reverse which could not fail to lead to the gravest trouble within the Japanese Empire." An editorial, also on the 22nd, said that the whole world would deplore the fact that Japan and China had apparently decided to resort to force. There would be general regret that the League had not been able to effect a friendly settlement. "This is not the moment to criticise its proceedings. But we have to note the ascertained fact of its helplessness." The *Mail* went on to urge that the sooner the British Government proclaimed a neutrality benevolent to both Japan and China the better. "That must be our attitude. Japan is our friend and former ally. China is our near neighbour in Asia."

We cannot allow ourselves to be entangled in any such wild-goose proceeding as a financial and economic blockade of either—for that would certainly and inevitably mean that we should be involved in a war for which we are quite unprepared. *Our business is to keep out.*

The article ended with a plea that events should be viewed in their proper proportion. Clashes between Chinese irregulars and the organised Japanese troops, it was said, should not be exaggerated into grave operations of actual war.

None of these three newspapers mentioned the arms embargo question in these leaders on the 22nd. The *News Chronicle*, however, was now in full cry on the subject. Its editorial welcomed the pressure brought to bear upon the Government in the House of Commons to declare its intentions clearly with regard to the export of arms to Japan. Sir John Simon's reply was fairly summarised, but only to be summarily dismissed. It amounted, said the article, "to a plea that this country can do nothing at the moment, because an embargo on arms is ineffectual unless it is international; because the League Assembly has not yet decided its policy on this issue; because the United States Congress has not yet passed the legislation necessary to enable its Government to take the requisite action." Without wishing to be "cynical" the *News Chronicle* found it impossible not

to have " a lurking conviction that if no other plausible impediment to immediate action had been discoverable " Sir John " would have said that it was impossible because there were spots on the sun." Sir John had promised, it was true, to make a statement at an early date ; that was " the only really hopeful part of his reply " ; and it would have been more hopeful still if it had been easier to believe that an early *decision* was implied. There was no doubt at all, the editorial proceeded, about American opinion on the matter—the reference to " opinion " indicates that the paper had now become a little cautious about the United States. Mr. Stimson had expressed it for the outgoing Government, and Mr. Roosevelt no less decisively for the incoming Government. The latter's statement of January 11th was quoted. The *News Chronicle* appealed for " an act of leadership " —for " a plain public announcement of the determination of some leading country " to impose an arms embargo against Japan. An " instant response " would be evoked in other countries. There was said to be " war fever " in Japan. " Very good," said the editorial, and (in heavy type) : " Let us oppose to it Peace fever in Europe and America, and let this country lead the way. The result would not be in doubt ; but every day and almost every hour counts." This was a plea, not, it is true, for an immediate unilateral embargo, but for an immediate and unilateral declaration by the British Government of its determination to impose an embargo against Japan alone.

The *Times* discussed the matter for the first time in its editorial on the same day. It expected hostilities on a large scale in Eastern Jehol, unless the considerable body of Chinese troops massed there thought it prudent to withdraw south of the Great Wall ; and it expected also that when the Assembly adopted the report Matsuoka would announce Japan's withdrawal from the League. The Assembly, it said, would then have to decide whether to take any further action or merely to recommend the settlement advocated in its report and disperse. The *Times* thought it advisable for the League to choose the less ambitious alternative. Japan was defying the League, and had a large army and navy engaged upon carrying out her own policy. " It would be frankly foolish to imagine that the countries composing the League are prepared to fight Japan in order to prevent the Japanese-Manchukuan armies from securing the province of Jehol."

In regard to sanctions under Article XVI, the editorial raised the familiar point that the majority of the States would take

little or no part in the application of penal measures, " which, to be properly carried out, would involve the risk of hostilities." The *Times* declared it to be the merest common sense that those upon whom the responsibility of action would fall must also be those to take the decision. That meant that the Assembly had done its part. If the countries with Far Eastern interests decided on a policy of waiting—" and in many circumstances this is the wisest course " —there was, said the article, " at least no reason why they should facilitate hostilities by allowing fresh supplies of arms to reach the belligerents." A strong movement existed in the United States to place an embargo on the provision of arms to nations at war. The *Times* referred to President Hoover's message to Congress, to Mr. Roosevelt's statement in January and to Mr. Stimson's memorandum. It quoted the now familiar passage, and pointed out that in this particular dispute the implication presumably was that Japan only would be refused the right to receive arms. But, said the *Times*, there was an obvious practical difficulty in discriminating between the belligerents. It was that arms destined for China might, and almost certainly would, be seized before arrival by Japan. The *Times* agreed with Sir John Simon that the question was one of great complexity ; but considered that, after the Assembly had finally adopted the draft report, it would certainly not be amiss for the arms-producing countries to take counsel together, and to ascertain the views of the Chinese Government.

5. The Campaign Develops

Two other relevant developments occurred on February 22nd. The arms embargo question was again raised in the House of Commons, and it was also brought before a joint meeting of the Trades Union Congress General Council and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party.

At Westminster, after it had been agreed that a debate on the Far Eastern situation should take place at the beginning of the following week, the Leader of the Opposition asked whether the Government would make a public statement before the following Monday on its policy " in regard to sending armaments and other help to the people who are fighting in the Far East," adding, " It is a question of an embargo on armaments." The Prime Minister replied that the Foreign Secretary had answered a question on the

subject on the previous day. The situation, he said, changed almost from hour to hour. He thought the debate on Monday would serve the purposes Lansbury had in mind, but if any statement were required an opportunity would certainly be taken of making it in the House of Commons.

Lansbury pressed for a declaration of Government policy as soon as possible, and hoped it would be made long before the end of the week. MacDonald repeated that the situation changed from hour to hour. He understood that the most important and definite point related to the export of arms. " Upon that a statement was made yesterday, and that is a continuing situation."

Lansbury then said that the only statement made had been that the Government " were considering the matter and would be willing in certain circumstances to act." He proceeded :

The newspapers tell us that all kinds of shiploads are going out, and that old ships are being bought and broken up for the production of shot and shell. What we are anxious about is that this should not go on for another three days. We want the Government to make up their mind.

To that MacDonald answered :

As a matter of fact, the Government have made up their mind. They have made up their mind that this must be the subject of an international agreement. The Government are doing everything they can to ascertain whether that international agreement is possible.

Sir Percy Harris intervened from the Liberal benches to ask, " While agreement is being arranged, cannot the Government give a lead to their own nationals in connection with trade orders for munitions ? " Lansbury was not satisfied. He asked for an answer :

The question is what our own Government will do in the matter with regard to our own country, whether other people do it or not. I want to know for what we are responsible.

The Prime Minister replied :

I am afraid that if the right hon. Gentleman were in the Government he would not take that view. The Government's view is that this matter must be settled as quickly as possible, but by international agreement.

After an intervention by James Maxton, the Prime Minister was asked by Mr. T. Williams whether the Government would " initiate a movement at Geneva for the purpose of securing in the minimum space of time such a policy as would be approved by almost every person in this country." MacDonald answered that the questions

only repeated each other. The Foreign Secretary's statement on the previous day held good, and action was being taken on the lines of that statement.

In this Parliamentary exchange, not a word was said on either side about limiting any ban on the export of arms to the case of Japan. Indeed, the whole spirit of the remarks made by those who pressed for an embargo suggests that they had in mind a complete prohibition of all arms shipments to the Far East. There is, of course, no doubt at all that that is what Lansbury himself wanted, and from his standpoint, therefore, there was no difficulty about unilateral and immediate action by this country. It will be noted also that those members who appeared to recognise that international agreement was desirable or necessary pressed the Government to " give a lead " in one way or another.

6. The Labour Movement and an Embargo

The joint meeting of the General Council of the T.U.C. and the Labour Party's National Executive on the same day adopted the following resolution :

> That in the event of Japan rejecting the proposals of the League Committee of Nineteen, all sections of the Labour Movement should pass resolutions calling for the application of an economic boycott in accordance with Article XVI of the Covenant of the League of Nations ; and, further, calling upon the Government to place an embargo upon the exportation of armaments from this country to Japan and China.

This curious resolution was issued to the Press without any further explanation. It was printed in the *Times*, the *News Chronicle*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Herald*, but without comment, save that the *Guardian* had the heading : " Labour calls for a Boycott," while the heading in the *Herald* was : " Labour demands ' Stop the Arms Traffic.' "

The two recommendations in the resolution were hardly consistent with each other. Both, moreover, were conditional upon Japan rejecting the report about to be adopted by the League Assembly. The resolution was plainly a compromise. The differences within the Labour Movement, and the resulting ambiguities in the official attitude of the Labour Party, will be revealed more clearly in our further examination of the Press and of the proceedings in Parliament. In regard to this resolution of February 22nd, 1933,

the reference to the joint meeting in the report of the National Executive Committee submitted to the Labour Party Conference at Hastings in October of that year stated that

> representations had been made by the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Party that all sections of the Movement should be urged immediately to pass resolutions pressing the Government to place an embargo on the export of armaments.

It is clear that the Parliamentary Labour Party's Executive Committee favoured an arms embargo against both Japan and China. The resolution adopted by the joint meeting endorsed their demand, save that the Labour Movement was not urged to support it " immediately ". A demand for " an economic boycott " of Japan under Article XVI was, however, put first.

At the Labour Party Conference in the following October there was an almost complete lack of interest in the Far East. However, one delegate (Mr. Lionel Elvin) did raise the subject of Manchuria in the discussion on the National Executive's report ; and his point related to the resolution adopted at the joint meeting on February 22nd. Mr. Elvin protested strongly against the inclusion of the words " and China," and asked for an explanation. Mr. George Dallas, on behalf of the National Executive, then explained that the resolution was passed " before Japan was formally denounced " by the League of Nations. That, presumably, was a reference to the adoption of the Assembly's report on February 24th. " Immediately Japan was denounced as the aggressor," Mr. Dallas continued—providing an illustration of the interpretation so widely given of the Assembly's action—" the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons raised the point and asked that an embargo should be put upon Japan—not upon Japan and China."

We shall see how far the Parliamentary Labour Party pressed its revised demand, and how far it acted in conformity with the resolution of February 22nd, either in its original form or as so revised. But Mr. Dallas's explanation of the original inclusion of the words " and China " cannot be reconciled with the terms of the resolution. The nature of the Committee of Nineteen's draft report, and Japan's rejection of the draft, were, of course, well known on February 22nd. Mr. Dallas suggested that the words " and China " were included because the League had not then formally denounced Japan as the aggressor, which was his way of saying that the draft report had not then been formally adopted. But, according to the

resolution, the campaign for an arms embargo applicable to China as well as to Japan was to be launched only " in the event of Japan rejecting the proposals of the League Committee of Nineteen," that is to say, in the event of Japan maintaining its rejection of the draft report and its recommendations at the meeting of the Assembly and after the Assembly had adopted the draft.

The *Daily Herald's* editorial line next day (February 23rd) is interesting. It had made no further reference to the proposed arms embargo since its leader of the 20th. It made no allusion to it on this occasion. It did not mention Lansbury's questions in the House of Commons. Nor did it refer to the resolution passed at the joint meeting. The line it took, however, conformed in a somewhat curious way to the first part of the resolution relating to an economic boycott under Article XVI. The editorial said that the report which the Assembly would adopt next day was one which " for all its careful moderation of language plainly and unambiguously convicts Japan of studied and deliberate aggression." It was a foregone conclusion that China would accept and that Japan would reject the report's recommendations. The *Herald* did not proceed to argue that the sanctions of Article XVI should then be applied against Japan. Its contention was that if Japan then made war on China she exposed herself " immediately and automatically to the sanctions of Article XVI."

> If, after the Assembly has passed its resolution, and China has accepted its recommendations, Japan " goes to war " with China then *ipso facto* Japan is at fault with every member of the League : and every member is bound immediately to sever all economic relations with her.

Japan, the article continued, was preparing new acts of war against China, and the condition of Article XVI would be unquestionably fulfilled within a very short space. The *Herald* concluded by emphasising again that the sanctions of Article XVI would come into operation automatically :

> The members of the League will not have to decide whether they shall or shall not boycott Japan. The obligation to do so is solemn and explicit.
>
> The League has been patient and forbearing to a fault. But Japan has forced the issue.
>
> However reluctant Governments may be to take so grave a step—and we do not minimise its gravity—they will have no choice.

7. Doubts and Difficulties

The *News Chronicle*, however, continued to concentrate on the arms embargo. In its editorial on the 23rd it criticised the Prime Minister for tenaciously resisting the attempts to extract from him " even an expression of opinion on the subject of the export of arms to the belligerents." Neither Mr. Roosevelt nor Mr. Stimson, it pointed out, had hesitated to give one. Until the following Monday, when a statement had been promised, " the export of arms from this country is apparently to go merrily on, unchecked by the slightest kind of official disapproval on the part of the Government." The *Times* was quoted. What was the good of talking about " outlawing war," asked the *News Chronicle*, if we allowed our factories to be used to fight a war ? The matter might be one of " great complexity," as Sir John Simon had claimed, but it was also one of great urgency.

All that might seem to suggest that the *News Chronicle* wanted an embargo upon the export of arms to both belligerents, but the slogan " No More Arms for Japan " was again prominently displayed ; and a former contention was repeated that the only effective method of fighting the war fever reported to be raging in Japan was " by showing ourselves not less earnest and not less zealous in the cause of peace." How was that possible, the leader asked in conclusion, " so long as we continue to provide more and more arms to a Power actively engaged in invading its neighbour's territory."

But on that same day the *News Chronicle* itself carried a report from its New York Correspondent of a Washington statement that no further action would be taken on the proposal to declare an arms embargo on the warring nations till the change of Administration. And there were other signs that day that the position of the United States was better understood and that other difficulties were being appreciated in some quarters.

The *Daily Herald* had a report that the Governments of leading nations were already considering enforcing an arms embargo against Japan, but that much depended on the attitude of the United States. Even if the League ordered an embargo against Japan as the aggressor, it would still be possible for a constant stream of arms to flow from United States manufacturers to the Far East. " President Hoover is at present seeking power from Congress to veto the export of arms from the United States."

The *Manchester Guardian's* Political Correspondent said that the

Government were certainly seeking some international agreement banning the export of arms, but that in the United States legislation was necessary to stop exportation, and the proposal apparently was to get agreement on an embargo among the European exporting countries and then to invite the United States to pass the necessary legislation with the least possible delay. This paper also published—in a rather inconspicuous place, it is true—a Reuter summary of the position, as follows :

Under the British Arms Export Prohibition Order of 1931, arms can only be exported from this country under Government licence, but should more drastic control be desired the co-operation of the United States is essential. At the present time the only action which is possible in the Chinese-Japanese dispute is a ban on the export of arms to both countries, but since Japan is an arms-producing country and China, broadly speaking, is not, it would be impracticable to impose such a ban. Should the League meanwhile take definite action in naming one country the aggressor the position would, of course, be changed.

In any case, an arms ban to be effective would have to be world-wide, and as such could be enforced by the League only with the co-operation of the United States, and as yet Congress is not in a position to take such a decision.

The Parliamentary Correspondent of the *Times* wrote that the question of a possible embargo on the export of arms and ammunition from this country to China and Japan had given the Cabinet considerable anxiety. Ministers were agreed that it was impossible to take action of any kind until the report of the Committee of Nineteen had been accepted, and held that even then nothing could be done except by international agreement. The Correspondent understood that preliminary conversations had already taken place with some foreign nations, including the United States, on this point.

8. Lord Lytton

On February 24th, the day of the fateful meeting of the League Assembly, Lord Lytton was again conspicuous in the daily Press. He maintained his opposition to the application of Article XVI of the Covenant, and his support of an arms embargo. On the previous day the *Guardian* reported his speech at Cambridge in which he said that we should be ready, with all other Governments, to place an embargo on arms for " people who ought not to be using them," and, replying to a question whether pressure should not be brought to bear, said

that " to bring about a far bigger war than the one already going on would not be making a success of negotiations."

Lord Lytton's replies to questions at a L.N.U. meeting at Letchworth were reported fully, and substantially in the same terms, by both the *Guardian* and the *Times*, while a briefer report was given in the *Express*. On the question of sanctions, Lord Lytton gave it as his opinion that the time had not come to apply them. Article XVI, he said, only came into force when one of the two parties in the dispute went to war against the decision of the League, and Japan was not going to do that. Her war with China was over. Yet they had been at war. It was for the League to say whether Article XVI was involved. If it did so, then he trusted his country would fulfil its obligations loyally with the other signatory Governments.

Lord Lytton was asked whether it was possible to stop the export of arms from this country to both belligerents. His reply (according to the somewhat fuller *Times* report) was :

> Surely there can be no difficulty about stopping the export of arms. It is said should we not supply arms to China as China is the victim and entitled to our assistance. I see no reason why we should not, but it is not so easy to send arms to China which will not fall into the hands of Japan. One thing is certain and that is that it is criminal for a Government, a State member of the League, to allow their nationals to go on selling arms to a country to carry on a war which is said to be unjust and when it is bound by reason of its own report to give every assistance to the other side. So my answer to that is it is not only possible but there is a very strong obligation for all State members of the League to do it and to do it as soon as possible.

Lord Lytton added that it was of the utmost importance for people to make up their own minds " and say to the Government, ' We will back you up in any policy which you consider it is necessary to take. In this issue we are behind you all the time and we expect you not to wait for others, but to take the lead.' That was what Geneva wanted at the moment. Everyone was saying ' We will do this if the others will.' Was not this the moment to say, ' Come along, boys, and do this ! ' ? "

A more considered statement, perhaps, was given by Lord Lytton in an interview (by John Rayner) published in the *Daily Herald*. The paper said that it did not necessarily agree with all the views expressed, and it summarised those views as follows :

1. That Japan has jeopardised what rights she has in Manchuria by

taking the matter into her own hands and that her plea of " self-defence " is a lie.

2. That it is monstrous and incredible that any member of the League should supply arms to Japan, or, for that matter, China.

3. That peace with a satisfactory solution for both sides is still possible and is in fact the only course open.

The interview was a long one. Lord Lytton said that we had now the authority of the League for condemning Japan's action. He proceeded :

There are no steps that Great Britain can take of her own accord. We cannot act alone. We are a member of the League, and must seek the consent of the other members before taking action.

But there is nothing to stop us taking the initiative in calling for an international agreement.

It is on the face of it incredible that any State member of the League should supply arms to either party in any quarrel which is *sub judice* of the League.

If, as is reported, this is being done, it is monstrous ; and it is plainly desirable that there should be added to the Covenant an Article forbidding the exportation of arms by any member to any other member who is as it were *sub judice* of the League.

The issue was one between the interests of commerce and the interests of humanity, and the only solution was by international agreement. The Labour Party, said Lord Lytton, was quite right to submit its demand that armaments shall be refused to Japan. (It had not submitted such a demand—the demand, if it can be called such, submitted in the resolution of the 22nd was for a refusal of armaments to both Japan and China.) But there was another, not perhaps a moral point of view, but a very real one. " Why should we refuse to export arms if other countries will continue to do so ? If there *is* going to be a trade in the weapons of war, why should it be carried on at our expense ? " Therefore, said Lord Lytton, a new international agreement was needed.

Japan, he continued, had a case, a very strong case on merits, but no case at all for the action she had taken. From the moment that Japan took the law into her own hands last September (i.e., presumably, September 1931) it ceased to matter how good a case she had in Manchuria. Her case of " self-defence " was untrue and insupportable.

The action Lord Lytton considered desirable following upon the League's condemnation of Japan's action was :

League members should stop the export of arms and money to Japan.

Economic boycott is most dangerous and undesirable. It would be the equivalent of a state of war, and such a step might enlarge the sphere of hostilities to an undreamt-of magnitude.

The Japanese will be in a grave enough position if we take only negative action.

Peace is still perfectly possible with a satisfactory solution for both sides.

Politically the issues are irreconcilable, admittedly. Both China and Japan want Manchuria. But there is no getting away from the fact that Manchuria *is* Chinese. Twenty-eight of her thirty million inhabitants are Chinese.

But economically it is perfectly possible for Japan to exploit Manchuria to their own great advantage as well as to the advantage of the Chinese.

The Japanese will never leave Manchuria. All her interests there are consistent with Chinese sovereignty.

Manchuria is most certainly a key position from a military point of view, not only from the Japanese and Chinese points of view, but also in regard to Russia.

The only solution is the complete demilitarisation of the district. An efficient police force with foreign officers would suffice to keep order.

It remains for both China and Japan to turn to the League for a peaceful and mutual and highly advantageous solution of their difficulties, by which they will both be able to have all that they want—without the expenses of both of them involved in the continuance of the present state of war.

The *Herald* seems to have misunderstood Lord Lytton's statement at one point. The correct interpretation appears to be that Lord Lytton was opposed to arms being supplied to either party to a dispute while the matter was *sub judice*. But, when the League had decided against one party (in this instance, Japan) then the embargo on arms should be applied against that party alone. Admittedly, some element of doubt remains. For one thing Lord Lytton seems to have overlooked in this interview the difficulty he raised himself at Letchworth, apparently on the same day—the difficulty of preventing arms destined for China from being seized by Japan. It is striking that Lord Lytton made no reference in his interview to the United States. It will also be noted that he again urged this country to " take the initiative," although on this occasion specifically in relation to an " international agreement."

9. Before the Assembly

The *News Chronicle* continued its campaign under the same slogan on the 24th. Japan, it declared, was that day to be "formally arraigned by the League of Nations as the aggressor." That, of course, was not so, and again illustrates the loose interpretation given in certain circles to the Assembly's report, as to the Lytton Report itself. Afterwards, the editorial proceeded, the least the League could do would be to call on its members to refrain from supplying the aggressor with arms, ammunition and money; and the least the Government could do was to give "a strong lead for collective action—a lead at least as strong as has already been given by Mr. Stimson for the United States." The situation, the article concluded, would not brook further waiting. On the same day this paper reported that a hundred clergy, from all parts of the country, assembled in conference at Swanwick, had passed a resolution protesting against shipment of munitions "to the Far East," presumably, therefore, to China as well as to Japan.

In passing, it may be noted that the I.L.P. organ, the *New Leader*, had a "Special War Danger Issue" on February 24th, in which its editorial demanded that "the transportation of arms to Japan shall immediately cease." It urged, however, that the working class should not wait on the decision of the Government. "They should refuse to make, handle or despatch munitions to Japan." Needless to say, "the working class," as usual, paid no attention to the *New Leader*. And, for nearly five months, the I.L.P. organ had ignored the Manchurian problem.

In the columns of the *Times*, and to a lesser extent in those of the *Express*, there was evidence of considerable Parliamentary activity in preparation for the impending debate. The Liberal Parliamentary Party had met on the night of the 23rd. According to the *Times* report, special consideration had been given to the possibility of the British Government taking independent action in order to give a lead to other Powers, and also to the course which the Government ought to take in dealing with the export of arms and munitions. "It was agreed that no decisions could be taken until the Assembly of the League of Nations has passed judgment, but the feeling was expressed strongly that every possible support ought to be given to the League at this juncture." The *Express* report said that a decision had been taken to "urge the Government to take immediate action

regarding an embargo on the export of arms to the Far East."

The *Times* also reported that a meeting had been held of the China Sub-Committee of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee, at which full endorsement had been given to the Government's view that action in regard to a " possible embargo on the export of arms and munitions to Japan and China " could not be taken by one nation, but only as a matter of international agreement. It was further reported that a group of eight Conservative M.P.s (some of whom were prominently connected with the League of Nations Union—the members were Mr. Vyvyan Adams, Mr. R. K. Law, Sir Eugene Ramsden, Major Hills, Mr. Godfrey Nicholson, Sir Frank Sanderson, Mr. G. Elliston and Sir W. Sugden) had handed in a motion declaring that :

> This House would support His Majesty's Government in taking the lead among the Powers by proposing that further licences be withheld for the export of arms and ammunition to any nation found to be in default by the Assembly of the League of Nations.

The Tokyo Correspondent of the *Times* reported that the Japanese were unperturbed. They—and some responsible foreigners—considered that the suggested arms embargo would do more harm than good, as it would merely serve to aggravate national sentiment without seriously hampering Japan. Japan was said to be almost self-supporting in regard to the output of munitions and had large emergency stocks in reserve. If an embargo were placed on oil, cotton, nitrates and other raw materials required for the manufacture of munitions, Japan would be liable to suffer, but it was considered that such an embargo would lead to war, and in any case Japan was known to have huge reserves of oil and other material. The Correspondent added that the suggestion that the export of arms to China should be permitted on the ground that China was acting in self-defence called forth smiles of derision and sarcastic comment among the Japanese. " Since when," it is asked, " did the hugely swollen private armies of the Chinese war lords become instruments of national defence ? "

The *Express* took note of the arms embargo campaign for the first time on the 24th. The agitation, its editorial declared, was well meant, " springing from humane and generous motives," but it was out of all touch with reality. First, what use was it for Britain to forbid the export of arms to the Far East if other countries did not ? Secondly, what was to prevent either China or Japan from

getting munitions from Britain through the medium of a third country? Next, if the "pacifist prohibitionists" answered that the entire trade in munitions must be forbidden, how were munitions to be defined? The *Express* concluded that a definition satisfactory to the more resolute and clear-sighted of the prohibitionists would involve an economic boycott of the Far East. But "the final and fateful question" was whether the boycott was to apply both to Japan and China, or only to Japan?

> For if we are to discriminate in favour of one of the belligerents, by that very act we range ourselves against the other. If ever we arrive at that fatal point we may soon be forced to make munitions on a stupendous scale—*to use ourselves.*

The *Express* urged the people of this country not to plunge blindly into so grave a peril. The issue, it declared, was plain:

> Either keep out of this war and keep clear of all entanglements. Or step in with our full power at once, and dictate a decision.
>
> Common sense will not hesitate to say which course we should take. *We will not send a single British soldier to his death on the foreign soil of Jehol.*

10. "New Statesman" and "Economist"

Before dealing with developments after the Assembly meeting on February 24th, it is necessary to consider the comments of the weeklies, written beforehand, and published on the 25th. In its notes the *New Statesman* said that our statesmen had only finally brought themselves to the point of discussing joint action when the difficulties of making it effective were formidable, though perhaps not yet insuperable. This weekly had also a main article. It began by discussing the war in the Far East, which, it said, had to all intents and purposes commenced. Dealing with an article in a London paper "which is a frank friend and admirer of Japan"—the article was that in the *Express* on February 20th—the *New Statesman* contended that the expansionist ambitions of the men dominating Japan were no secret, and held that it would be childish to comfort ourselves with the belief that their limit was marked by the Great Wall. The odds were "a thousand pounds to a brass button" that the attainment of the objective of the Lan-ho River line by the Japanese would not be the end of the war in the Far East.

The *New Statesman* claimed that for a year and a half it had been urging the League "to do what it was established to do." The

leading statesmen had only reluctantly, and when it was perhaps too late, "brought themselves to accept the challenge thrust in their teeth." They were now faced with the question of what, if anything, they could do to stop the Japanese advance. One alternative—to do nothing—would at best mean only a postponement of the day of reckoning. The other alternative was for the League, in concert with the United States and Russia, to take what action it could to prevent the extension of the war. The *New Statesman* said that it was not to be expected in the circumstances that the signatories of the Covenant would honour their signature to the full. That would require them immediately to subject Japan "to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State."

Such an out-and-out application of sanctions may be advocated by zealots for the law, and it may be demanded by the unfortunate Chinese. But it can be refused, without undue cynicism, on the ground that it would be likely to do more harm than good.

But, the article continued, if all sanctions could not be applied, some could and ought to be.

The *New Statesman's* discussion of these is diverting in view of its preceding remarks. It first eliminated the withdrawal of Ambassadors from Tokyo. At an earlier stage that might have had considerable effect, "but now that things have gone so far its advantages are more doubtful." That left the *New Statesman* with "an embargo on arms and a refusal of any financial assistance to Japan." It was surely only common sense and common decency to forbid the supply of arms to Japan, and, moreover, it was "favoured by the United States."

But the matter is not so simple as it looks. In common decency also we ought not to deny China the weapons to resist the aggression. Common sense, on the other hand, reminds us that the Japanese navy will be there to prevent China from getting the arms, and that (leaving aside the general complications which might result from such gun-running) the Japanese and not the Chinese armies might well be the chief beneficiaries.

The *New Statesman* said that this conflict of principle and expediency would be settled either by an embargo being put on the exportation of arms to both belligerents, or, as it feared was much more probable, by no embargo at all "and a fine harvest for the armament firms of Great Britain and other loyal members of the League." There was,

therefore, no demand from this weekly for an arms embargo directed against Japan alone, the only kind of embargo which fell within the category of " sanctions." But it considered financial pressure more promising, for without substantial assistance from abroad Japan could not carry on a long and costly war. " ' Money talks,' they say : here is an occasion for it to talk quickly and loud." So that, after all the *New Statesman's* valiant talk about sanctions, it proposed only a ban on financial assistance to Japan.

The *Economist* also raised the question of what was to be done " to clip Japan's militaristic wings."

> As has happened before in this Far Eastern affair, the constructive action has been taken by the Secretary of State at Washington, Mr. Stimson.

This constructive action, it seemed, was the introduction of the joint resolution in Congress, and Mr. Stimson's memorandum in support thereof. The *Economist* quoted the much-quoted passage from the memorandum, a State paper of " immense importance," and went on :

> When the Assembly had adopted the Committee of Nineteen's report it would be monstrous that any Government which was a party to this verdict (and what Government will venture to dissent ?) should either itself supply munitions of war to Japan or should allow its nationals to supply them to her.

Since, " as Mr. Stimson pertinently points out," an arms embargo must be international to be effective, the next step was consultation between the League States and the United States and Soviet Russia. The term " contraband of war " could be interpreted as it had been by Britain during the 1914-1918 war ; and there could also be the denial of credits or other forms of financial support.

The *Economist* then came to the British Government's attitude. It seemed to be unaware of the reports that the Government had already embarked upon consultations, and its account of what had happened in the House of Commons is open to the charge of misrepresentation. Sir John Simon—on the 21st—had begun, it said, " in his most unfortunate ' completely evasive ' manner."

> Upon being pressed, he did go so far as to say that the Government " would be very willing to discover from the United States what co-operation is possible " and that " the matter is very important and urgent."

In fact, as has been seen, Sir John Simon did not say that the

Government " would " be very willing, etc., but that he had " already shown that we have been very willing," etc. He had again informed the House of the British Government's initiative in the matter of prohibiting the export of arms ; and he had again explained the position of the United States. The *Economist* continued :

> But this attitude of cautious willingness to explore possibilities is a poor substitute for positive policy ; and though the British Government can scarcely be expected to take the unilateral step of placing an embargo on shipments of munitions to Japan if no other Power associates itself with this policy, the Cabinet will be gravely to blame if this country does not give a strong lead in that direction.

The article then came to the Prime Minister's remarks on the 22nd. He, said the *Economist*, was " far from reassuring." MacDonald had said that an embargo must be the subject of international agreement, but he had " refrained significantly from answering " the question put by Mr. T. Williams. That also was inaccurate. The Prime Minister had replied that action was being taken on the lines of the Foreign Secretary's statement. The *Economist* hoped that in the debate on the 27th the Government would be pressed to take the lead at Geneva in asking for an immediate embargo under the auspices of the League, " taking it for granted that the United States would scarcely refrain from falling into line with such an expression of world opinion." Indeed, it added, Mr. Stimson's pronouncement suggested that the danger was not that the United States would hang back but that the League would, " unless Great Britain exercises its influence courageously in support of the principles of international justice and morality." The persistence of the notion that the United States was more ready to take this (and other forms of) action than the British Government, despite the known facts, is a truly remarkable phenomenon.

It was expressed in a peculiarly extreme form in the Glasgow *Forward* on the same day. This Labour weekly had printed nothing on the Far Eastern situation for three months. It had not even said anything about Sir John Simon's speech of December 7th. Now " T. J." (the Editor, Mr. Thomas Johnston) had a note on the subject. This was based upon an article in *Harper's Magazine* which envisaged the situation in terms of a possible Japanese-American war. Mr. Stimson had twice formally announced that the United States did not and would not recognise any forcible seizure of territory in Manchuria. Quoting from the article, " Either Japan

will yield, or America will yield, or they will go to war," " T. J." added, " Not immediately perhaps," although the American Fleet was exercising in the Pacific and the United States was negotiating with Soviet Russia for an airplane base on Kamchatka Island. " Perhaps the final stage will be an economic boycott of Japan. If America can enlist British aid—and that may be part of the price for a debt settlement—the boycott may be effective." Later in the same issue *Forward* asked whether we could not stop the sale of munitions to Japan. " Surely we might take the lead here and induce the League of Nations to follow our example."

11. After the Assembly

February 24th, when the League Assembly adopted the report under Article XV, and the Japanese delegates withdrew in protest, was hailed by the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent as " a memorable day in the history of the League of Nations "—it might almost be said in the history of the world, " for it was the first time that a nation guilty of an international crime has been solemnly condemned by the assembled representatives of the other nations." The influence and reputation of the League, he declared, would be greatly enhanced.

The *Guardian's* editorial described the League's adoption of the report as a victory gained by the League, not over Japan but over itself, but none the less " a precious victory." Turning to the question of further action, the *Guardian* said :

> An icy hand rests on our foreign policy : it would be too much to expect a generous gesture from it.

For the moment we had to be content with " the cautious statement that the Government, having made up its mind that the question of the export of arms to Japan must be a matter of international agreement, is seeking to discover whether such an agreement is possible." The Government, said the *Guardian*, should start from the principle that no country loyal to the Covenant would sell armaments to Japan. " An obligation, individual and inescapable, rests on every country which is sincere." The British Government " could do much to regain lost credit by working energetically to secure agreement on an embargo, and also rapid action." The American Government, the *Guardian* proceeded, might be expected to support it. Once again it quoted the passage from the Stimson

memorandum, and this time also the Roosevelt statement of January 11th, 1933, and concluded :

> No nation that accepts the verdict of the League can now sell arms to Japan without becoming a mercenary accomplice in treaty-breaking and a most brutal war.

Although the *Guardian* urged energetic efforts to secure an international agreement, it also wanted, while not expecting, a " generous gesture " by the British Government ; and the whole weight of its argument was to the effect that the duty to impose a ban on arms exports to Japan rested upon each country individually and should be carried out immediately.

The *News Chronicle's* editorial on the 25th was headed " No More Arms, No More Money, For Japan," and there was the usual display of inset slogans of the same kind. The Assembly had adopted the report " which condemns root and branch Japan's policy in Manchuria," and the Japanese delegates had closed the door upon the last faint chance of peace. The *News Chronicle* discussed what action in these circumstances should be advised by the Consultation Committee which the League had promptly set up. The first step was " an international embargo both on arms and on money for Japan." This should be imposed at once.

What of the *Daily Herald*? Its editorial on the 25th declared that the die was cast. Japan had withdrawn from co-operation with the League, and in Jehol the first shots had already been fired. China was preparing to resist with all her power, and was asking the League what *action* it was prepared to take to uphold the Covenant. On this question of action the *Herald* adhered to its contention of the 23rd. The answer, it said, could not be long delayed because " the sanctions of Article XVI will come automatically into operation the moment it is plain that Japan is in fact making war." But, having made that point, the *Herald* moved quickly to others, and particularly to the question of an arms embargo. With dubious consistency, it said that decisions must be carefully weighed and firmly taken ; but one thing was plain—no League Power could in honour or duty profess a complete neutrality. China was " entitled at the very least to the moral support " of every State adhering to the Covenant :

> In particular, it is clear that the proposal of an arms embargo applying equally to Japan and China is now dead.

For to place obstacles in the way of China's defence of her territorial integrity would be directly contrary to the plain intention of the Covenant. An arms embargo may be the right first action. But it must be directed to hamper the activities of the aggressor, not those of the defender.

The *Herald's* position on the 25th is of special interest in relation to the attitude of the Labour Movement. It still continued to argue that the sanctions of Article XVI would come automatically into operation *if Japan were now to go to war.* It still refrained from supporting any demand for an economic boycott of Japan such as that apparently envisaged in the resolution passed by the joint meeting of the T.U.C. General Council and the National Executive of the Labour Party on the 22nd. That is to say, it did not advocate an economic boycott in order to bring pressure to bear on Japan to accept the recommendations of the Assembly's report. On the other hand, it now returned, somewhat hesitantly, to its earlier demand for an arms embargo, insisting, however, that such an embargo should be applied against Japan alone.

12. Professor Murray and the "Times"

With the exception of the *Times*, the newspapers of the "Right" did not discuss the question of an arms embargo in their comments on February 25th. The exception, however, is important.

The *Times* that day had a letter from Professor Gilbert Murray, who wrote of the "intense feeling" in all parts of the country about "the export of arms to a Covenant-breaking State," and the need for clear thinking on the subject. Professor Murray assumed two points to be obvious, (1) that it was incompatible with the undertakings of the Covenant and the spirit of the Kellogg Pact for signatories of them to furnish a recalcitrant State with the means of making war contrary to its engagements, and (2) that a refusal by one country alone to export arms would be quite ineffective, a collective embargo by "all the nations concerned" being required. Therefore, declared Professor Murray, the point at issue was this:

> Is it sufficient for the British Government to undertake to "exchange views" with other Powers while in the meantime allowing the export of arms from this country to continue and—according to published statements—to be furiously speeded up? Cannot our Government undertake to do its very best to secure a general embargo on the export of arms to Covenant-breaking States, and in the meantime—until its efforts have definitely failed—to issue no licences itself? Is that too much to ask?

I leave aside for the present the further question, whether, even if a general embargo proves to be impossible and some nations insist on breaking faith for the sake of blood money, it is well for Great Britain to do the same.

This letter, it will be noted, carried further the now familiar plea that Britain should " give a lead." It suggested immediate independent action by the British Government—such action to continue at least until efforts to secure a general embargo had definitely failed, and possibly afterwards. Professor Murray's phrase " issue no licences " could be interpreted to mean no licences at all, or no licences for exports to the Far East, or no licences for exports to Japan. The context suggests that it was the last he had in mind. And that, apparently, is how the *Times* itself interpreted his argument. Moreover, the *Times* supported that argument. On the whole, it said, " public opinion must agree that it is unseemly for a country which is a member of the League and stands by its principles to dispatch weapons for the use of a State which is defying the League."

The *Times* recognised that there were " immense complexities," and that the practical result of a mere arms embargo might not be great, since Japan might have greater need of oil, cotton and nitrates than of manufactured weapons.

Nevertheless, it would be abhorrent to the public conscience that arms should be freely exported to a Covenant-breaking State. Under the Arms Export Prohibition Order of 1931 arms can be exported from this country only by Government licences. Such licences should at least be withheld, during the period of the present dispute, from all consignments of arms or munitions destined for Japan.

The *Times*, it will be seen, did not even make the qualifications in regard to the period of this proposed unilateral embargo which Professor Murray had made.

In the earlier part of its editorial that day the *Times* wrote of the Assembly as having " adjudicated adversely upon the Japanese case, which the report had condemned as untenable." It expected that the withdrawal of the Japanese delegation would be followed by an announcement of Japan's resignation from the League, but was hopeful that Japan would continue to participate in the Disarmament Conference, which, " of course," was " most desirable." The *Times* " strongly emphasised " that the only divergence between Japan and the League States related to her policy in Manchuria. The charge that Japan had repudiated the obligations of treaties

and Covenant in that regard was " irrefutable " ; and the other League States and signatories of relevant treaties could not condone so violent a departure " from new international standards and agreed international methods." The League had no choice but to reject Japan's militarist methods in the Manchurian dispute. It was in no position to impose the settlement which it had drawn up, but all its members were bound to do all in their power to further its ultimate triumph.

13. Opposition on the Right

The other newspapers of the " Right " expressed no approval of the Assembly's action. It is true that they expressed no direct disapproval, but a note or two of criticism can be detected in their comments.

The *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail* were editorially silent. The latter paper printed separately a full report of Matsuoka's speech. The *Express*, which announced that day that General " One Arm Sutton " was off on its behalf to the China front, had an editorial which was primarily concerned with the risk of Great Britain being " dragged headlong into the war in the Far East." The League States which had condemned Japan, it said, were " being urged by the militant pacifists to apply an economic boycott to Japan." As usual, the *Express* greatly exaggerated the demand for sanctions. Still, " an economic boycott " had been mentioned. " In the excited atmosphere of Geneva," the editorial continued, " the delegates may well believe that they represent the authority and might of world opinion " ; but " what power can they bring into effective action to enforce their wordy resolutions ? "

The United States still stands outside the League. Of the Great Powers within it, France, Italy and Germany are absorbed in a critically developing European situation.

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia and Rumania, which can together command vast armies, have no fleets.

And Panama, Guatemala and Mexico and the rest are not likely to carry their warlike indignation with Japan beyond a safe vote against her in Geneva. *Britain alone, of all the naval Powers, will be left to enforce the proposed boycott in Far Eastern waters.*

This, declared the *Express*, was " the fatal legacy of the League " against which it had constantly warned the people of this country. The deadly liability should be refused at once and finally.

The editorial in the *Telegraph* on the 25th was almost exclusively concerned with the nature of Japanese reactions to the Assembly's proceedings. What Matsuoka had said raised doubts whether Japan would give notice of withdrawal from the League, but the *Telegraph* was not optimistic. All that could be said was that the ultimate decision rested with the Privy Council of Japan. At the same time, the *Telegraph* drew the conclusion from Matsuoka's words that Japan was not inspired by a temper of reckless resentment, and it felt there was ground for the hope expressed by the President of the Assembly that the withdrawal of the Japanese delegation was " not a catastrophic or irreparable act." The editorial concluded with a description of Matsuoka's speech as " an admirably expressed appeal to the world's judgment, which many, perhaps, will read with a feeling that the letter of the League's law is not the last word in natural equity." In particular, Matsuoka had emphasised, as the *Telegraph* itself had done from the outset, " the mischief born of the League's ' dealing in fictions regarding China,' which is not a nation as defined in its own statute." Matsuoka had also recalled the long record of Chinese defiance of treaty obligations. He had claimed for his country the credit of having sought to give peace and order to Eastern Asia, and, said the *Telegraph*, " it is at least not to be denied that it owes to Chinese so-called Governments nothing but some twenty years of indescribable chaos, misery and ruin."

This implied criticism of the League's action was developed further on February 26th in both the *Observer* and the *Sunday Times*. The single source of comfort, said the former, which was still open " in a deplorable business, badly mismanaged from the first," was that Japan remained, so far, a member of the League. " Confused mentality—affecting a surprisingly large contingent—lightly demands a virtual war with Japan in the supposed interests of peace," but " luckily, this aspiration is doomed to disappointment." From the very beginning Geneva's mistake, according to the *Observer*, had been " to ignore the limitations of the League's competence, and even to forget the League's real purpose."

The fact is that the League is not a supernational but an international body, and not even fully international. Therefore, it cannot impose any decision about anything. Its only value is to encourage goodwill and harmony ; its only effective instruments are an infinite patience and an active sense of conciliation. Yet China has been encouraged not to seek a direct understanding with Japan, although Japan was willing. We do

not defend Japan. She has put herself in the wrong ; but Geneva missed its initial opportunity by failing to recognise that tact, not dictation, was the key to any success attainable.

" Scrutator," in the *Sunday Times*, took essentially the same line. The condemnation of Japan by the League Assembly was, he said, " a fact from which nothing can take away its impressiveness." . . . " But what is morally impressive is not always politically wise ; nor does it always make for the peace and happiness of the world." . . . " The danger which Friday's outburst of moral indignation brings uncomfortably nearer is that we are liable, unless care is taken, to find ourselves in a state of war with Japan." After discussing, somewhat inconclusively, the legal situation, and quoting Article XVI of the Covenant, " Scrutator " declared that Japan was not the nation to acquiesce meekly in a blockade, and that no blockade could be enforced without war.

We should no doubt have forty-two States giving us their moral support, but we should get no material help from them until we had suffered injuries from which our commerce in these waters might never recover and which would completely destroy all our efforts at financial and economic reconstruction made in the last eighteen months.

" Scrutator " noted that the President of the Assembly had drawn a distinction between the legal and the political effects of the Assembly's vote, and had pointed out that the recommendations were not " executory " but remained " an offer of collaboration for the settlement of the dispute." The article went on :

These are fine distinctions to be drawing after Japan has withdrawn from the League " collaboration " in Manchuria, but if they are useful we shall not quarrel with them. We are playing with fire, and one cares little by what technicality we escape from the risk of conflagration.

This country is determined to incur no responsibility for the sanctions under Article XVI, in no circumstances to run the risk of war for the sake of Manchuria. . . . What is Jehol to Southwark or Chaoyong to Salford ?

The League has, in fact, mismanaged this business of Manchuria, for so far from fortifying the peace it has exposed the world to the risks of what might very easily become a great war. We have now, in circumstances of extreme difficulty, to effect a reconciliation which, never easy, would at any rate have been far easier before the vote of Friday last. . . .

Because its position was juridically so strong, the League has tended to adopt the manner of the schoolmaster with a cane. It has not met Japan in the spirit of accommodation ; it has made no real concessions ; it has shown no appreciation of Japan's difficulties. To China, on the

other hand, because legally her case was strong, it has been indulgent and partial. That is one cause for the gradual fraying of tempers in Japan and the growing power of the extremists. A second cause is the neglect of history.

"Scrutator" summed up "the vice of the League" as "law without statesmanship."

The *Observer* dismissed the suggested arms embargo rather summarily. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had hinted that such an embargo could become a matter of policy only if universally adopted. That was elementary, "hardly needing to be stated." Sir John Simon had further hinted that Geneva might be the best place for the discussion of such a proposal. But neither the United States nor Russia was a member of the League. "The difficulties are commonplace and so forbidding that they have already proved insuperable even in the case of a minor war in South America."

In the *Sunday Times*, however, a message from its Geneva Correspondent announced that Great Britain had given a lead at the meeting of the League's Advisory Committee on the previous day. Mr. Eden had proposed that a sub-committee of the Powers specially concerned should be set up to consider the possibility of an embargo on the export of arms to the Far East. The Correspondent added that there were many difficulties in an arms embargo, so far as Great Britain was concerned, "such as that: (1) You cannot put an embargo on all arms going to the Far East, or else China must be considered on a like basis with Japan, and that would be against the terms of the Covenant; (2) If the embargo were enforced on exports of arms to Japan only, arms sent to China would certainly be seized by the Japanese Navy."

14. The United States and the Assembly

The attitude of the United States towards the Assembly's adoption of the report and towards the question of further action, including the suggested arms embargo, was the subject of considerable comment in the British Press on February 27th, 1933. But the United States featured much more prominently in another, though by no means an irrelevant, connection. That country was in the throes of a most grave financial crisis. Twenty State legislatures, it was reported, had sat throughout Sunday, February 26th. Congress

had passed emergency legislation. The attention of the United States was concentrated upon the domestic problem and the impending change of Administration. On March 4th, President Hoover and Mr. Stimson would be out of office, and Franklin D. Roosevelt and Mr. Cordell Hull would occupy their places.

The concluding paragraph of the Assembly's report had instructed the Secretary-General of the League to communicate a copy of the report to the States non-members of the League who were signatories of, or had acceded to, the Pact of Paris or of the Nine Power Treaty, " informing them of the Assembly's hope that they will associate themselves with the views expressed in the report, and that they will, if necessary, concert their action and their attitude with the Members of the League."

This paragraph had been preceded by the following passage :

> In view of the special circumstances of the case, the recommendations made do not provide for a mere return to the *status quo* existing before September 1931. They likewise exclude the maintenance and recognition of the existing régime in Manchuria, such maintenance and recognition being incompatible with the fundamental principles of existing international obligations and with the good understanding between the two countries on which peace in the Far East depends.
>
> It follows that, in adopting the present report, the Members of the League intend to abstain, particularly as regards the existing régime in Manchuria, from any act which might prejudice or delay the carrying out of the recommendations of the said report. They will continue not to recognise this régime either *de jure* or *de facto*. They intend to abstain from taking any isolated action with regard to the situation in Manchuria and to continue to concert their action among themselves as well as with the interested States not Members of the League. As regards the members of the League who are signatories of the Nine Power Treaty, it may be recalled that, in accordance with the provisions of that Treaty : " Whenever a situation arises which, in the opinion of any one of them, involves the application of the stipulations of the present Treaty and renders desirable discussion of such application, there shall be full and frank communication between the contracting Powers concerned."

The declaration about non-recognition of Manchukuo had received little or no attention in British Press comments on the 25th. That was partly, no doubt, because the terms of the report had been known in advance ; but, in view of the prominence given to the non-recognition issue in the previous period, it is interesting, and perhaps a little surprising. The subject was to be raised occasionally

in the following weeks, as we shall see, but since for the moment it could no longer be used as a stick with which to beat the British Government, particularly in support of the myth of British refusal to support a United States of America eager for effective action against Japan, it lost what little appeal it had ; coming back into favour, and for the same reasons, as we have seen, when memories had been sufficiently blurred—and only a brief interval was required for that.

The Secretary-General of the League had immediately carried out the instruction contained in the last paragraph of the Assembly's report. The Assembly had also set up an Advisory Committee on Far Eastern affairs, and invited the co-operation of the United States and Soviet Governments. On February 25th Mr. Stimson had issued to the Press the following statement, and replied to the League in the same terms :

In the situation which has developed out of the controversy between China and Japan, the purpose of the United States has coincided in general with that of the League of Nations, the common objective being maintenance of peace and settlement of international disputes by pacific means. In pursuance of that objective, while the League of Nations has been exercising jurisdiction over a controversy between two of its members, the Government of the United States has endeavoured to give support, reserving to itself independence of judgment with regard to method and scope, to the efforts of the League on behalf of peace.

The findings of fact arrived at by the League and the understanding of the facts derived by the American Government from reports made to it by its own representatives are in substantial accord. In the light of its findings of fact the Assembly of the League has formulated a measured statement of conclusions. With those conclusions the American Government is in general accord. In their affirmations, respectively of the principle of non-recognition and their attitude in regard thereto, the League and the United States are on common ground. The League has recommended principles of settlement. In so far as appropriate under the treaties to which it is a party, the American Government expresses its general endorsement of the principles thus recommended.

The American Government earnestly hopes that the two nations now engaged in controversy, both of which have been long in friendly relationship with our own and other peoples, may find it possible in the light of world opinion to conform their policies to the need and the desire of the family of nations that disputes between nations shall be settled by none but pacific means.

On February 27th the Geneva Correspondent of the *Times* considered this reply " very encouraging." The *Guardian's* Correspondent said it had given great satisfaction at Geneva, and was thought there to foreshadow acceptance of the invitation to join the Advisory Committee. The reference to reservation of independence of judgment with regard to method and scope aroused no perturbation : it was regarded as " natural." The *Telegraph's* Diplomatic Correspondent also said that the statement was interpreted as heralding acceptance of the invitation to appoint an American delegate to the new Advisory Committee, but he understood that in that event the delegate would be " most carefully restricted." In sending his reply Mr. Stimson had also " conveyed a verbal intimation to the Powers that America must not be expected to associate herself with any coercive action which the League might feel impelled to take by virtue of the Covenant," and, said this Correspondent, what was to be noted was that Mr. Stimson's warning on this point had been given after consultation with the President-elect. Thus, " Mr. Roosevelt's foreign policy does not differ in this particular from that repeatedly formulated by President Hoover."

The *Guardian's* New York Correspondent said that the United States Government had given its moral support to the League, but pointed out that it had not promised any action as signatory to the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact. He also asserted that the statement had been prepared after consultation with the President-elect and Mr. Cordell Hull. This Correspondent went on to discuss the question of sanctions. Public opinion in the United States, he wrote, " which a few months ago seemed to support the idea of economic sanctions, has recently turned strongly in the opposite direction, on the ground that an embargo, if successful, would be almost as disastrous as war and likely to lead to armed hostilities." However, it was " probably accurate to say " that " American opinion would support an embargo limited to arms and munitions." The Correspondent said that a resolution was pending in the United States Senate empowering the President to prohibit shipments of arms and munitions to any country, a power he already had in regard to South and Central American countries. This resolution was being strongly supported by " American pacifists " and had " a fair chance of adoption."

Public opinion, however, favours an embargo on all exports of military supplies to any country, and there would be much less enthusiasm for a proposal to ship arms to China and withhold them from Japan.

In view of this, it is a little surprising to find the *Guardian's* editorial on the same day saying, in connection with an international agreement to stop the export of arms to Japan, " our New York Correspondent thinks that the United States is likely to agree." It may be noted that the *Daily Herald* that day also asserted that the prospects of participation by the United States in an embargo against Japan were encouraging.

In his 1936 book Mr. Stimson made no reference to the proposed arms embargo. His account of the crisis virtually terminates with his statement of February 25th, 1933, which itself, of course, did not mention the matter. The same is true of *On Active Service in Peace and War*. In neither instance was there any mention of President Hoover's special message to Congress in the previous January, or to the joint resolution introduced there, or to his own memorandum connected therewith. In neither book, again, is there any allusion to the subsequent fate of the joint resolution. When Mr. Zilliacus wrote his election piece, *Inquest on Peace*, he said (p. 22) that Mr. Stimson had given " as broad a public hint as he possibly could that the United States wanted to act." This hint was given, he continued, in Mr. Stimson's memorandum, from which he quoted the familiar passage. Later (p. 27), Mr. Zilliacus said that the hint was " repeated and amplified by the *Times* and other well-informed Washington Correspondents at the time in dispatches clearly inspired by the State Department." Comment would be superfluous.

15. On the Morning of the Debate

The *Guardian*, in its editorial on February 27th, said that " only defenders of the greedy imperialism which perpetuates war " would be content that League States should continue to supply Japan with the means of continuing her offence. It was inconceivable that they would not, as rapidly as possible, agree to stop the export of arms to Japan.

But that may take some time. What are we ourselves to do ? We hear it said that it would be " futile " for us to take action alone. Why ? Because others would get the trade if we refused it. Because, then, others are ready to betray the Covenant and China, we may as well have our

share of the pieces of silver? That is not an argument which we think the people of this country would like to see presented by a British Government to Parliament.

The *Guardian* continued, "International agreement by all means," but absence of such an agreement would "not absolve us from the duty of cleaning our hands, which are now no longer clean."

It is said, too, that if we do not export to Japan we must not export to China. If the Government takes that view it must explain what grounds of State interest are so strong as to justify it, for there are none in natural or legal justice.

The reader will note here the continued pressure of the *Guardian* for unilateral and immediate action by the British Government, and will also appreciate the final hesitancy about such action being directed exclusively against Japan.

The Geneva Correspondents of both the *Times* and the *Guardian* reported Mr. Eden's action at Geneva on the 25th in informing the Advisory Committee that the British Government had already approached other interested Governments on the question of shipment of arms to the Far East, and in suggesting the appointment of a sub-committee to study the matter and report. The latter Correspondent added that some members of the committee had expressed the view that it would be better to defer the appointment of a sub-committee until a reply had been received from the United States (presumably about that country's participation in the work of the Advisory Committee), and further discussion was deferred. This Correspondent of the *Guardian* said that there was great surprise at Geneva at the suggestion made in England, "notably by a joint meeting last Wednesday of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress and the National Executive of the Labour Party," that the embargo on the exportation of arms should apply to China as well as Japan. An embargo against both countries would be unfair to China, and "something like a violation of the Covenant." Nobody at Geneva, the Correspondent said, was thinking of anything but an embargo against Japan alone, and one against both countries had not the least chance of obtaining general support. "The United States in particular would certainly not agree to it, whereas Mr. Stimson has declared that the American Government would be willing to put an embargo against a country declared by the League of Nations to be an aggressor, as Japan now

has been." Japan, in fact, had not been declared an aggressor by the League of Nations. The *Guardian* Correspondent, however, realised that it would be necessary for the American Government to obtain the consent of Congress to an embargo, " as the House of Representatives has limited to North and South America the power given to the President to put an embargo on the exportation of arms." This Correspondent added that many people at Geneva thought " sanctions " of some kind against Japan would become inevitable. The opinion of jurists was that, if China now broke off diplomatic relations with Japan there would be a state of war between the two countries, and Japan would then be resorting to war in disregard of its covenants under Article XV, with the result that Article XVI would automatically come into operation. The Correspondent " understood " that China was being urged by some of the Great Powers not to break off diplomatic relations, and Japan, he said, certainly would not do so.

The *News Chronicle* maintained its campaign on the 27th. There was, it announced, a " Call for a Lead by Britain," a strong demand by M.P.s of all parties, by young Tory M.P.s, by a meeting of Liberals at Derby, by the London Labour Party in a unanimous resolution (which, however, it may be noted, did not speak of an arms ban to be applied to Japan alone). In an editorial, headed " Act To-day," and with the customary displayed slogans, strong objection was expressed to the suggestion that an arms embargo should be applied against China as well as Japan. On the front page, Mr. Wilson Harris was less definite. There was no excuse, he said, for an impartial embargo against both combatants. Justice demanded an immediate embargo against Japan—provided other arms-exporting countries concurred in imposing it. There might be differences about the export of arms to China, " in view of the possibility of their being intercepted by Japan," but this matter would require further and more deliberate consideration " on a totally different footing," that of discussion with the Nanking Government and " what the situation demands regarding China."

Lansbury, said the *Daily Herald's* leader, would be calling upon the Government " to initiate, in conjunction with others, suitable steps against Japan." One of these steps, clearly, " must be an embargo on the export of arms to the declared aggressor," and the decision to impose the embargo " must be a speedy one." None of

the League States, it was said, ought to hesitate for one moment about the embargo :

As important as the material aspect of the embargo is the moral side of it. World opinion will be making itself felt. The League will stand forth as the instrument of the international conscience. Sooner or later the effect of this will be felt in Japan. No doubt the rulers of that country will, to the limit of their power, keep the population in ignorance. No doubt, also, the war fever is raging in Japan at the present moment. But that fever will one day give way to internal conflict which will compass the destruction of the régime that has created the shambles in the Far East.

The *Times* had no editorial on the subject on the 27th. Its Parliamentary Correspondent wrote that while the Labour Party would press for a pledge that the export of arms to Japan from this country should be prohibited, the majority of members fully supported the Government contention that the matter could be dealt with only by international action. A letter from Mr. C. G. Hancock argued that the Government were wise in handling the proposal with caution. In the first place, the writer said, it was inherent in the Assembly's resolution that no member of the League should take independent action, and Mr. Eden had accordingly " laid the proposal of an arms embargo before a Geneva sub-committee." Moreover, " for one Power to act in such a matter ahead of agreement with others, while it might be a ' gesture ' would be useless in promoting the objects of an embargo." Mr. Hancock contended that an embargo could only be imposed by the League members acting in unison, and could only be complete and effective if extended to cover nitrates, oil and other materials. Lastly, he held that " in common fairness " the embargo ought to apply to China as well as to Japan, " for the Lytton Report and the League report based on it, although an indictment of Japan, is also an indictment in part of China prior to September 1931." In any case, to allow arms to go to China and not to Japan was impracticable, for " either such consignments would be at the mercy of the Japanese Navy or the taking of measures necessary to prevent such seizure would be the beginning of endless complications."

The *Telegraph's* Diplomatic Correspondent discussed this " thorny problem " at some length that day. He wrote on the assumption that the British Government's objective, " an embargo on the export of arms to the Far East," meant an embargo upon arms for both countries. Its efforts, he thought, were likely to encounter serious

difficulties. A number of League States, it was understood, were preparing to oppose the idea of an embargo involving both countries. But, said the Correspondent, a one-sided embargo would not help China, as Lord Lytton himself had pointed out, and would certainly lead to dangerous international complications. "Japan's response to a measure aimed at her alone would most certainly be the institution of a blockade in Chinese waters, and the consequent search for, and seizure of, all war material consigned to China." Britain would find it difficult to deny the right of search, whereas America would challenge it; incidents would arise sooner or later; and a grave extension of the existing conflict would be threatened. It was felt in British circles, therefore, "that neither Britain nor any other Power could afford to move otherwise than warily in such a matter."

Editorially, the *Telegraph* did not allude directly to the proposed arms embargo. Again discussing the question what was now to be done, the article said that while the simplest answer was that nothing should be done, there was in many quarters a passionate rejection of the idea. The view in those quarters was that there was a moral obligation to adopt a policy of unfriendly acts towards Japan; and that we were committed to run the risk of being involved in war, "whether we do or do not believe that the whole of the blame for what has happened in the Far East is assignable to Japan." The *Telegraph* said that "if a country did indeed find itself placed in so monstrous a position, the best thing for its self-respect and safety would be to follow Japan's example in quitting the League."

> The besetting trouble in the whole course of League activity regarding this dispute has been the constant appeal to inelastic juridical forms and the assumption by all concerned of the airs of a tribunal. There has been no room in this sort of procedure for such matters as balanced judgment, historical sense, statesmanship.

The editorial, indeed, endorsed the Japanese observation that in this case the Assembly stood for formal law and Japan for solid realities. Japan, it said, did not pretend that she had acted out of pure philanthropy, but considered that the substitution of order for chaos was not a purpose to be ashamed of. The *Telegraph* ended:

> The people of Great Britain have not the smallest intention of being dragged into hostilities over Manchuria, nor will they support any action which savours of taking sides in this Far Eastern dispute.

The *Daily Express* had General Sutton's first war cable on its front page on the 27th, but did not discuss the Far East editorially. The *Mail*, however, under the heading " Leave Japan Alone," reiterated its strenuous opposition to " our fire-eating pacifists " ; declared that Japan was really on the defensive against Chinese sabotage ; and said that its Special Correspondent, G. Ward Price, believed that " but for the encouragement which the League of Nations has given them, the Chinese would never have forced Japan into action." What this Correspondent had in fact said was that without the encouragement of the League, " it is doubtful whether the Japanese occupation of Jehol would have been opposed at all." The *Mail* again argued that if Japan were to abandon Manchuria, its immediate fate would be to relapse into anarchy and it would ultimately be swallowed up by Russia. The article then turned to the proposed arms embargo. People were urging the British Government to " coerce " Japan into surrender to China by imposing an embargo on the export of arms and munitions to her. " The proper answer to that nonsense " had been given by President Hoover, whom the *Mail* quoted. It was the passage in which the President had said that prohibitions by one nation alone were futile. The editorial continued :

> A one-sided embargo directed solely against Japan would be something worse. It would be a non-neutral act which might bring the gravest consequences.
>
> If there is to be an embargo at all, it must be applied equitably to both sides. But *any embargo would mean ruinous interference with British industry.* In " munitions " are included articles of enormous variety such as cotton fabric, cloth, blankets, boots, saddles, tools, wagons, motor vehicles, petrol, rubber, tyres and foodstuffs, besides explosives and arms. To impose an embargo on all these would absolutely wreck our trade in the Far East.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE DEBATE OF FEBRUARY 27TH, 1933

1. "GIVE A LEAD"

WHEN the House of Commons debated the Far Eastern situation on February 27th, Japan, according to the main body of the British Government's critics, had been "declared the aggressor." Moreover, the Japanese offensive in Jehol had begun in earnest. Now, if ever, one would have expected to find the League enthusiasts and the spokesmen of the Opposition presenting a straightforward and unqualified demand for the application of the sanctions provided for in Article XVI of the Covenant. Nothing of the kind actually occurred.

Before the debate, as we have seen, there had continued to be some talk of applying sanctions against Japan, or of such sanctions coming automatically into operation against Japan, in this or that eventuality. But, for the most part, suggestions of sanctions had been watered down to a demand for an arms embargo. This demand had also been presented by other people, and also by the same people, for quite different reasons, and had almost entirely pushed the question of sanctions proper under Article XVI into the background. It was far from being pacifists only who had urged that it was morally indefensible to continue to issue licences to export arms to Japan. And it was far from being pacifists only who had contended that the ban should be applied in respect of both the countries engaged in the Far Eastern conflict. Motives were mixed; and the demands made upon the Government were confused.

But those who clamoured for an arms embargo, whether of this type or that, had pressed the Government to "give a lead," and to do so in deeds as well as words. They had insisted upon the need for immediate and independent action by Great Britain. In the debate on February 27th they were surprised to be told that their demand for such action had been met. And many of them, perhaps most of them, did not altogether like it. Some, indeed, strongly disliked it. The action taken by the British Government in regard to the arms embargo really shattered the long-developed criticism

that it was Great Britain which had stood in the way of effective action both by the League of Nations and the United States of America. It destroyed also the long and fondly entertained notion that if only Britain were to give a lead, " the world " would follow. If the other States failed to respond in the matter of an arms embargo, what prospect was there of a response from them in regard to any of the sanctions of Article XVI ? But such considerations only added exasperation to the dissatisfaction of the critics. The debate of February 27th is of crucial importance for an understanding of the whole " sanctions " issue.

2. The Leader of the Opposition

The debate was opened by George Lansbury. The Parliamentary representative of the *Daily Telegraph* was to say next morning that " Mr. Lansbury began the day with a characteristic speech, ardently humanitarian in feeling, violent in expression and vague in thought." That this was not a merely partisan view is shown by the comment of the *Manchester Guardian's* Parliamentary Correspondent, who said that the speech was " not a success "—" it was badly knit together, and it did not present the Opposition's case in a massive, coherent way."

But what was the Opposition's case ? Officially, one presumes, it was the compromise effected in the resolution of the joint meeting on February 22nd, as revised (though the revision had not been announced in advance unless the *Daily Herald's* editorials are taken as such an announcement) to make the demand for an arms embargo one to be applied against Japan alone. Lansbury, while voicing this revised demand, and also, in a confused way, a demand for limited economic sanctions, expressed his personal desire for an arms embargo to be applied to both disputants. He was, of course, in a difficult position ; and his line can only be understood, if it can be understood at all, from his own words. The following quotations are set out below in the order in which the remarks were made.[1]

1. . . . we who sit here have, right from the start, urged that *some action* should be taken, . . .

2. What is to be done ? It is for the Government to tell us what they propose to do.

3. We are very glad indeed that at long last the League of Nations

[1] The italics are the author's.

has unanimously, and, as far as we know, with the approval of the American Government, come to certain definite conclusions. *They have declared who is the aggressor*, and therefore *all the sanctions*, all the obligations of the Covenant *ought, in our judgment, to be carried through*. . . . The Covenant lays down certain things to be done. I know it is the fashion to say that if these are carried out, the Japanese Government may run amok in the Pacific, and all kinds of terrible things may happen. I think it is a pity that those who signed the Covenant did not think of this kind of thing when they signed it, because it is very terrible if, after all the hopes and aspirations raised by the League of Nations, we are now to be told that it is useless, and cannot do anything at all. I hope that if that is the view of the House they will say so, and will retire from the League of Nations and be done with it.

4. . . . we ask that the Government should let the Japanese Government and the Japanese people understand that we intend neither directly nor indirectly to give her the least help in carrying out her purposes against China.

5. We agree, as a general principle, that all the Governments connected with the League of Nations should act together, but . . .

6. On behalf of my friends, I want to press on the Government that we want action to be taken now. (An hon. Member : What action ?) If the hon. Member will have patience, I will tell him. *We want our Government to say at once that no arms and no ammunition shall be exported from this country.* They have got plenty of power to do it without any Act of Parliament at all. (*Mr. Churchill* : Exports to both sides ?) Speaking from an entirely different point of view from the right hon. Gentleman, and only for myself as a pacifist, *I should not send them to either side, but* my friends take the view, and it is the view I am putting to the Government —I am speaking for them at the moment—*my friends on this matter do not hold the entirely pacific view I happen to hold myself, and, therefore, I am asking for a complete embargo against the aggressor.* (*Captain Strickland* : May I ask whether in this embargo the right hon. Gentleman would include the import of arms from America into Japan, and whether he would be prepared to send a British Fleet against America to prevent that importation ?) The American nation and the American Government will, I am quite sure, do what they think right.

7. We also ask that there shall be an embargo on finance and credit. We believe that if these two things were done, then neither Japan nor any other Government could carry on a war. It is said, " Why should we do this alone ? " It is said by some people, " Well, if you do it, the Japanese, contrary to your belief, will have power to continue fighting against the Chinese, or, alternatively, if we do not export arms, other nations will, and if we do not allow our factories to work for the supply of these

weapons of destruction, other nations will garner a very rich harvest." I have heard that argument a good many times, but I should like to put it to the House that it is a very unworthy argument indeed, and one for which we, at least, ought not to stand. If a thing is right, it is right ; if a thing is wrong, it is wrong.

8. We want the export from this country prohibited of *everything* that will aid and abet Japan in its cruel, cynical war on China. . . . I hope I have spoken quite clearly. *We ask for that for the sole purpose of freeing our nation from any responsibility in the matter.*

9. I . . . ask that this Committee should call upon the Government to act on its own behalf and on behalf of the British people, and say that, while Japan holds on her path of Imperialist crushing of a nation weaker than herself, *we will have no part or lot with her at all, but will just stand outside it.*

10. I would also like our Government to make *one more effort with the Japanese Government to bring them to reason.* . . . I think our Government should make *even another appeal* to the Japanese people and the Japanese Government to hold their hands, and, instead of pursuing the way of force and slaughter and domination, to try to come to an understanding with the people of China. I do not believe that that is impossible.

For the first time there was, it can be said, an official Opposition demand for " a complete embargo " on the export of arms to Japan, and on " finance and credit." It appeared also that the demand was for immediate and unilateral action by the British Government, in order to free Great Britain of all responsibility. At the same time, the Government was urged to make yet another effort at conciliation.

3. Sir John Simon's Announcement

The Foreign Secretary followed the Opposition Leader. He began by expressing his agreement with Lansbury's desire for further efforts to reach a mode of conciliation :

> That is everybody's desire, and that is the justification for the time that has been occupied at Geneva on the effort to conciliate. I am very glad indeed that the right hon. Gentleman, in his peroration, should have admitted that it was a worthy object, and even now should be pursued.

After emphasising that the insinuations of critics about the British Government's attitude towards the Lytton Report had been totally unfounded and had been shown to be mistaken, Sir John Simon repeated the views he had expressed about the Report in his much-attacked Geneva speech of December 7th, 1932. His explanation

and defence of British policy will be dealt with later. He pointed out that the Lytton Commission had not made recommendations " for sanctions or vehement action or compulsion in any form at all," and said he would have thought Lansbury was the last man in the world to belittle the moral effect of the judgment of the world. He himself altogether repudiated the idea that the League, by adopting its report, had not itself done a great thing.

Sir John Simon described as " perfectly natural " the demand for action to " prevent the sustaining, the fostering, the fomenting of the conflict by the supply of arms." He had " sincere respect and understanding and sympathy " with that " sentiment and attitude."

> It would be a great satisfaction to any of us, especially in view of the efforts that we have made and are making to promote disarmament and spread the basis of peace, if we could feel that our own country was taking no part in supplying the means of carrying on the conflict, or if we could secure international action to produce that result more effectively. . . . It is a horrible thing . . . that profit should be made out of the supply of the means of provoking fighting which is neither necessary nor just.

Analysing the situation, Sir John Simon stated :

1. " The very obvious fact " that the supply of arms could only be effectively and finally stopped by international agreement. He referred again to what President Hoover had said on that point.

2. Our licensing system gave us a better means of stopping the arms traffic than any other country had. Most other countries had no such machinery. In the case of the United States, " the position really is that the executive has no power to stop it." Sir John was very glad to note the President's message suggesting legislation by Congress to grant him that power, " but they have not at present done so."

3. As soon as it became plain that the report of the Committee of Nineteen would be adopted by the League and that Japan would not accept it, the British Government had made inquiries of some half-dozen of the principal arms-producing countries. " Those inquiries have not yet been answered ; and in no case have they been answered finally." The Government had been " as energetic and active about it as any Government could possibly be." But, " at the very best it will take a little time, not only to get a decision but to get enough information to know whether a decision is possible."

The Foreign Secretary then came to the question " Is there any

action which can be taken by this country by itself? " He laid down a proposition from which the Government would not budge :

> It is impracticable for a single country like ourselves acting alone to differentiate between one combatant and another.

The reasons, he said, would " occur to any man of ordinary sense and prudence." In response to James Maxton, one reason was developed in these terms :

> It would be the height of absurdity for a cargo designed to go to the port of " X " at a time when we had decreed that in no circumstances it shall go to the port of " Y," to find itself in the China Seas and in danger of being interfered with, because the authority of " Y " have plenty of powers in those seas and " X " have no power. I think that I am myself enough of a pacifist to take this view, that, however we handle this matter, I do not intend my own country to get into trouble about it.

The reader will note that this last remark was made in connection with a discriminatory embargo on arms by this country alone. In subsequent controversy, it was invariably quoted apart from its context.

Sir John Simon said that the choice was, therefore, " between Departments here day by day granting positive licences to exporters whether the cargo is going to be consigned to China or Japan, and refusing licences for either one or the other." The Government, he continued, believed

> that the general sense of the country at this time would be opposed to a decision which, by freely admitting the dispatch of arms—and it involves a positive authority from a Government Department—would undoubtedly help to foment the struggle and increase the slaughter.

Sir John thereupon announced that, subject to contracts already entered into,

> we have decided that as from to-day, and pending the opportunity of international consultation and decision such as I hope for, the Government will not authorise the issue of licences for export to either China or Japan of any article mentioned in the Arms Export Prohibition Order, 1931.

The Foreign Secretary added that it was certainly the first time any neutral Government which manufactured arms had taken positive action of this kind " in reference to a distant conflict with which we do not mean in any circumstances to concern ourselves." He ended with a reference to a comparison Lansbury had made with the situation in 1914. There was, he said, one great difference :

" In no circumstances will this Government authorise this country to be a party to the struggle."

The Government had unexpectedly decided to adopt the suggestion made by Professor Gilbert Murray in his letter to the *Times* two days before. The announcement made it clear that the embargo on the export of arms to both China and Japan was temporary and provisional. It was imposed " pending the opportunity of international consultation and decision such as I hope for."

4. Labour's Reactions

The Government's decision came as a surprise. It had a devastating effect upon the Labour Opposition. The Party's case, itself a compromise between conflicting views, had already been presented by Lansbury in so confused and inadequate a manner that the underlying differences had been plainly revealed. The impact of Sir John Simon's announcement was felt precisely at the main point of divergence—the clash between the desire to take some kind of action against Japan and the more potent dread of involvement in war. The Government's decision expressed and appealed to that hostility to armaments, and particularly to the arms traffic, which was nowhere more deep-rooted and general than in the ranks of the Labour Party.

When Morgan Jones spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, he gave complete and unqualified approval to the Government's action. " I rejoice," he said. Morgan Jones described himself as an " unrepentant pacifist." It may be noted that he was under no misapprehension about the nature of the decision. He said he was glad it had been decided to impose the embargo, " pending further agreement between ourselves and other nations with a view to international action." Morgan Jones also hoped that the League might yet be able to " effect some reconciling influence." He added that

> in so far as the Government takes the initiative—and we beg of it to keep the initiative going in this matter—in reconciling the warring nations, I am quite sure the Government can rely upon our wholehearted support.

It would be difficult to imagine an utterance more plainly inconsistent with any demand for " sanctions " against Japan.

The next speaker from the Labour benches was Colonel Josiah Wedgwood. It would be rash, perhaps, to consider this independent-

minded M.P. as having been representative in any sense of the Party to which he was nominally attached. He complained that what all the preceding speakers wanted done remained " wrapt in mystery." Sir John Simon, in his reply to the debate, said that the same remark was fully applicable to Colonel Wedgwood's own speech. After saying that the Government of China was not only no real Government but was " a terror to every Chinaman," Colonel Wedgwood declared that he was not prepared to go to war with the Japanese, and that he did not think that any of his Parliamentary colleagues were prepared to do so. On that point he was undoubtedly right. But he went on to suggest that the best fate for the Chinese people would be " that they should surrender their autonomy to the League of Nations, to us, or to America, so that they should have somebody to enforce government upon them, and thereby deprive the Japanese of the perpetual excuses for going on and on, as we did in India." Colonel Wedgwood said nothing at all about the arms embargo.

As we have seen, Mr. Seymour Cocks was at that time the leading advocate of " pooled " or " collective " security on the Labour benches. On this occasion he made a long and interesting speech, part of which will be dealt with later. If, he said, the Foreign Secretary's statement were his final statement on the subject, which he hoped it was not, its effect would be to combine moral condemnation of the aggressor with a refusal to give the disarmed or weak Power any means with which to defend herself. Quoting Mr. Stimson in support of his contention that absolute neutrality was impossible in the modern world, Mr. Cocks said it was all very well for the Foreign Secretary to say that no consideration whatever would allow this country to be dragged into the Far Eastern war, but how did he know ?

Mr. Cocks was " not at all satisfied with the declaration that we must simply put an embargo upon arms to China and Japan."

Japan has been declared the aggressor and is well supplied with ammunition and guns. China we know does not manufacture her own ammunition, and, therefore, to put an embargo on arms sent both to China and to Japan is in fact to help Japan, the aggressor and the nation condemned by the League.

But Mr. Cocks did not commit himself to support of an arms embargo against Japan alone by this country alone. The exchanges

which followed between him and Sir John Simon have a special interest because of his general attitude :

I do not forget the difficulties of one country placing an embargo upon the arms of both countries. I realise that Japan has the command of the seas in the East which we formerly had, which has been given to her by the Nine Power Treaty which she has broken, and owing to that fact she is in a position to intercept ships filled with arms. That might lead to conflict and to war. I understand that difficulty.

Sir John Simon : Is that what you recommend ?

Mr. Cocks: I have said that I understand that difficulty.

Sir John Simon : And I now ask you, Is that what you recommend ?

Mr. Cocks: I was going to go on——

Sir John Simon : I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman, but he said that he was not satisfied with the idea of the decision by this country that we should stop arms to both sides, and I gathered that his view was that we ought to send arms to one side and not to the other. If he thinks so, does he realise what the consequences will mean ? I respectfully ask him, Is that what he recommends ?

Mr. Cocks : The right hon. Gentleman always puts his points so courteously that I have not the slightest objection to the intervention. I was going to go on. I said that I understand the difficulties in the way, and I was going to say " but." We ought, as it has been suggested, to communicate with the Chinese Government and point out the position to them. I do not see why in any case there should be an embargo on any arms sent to her otherwise than by sea. For example, fleets of aeroplanes could go out there and not touch the sea. Aeroplanes could be sent to China which would be very useful in helping her to defend herself against this unjust attack, and they could go in various ways to China without going near the sea.

It will be seen that Mr. Seymour Cocks rather lamely evaded a direct answer to Sir John Simon. Opposition speakers were again and again to behave in similar fashion, although usually with less skill than Mr. Cocks displayed. They were not, in fact, prepared to face up to the risks of war arising from either discriminatory or coercive action against Japan.

Mr. Cocks held that the Foreign Secretary's declaration was not enough. We were not doing sufficient " to defend the nation which has been attacked against the nation which has been condemned." He therefore urged every effort to secure " some arrangement between the nations, members of the League and the United States, to place certain embargoes on goods going to Japan or bringing

pressure in various ways which would put her at a disadvantage." For example, all loans should be forbidden to Japan. "Judging from the letters of Mr. Stimson, America is quite willing cordially to co-operate with the League in certain measures of that sort." Mr. Cocks mentioned "cotton, nitrates and various things used in warlike material." He explained that he did not mean a blockade of Japanese shores but "the prevention of these materials leaving the ports of the nations agreeing for Japan." From these and previous remarks it is clear that Mr. Cocks was conscious of the risks of war involved, and was anxious to reduce them to a minimum. His references to the nature of British obligations under the Covenant also merit attention. He quoted part of Article XVI; said that it might seem very drastic; and added that it might not be wise to put it into operation all at once. His own proposals certainly fell very far short of the measures laid down in Article XVI, and, moreover, he made them dependent upon the co-operation of the United States. At the same time, Mr. Cocks maintained that "we must see to it that the obligations of the Article are carried out in the spirit if not in the exact letter of the law."

The next Labour speaker was Richard Wallhead, a somewhat detached Left-Wing Socialist. He said: "The only thing that will bring her (Japan) to her senses is a form of keen economic boycott." That, he contended, "would lead up to a kind of social revolution on the part of the Japanese people against their militarists," which "would be the best way of bringing the war between China and Japan to a satisfactory conclusion." Wallhead hoped that the Foreign Secretary was correct in saying that we were not going into war, but he had his doubts. "We can easily drift into war, and I can easily visualise a position in the Far East that would bring repercussions in Central Europe." Wallhead contended that Japan wanted the Maritime Province of the Far Eastern Republic, and that therefore there might be war with Russia. He suggested that "some kind of encouragement has been given to Japanese ambitions" in that respect. Our policy, he concluded, was "to isolate the aggressor as much as possible and make it impossible for this war to be continued." Wallhead's speech will be searched in vain for any indication that he realised the risks of war involved in any "keen economic boycott" of Japan. He made no allusion to the arms embargo.

The final speaker on the Labour side in this debate was Sir

Stafford Cripps, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The debate, he said, had been striking because of the almost unanimous support for the League of Nations and the action which it had already taken. He mentioned Mr. Amery as almost the only exception. Sir Stafford then announced that the Labour Party did not propose to divide the House. This fact deserves to be noted because of the explanations subsequently presented of Opposition votes during these years. Mr. Mander, for example, tried to explain away Labour votes against the Service Estimates. Such votes, he said, were purely technical. They were not really votes against the Estimates, but were given " to show dissatisfaction with the Government in general, as a demonstration of strong feelings on the subject and as an attempt to embarrass Ministers as much as possible." Of course, the evidence of the Labour Party's opposition to increased armaments is provided not so much by the votes as by the speeches made in the House and the propaganda conducted in the country, which Mr. Mander conveniently ignored. But, on his own argument, the Labour Party's decision not to vote against the Government on February 27th, 1933, shows clearly that the Party as such had no strong feelings on the subject of the Government's handling of the Sino-Japanese dispute. It is certain that the Opposition would not have been averse to expressing its general dissatisfaction with the Government or to embarrassing Ministers as much as possible. It is true that Sir Stafford Cripps explained the decision on the ground of " the time which the debate has taken." But there was plenty of time for a division. Indeed, contrary to the usual custom, another speech was made before Sir John Simon wound up the debate. The real explanation, undoubtedly, was that the Labour Party suffered from " divided counsels," and was unwilling, anyhow, to oppose the arms embargo. Sir Stafford Cripps's speech, though far more skilful, as might be expected, than Lansbury's, provides ample evidence.

The League of Nations, said Sir Stafford, had " come to the conclusion that Japan must be considered as an aggressor State " ;

> That declaration, as the right hon. Gentleman the Foreign Secretary truly said, is a declaration of very great moral effect.

The Foreign Secretary, it may be recalled, had actually used that phrase in regard to the League's adoption of the report ; he had not referred to any such declaration. Japan, continued Sir Stafford,

was snapping its fingers at the League's decision. What, then, were we to do?

Sir Stafford Cripps answered as follows:

1. " . . . whatever action is taken should now be taken with extreme rapidity." It was not, of course, the function of the Lytton Report to recommend sanctions. Its function was to give the League a basis upon which they might come to a decision, " and it was not until that decision had been come to that any question of sanctions could possibly arise." Since Japan had refused to accept the League's proposals, the position had changed.

2. Lord Lytton had urged League members to stop the export of arms and money to Japan.

3. " We do not suggest, and never have suggested, that any one single country should butt into the war in the Far East and make that war worse." What the Leader of the Opposition had pressed for was " the necessity for the League to butt in and exercise the powers which it had undertaken, and which the members had undertaken to exercise under the Covenant of the League."

4. " The first step, obviously, and the easiest step, is an arms embargo." That, however, would only have a moral effect. The refusal of credits to Japan by international arrangement " would be far more decisive and important."

5. " Nevertheless, the announcement of the Foreign Secretary as to our refusal to licence further export of arms from this country to China and Japan is at least a gesture, a very fine gesture, in its way, although it is a great pity that it was not made a year ago, when we were pressing for it to be made." (As we have seen, there was in fact very little pressure, if any, from the Labour Party in Parliament at that time.) Sir Stafford argued that it was suitable to apply an arms embargo to both parties before a decision was taken about the aggressor; but " the moment you have decided on the aggressor " such an embargo ceased to be suitable, and, by taking the action now, we " lay ourselves open to a misunderstanding on the part of China that by not exporting arms to China we are actively assisting Japan." The Labour Party appreciated that there were difficulties when one nation was acting alone, and " certainly do not oppose the step which the Government are taking as regards this matter." It might have some effect upon world sentiment, " because a lead is a great thing, especially when it is a fine moral lead." The Labour Party hoped that this gesture by the

Government would be rapidly followed " by an agreement throughout the world to extend the embargo on arms against Japan."

6. " When it comes to an agreement between the different nations, then I hope the Foreign Secretary will tell us that that agreement will be based upon an embargo against Japan alone. (Hon. Members : Why ?) Because Japan has been determined the aggressor. We hope that there will be no question of that embargo being exercised against China as well."

Sir Stafford Cripps then raised " the statement of the Foreign Secretary that we will not become involved in this war in any event." Did that statement mean the abrogation of Article XVI of the Covenant ? Sooner or later, said Sir Stafford, the House would have to come to a determination as to whether they were to treat Article XVI as a mere scrap of paper.

We believe that it is a fallacy to say that if the sanctions were applied or had been applied earlier, we should eventually have had war. *That clearly could not have been the thought of the people who framed the Covenant. It was framed for the purpose of avoiding war.* We believe that even countries who may take up a bullying attitude can and must be brought to heel by the exercise of *economic sanctions in the last resort*, unless you are to say that a person who bluffs sufficiently high can always win the trick. That would indeed be a tragedy. If the Article is a reality then, as in everything else in life, we may have to take risks, and the risk may well be worth the possible price. It is a little unfortunate that any so definite a statement should be made as to our unwillingness to take any risk at all if we really are going to try to put our weight behind Article XVI of the Covenant.[1]

It will be noted that Sir Stafford Cripps attempted to draw the sharpest possible distinction between economic and military sanctions. It was a curious argument, already met with in another form in the case of Lansbury, that economic sanctions would not lead to war because the framers of the Covenant had never thought of such a thing. Moreover, the Covenant makes it plain that they had envisaged the possibility. Economic sanctions were not " the last resort." Sir Stafford himself conceded the risks of war. His argument suggested that the aggressor's " bluff " (which, after all, might not be bluff) should be met by counter-bluff. But it was based upon the view, which was to become increasingly popular in this country, that the application of a Covenant designed to prevent war could not lead to war ; a view which illuminates the British conception of " collective security."

[1] Author's italics.

Sir Stafford Cripps did not, of course, demand the application of the sanctions of Article XVI. The only sanctions he urged were an arms embargo and a refusal of financial credits to Japan. And he concluded his speech with a plea for renewed efforts at conciliation :

> Whatever sanctions the League of Nations decides to put on, we hope they will not neglect every opportunity of using their good offices to settle this dispute. *We do not want them to concentrate entirely on the sanctions side,* but that they will continue to use their good offices to arrive at some settlement.[1]

Thus, all three speakers from the Opposition Front Bench in this debate (Lansbury, Morgan Jones and Sir Stafford Cripps) pleaded for continued pursuit of a settlement by conciliation, and this after the League, according to them, had " declared Japan to be the aggressor " by adopting the report of the Committee of Nineteen.

5. The Liberals

Four representatives of the Liberal Party spoke after Sir John Simon's announcement. Sir Herbert Samuel (now Viscount Samuel), then the leader of the Party, followed the Foreign Secretary in the debate. The Parliamentary Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* described his speech as " cautious, detached and philosophical." The *Telegraph's* representative wrote that it was " carefully friendly to Japan."

At the moment we are concerned only with what Sir Herbert had to say on " the urgent question of an embargo upon the export of arms either to Japan alone or to both countries." He believed that the conscience of the British people would revolt against the continued supply of arms to the Japanese, and that public opinion would not endure it. Obviously, he said, the right course to pursue was by international action ; " but the duty does not lie on this country alone or upon any other country alone." Sir Herbert expressed satisfaction at the initiative the British Government had taken in bringing the matter before the League and asking for a very early decision. In regard to the Government's action in the immediate situation, the Liberal leader emphasised, as one of the factors in that situation, the fact that the Government, under the arms licensing system, had " to take specific action one way or the other by granting or withholding from this country or to that country

[1] Author's italics.

the supply of arms." The difficulties in the way of individual action constituted a very strong reason for urgently desiring joint action.

We have the duty to participate with other Powers in the establishment of world order, but there is no obligation to make the British Navy the sole policeman of the world. *Those who believe most strongly in collective action would be unwilling to anticipate it by individual action.*[1]

Sir Herbert Samuel pointed out that the Government's embargo was made " for the time being and pending an international decision." He trusted " that this temporary arrangement will be only for a very brief period," as its practical effect would be injurious to China rather than to Japan. At the same time, his view was that, apart from the supply of arms, Great Britain should " withhold aid and assistance of every kind from Japan, who have been declared to be the aggressor in this matter," particularly in respect of loans and credits.

The next speaker from the Liberal benches was Mr. Mander. In his 1941 book he makes a reference to this debate. Here it is :

Remember Sir John Simon's devastating words in the debate on February 27th, 1933 : " I am myself enough of a pacifist to take this view that however we handle this matter I do not intend my own country to get into trouble about it."

Such an attitude was clearly inconsistent with membership of the League. Has not our country got " into trouble about it " with a vengeance ? His was the policy of the anarchist.

Mr. Mander took Sir John's words out of their context. He did not explain that " this matter " was the matter of an arms embargo by this country alone. But the reader may possibly be surprised to learn that Mr. Mander, who spoke some two hours after Sir John Simon on February 27th, 1933, made no reference to those " devastating words " ; made no protest against that " anarchist " policy ; did not even point out that Sir John's attitude was inconsistent with League membership, although, according to the 1941 Mr. Mander, it " clearly " was so ! What a shocking neglect on his part of a public duty ! But maybe things were not then so clear to Mr. Mander as they afterwards became. Indeed, that seems obvious from his speech on that occasion.

I want (he said) warmly to congratulate the Government on the part they have played in persuading the members of the Assembly of the League to arrive at that historic, dramatic decision a few days ago, a decision which is bound to be a precedent for all time and will have a very great

[1] Author's italics.

effect for good, whatever happens in this particular dispute, through all the decades and centuries to come.

Mr. Mander went on to speak of " the firmness of decision " which the Government had shown that day, regretting only that they had not shown it at the beginning of the dispute. " However," he consoled the House, " the situation fortunately is a satisfactory one at the moment from the point of view of the League."

Plainly, Mr. Mander was not then conscious that the British Government, through the lips of Sir John Simon, had adopted an attitude inconsistent with League membership. There is much further confirmation to be found in his speech. Mr. Mander did not think "that military action of any kind could be used with effect, or *should be used* " in this particular dispute.[1] It would be interesting to know how such an attitude differed from that attributed to Sir John Simon by Mr. Mander by detachment of a remark from its context, and from that disclosed in Sir John's closing remark that the Government would in no circumstances authorise this country to be a party to the struggle. After all, there was Article XVI, Section 2, of the Covenant, with which Mr. Mander (as a member of the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union) was, of course, thoroughly familiar. He himself quoted in his speech Article XVI, Section 1, and also the interpretation of the obligations of Article XVI contained in Annex F of the Locarno Treaty.

It was necessary for us, Mr. Mander said, " to take all the steps in the way of economic and moral pressure that we can possibly bring to bear upon Japan during the next few weeks and months." He was glad to hear that the Government were making an international effort at Geneva, " where the Under-Secretary is playing an admirable part," in trying to arrange for simultaneous action on the part of all the nations of the world. He hoped this would relate not only to armaments but also to " financial support " and to " such articles as oil, cotton, nitrates and others which are essential to the manufacture of munitions by Japan." Mr. Mander described Sir John Simon's announcement of the decision not to allow the export of arms to either party as " historic " and " a very fine gesture." He was always very partial to gestures.

If the decision that has been announced by the Government is to be regarded purely as a temporary emergency decision, there is a great deal to be said for it and we can support it, but if it were to be for a moment

[1] Author's italics.

considered as a permanent settlement of this question of the export of arms, it would be grossly unfair, it would be intolerably unjust to China, and would be taking the side of the aggressor against the State that has been attacked, for the obvious reason that Japan is in a good position to manufacture armaments and China is not.

Mr. Mander hoped, indeed, took it as certain, that it was an emergency measure. Anticipating that the military decision in the Far East would be only two or three weeks distant, he said it was necessary to think of " the sort of economic pressure we can bring to bear throughout the months, and it may be years, to come." He referred with approval to Lord Lytton's view that three things might be done at the right moment—the question of the export of arms, the withholding of financial assistance and the withdrawal of Ambassadors. Mr. Mander seemed particularly impressed by the last-mentioned proposal," a dramatic measure," but all the proposals, he said, " are alternatives to military action and are obviously infinitely preferable to anything of that kind."

The use of the word " alternatives," and, indeed, the whole speech, provide further evidence of the failure in some circles to appreciate the connection between economic sanctions and military action. Mr. D. M. Mason, a later Liberal speaker in the debate, apparently had some appreciation of the connection, although his language was so lacking in precision that some doubt remains. This M.P. found it difficult to understand Sir John Simon. Nearly everyone had decided that Japan was at fault, and yet the House was apparently agreeing to the Government's decision to place an embargo on munitions to either belligerent. While the Government was taking this stand, they were endeavouring to persuade foreign Powers to agree to our policy. Did that mean that the Government were trying to persuade all the other Great Powers to place an embargo upon munitions going to both belligerents or only munitions going to Japan ?

Mr. Mason strongly objected to Government statements that in no circumstances would this country resort to military action. He took his stand upon the letter of Article XVI of the Covenant, ignoring the interpretation to which Mr. Mander had referred, and, indeed, indirectly reproving the latter for his apparent distaste for the letter of the Covenant. Mr. Mason said :

We are not called upon to go to war. These Articles may provide for certain sanctions as a last resort [i.e., presumably, military sanctions],

but there are economic sanctions and financial sanctions, and to state beforehand to a belligerent who is engaged in aggressive action that in no circumstances will you carry out sanctions of this extreme character [i.e., presumably, military sanctions] is to my mind quite uncalled for.

Mr. Mason, it seems, supported the application of the economic and financial sanctions provided for in the Covenant, and while being conscious, apparently, that this might lead us into war, and having been all his life " a man of peace," felt " sometimes . . . that you are more likely to get peace if you take a firm line." That does not mean that in this speech Mr. Mason demanded economic and financial sanctions. He was discussing the meaning of the Covenant, and he did not discuss whether or not Article XVI was then applicable. This speech, in all its vagueness, accurately expressed an attitude which afterwards acquired wide popularity. At the time, however, Mr. Mason was rather a lone figure in the House of Commons.

Mr. Ernest Pickering, the remaining speaker from the Liberal Party benches, took a very different line. He had spent four years in Japan, having left only a few months before the seizure of Mukden. He was a strongly sympathetic interpreter of the Japanese case in regard to Manchuria,[1] and a critic of the Lytton Report. His general plea on this occasion was for compromise with Japan, for a further effort at conciliation. " We ought at least to provide one more opportunity in order to restore to the comity of the League of Nations one who was very proud at one time to be an ally of the League." The great difficulty was the military clique then in power in Japan. Mr. Pickering dismissed the arms embargo as relatively unimportant because, from the standpoint of military operations, the issue was not in very grave doubt. At the same time, like Mr. Mander, he considered the Government's decision " a very fine gesture."

6. On the Government Side

The back-benchers on the Government side of the House were as much surprised as anybody by Sir John Simon's announcement. Considerable divergences of view existed within the ranks of the Conservatives and their associates about the Far Eastern problem. These differences (which will be discussed more fully later on) were reflected in the reception given to the Government's decision. While there was general (though not unanimous) approval of the

[1] See his book *Japan's Place in the Modern World* (1936).

temporary and provisional arms embargo, the reasons given for approval were by no means always the same.

The most prominent and influential speaker on the Conservative side, outside the ranks of the Government itself, was, of course, Sir Austen Chamberlain; and he was the first to speak, following Sir Herbert Samuel. Sir Austen, commenting on Lansbury's speech, refused to believe that the verdict of the assembled world united at Geneva would count for nothing when the settlement came. "There is no nation in the world to-day, however strong, however mighty, however powerful its arms, that can afford to neglect the judgments at Geneva." If Lansbury's words were taken literally (and Sir Austen clearly doubted whether Lansbury really meant them to be), he was an "advocate of the most bellicose policy, amounting to a blockade by this nation, even if we stand alone, of commerce with Japan."

> I know that men who are passionately devoted to peace are apt to feel more bellicose than anyone else, but surely the right hon. Gentleman does not contemplate the possibility of thrusting this country into this struggle, and thrusting it in with no international mandate and as no part of any common international action. I am quite certain that in no quarter of the House would a policy of that kind meet with wholehearted support, and I am also quite certain that opinion outside would not support a Government which acted so unwisely and so rashly.

Sir Austen Chamberlain's views on the arms embargo question were as follows:

> Having regard to the fact that the export of arms from this country is no longer a matter simply of letting be, but requires an active act by the Government, His Majesty's Government are right to say that arms shall not go to a nation which has been found in default by its refusal to accept the award, the decision, the advice, or whatever you like to call it, unanimously given by the League of Nations. And reluctant as I am to agree, I say it quite frankly, I do agree that, acting for the present alone and without international agreement, it follows that if we do not supply arms to one party we must not supply arms to the other.

Sir Austen rejoiced that Sir John Simon had moved so quickly in order to obtain international action in this matter. He hoped that such action would be pressed for, not only at Geneva but with other Governments. Here he clearly had in mind the United States and Russia. He proceeded to argue strongly in favour of the adoption of a rule that

where the League has been appealed to, a unanimous decision given and concurred in by the Great Powers not represented directly in the League, no arms should go from any of them to the country which refuses to accept that decision, . . .

But, he said,

for the time being the compromise adopted by His Majesty's Government seems to me the only wise, and indeed the only safe course.

The other eminent Conservative, not in the Government, who took part in this debate (and he was the next speaker from that side) was Mr. L. S. Amery. A strong critic of the Government's Far Eastern policy, and of its foreign policy in general, Mr. Amery made a speech criticising the lack of reality in the proceedings of the Lytton Commission, the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference. He disapproved of the Government's decision in regard to the arms embargo. Mr. Amery gathered that the Government's view was that Japan had definitely broken the rules of the League of Nations and had been condemned by the League's report. Presumably, therefore, Sir John Simon was consulting with other Governments with a view to seeing what action could be taken against Japan. Presumably, the object was to apply some sort of restriction upon munitions that would aim at preventing Japan from carrying out her policy in Manchuria. The Foreign Secretary had declared very definitely that in this matter " you could only act internationally," yet we were going to act individually after all, and to do so " not in accordance with the policy which is presumably being put forward internationally but on an entirely different and indeed contradictory policy, namely, that of refusing to supply munitions to both sides." Mr. Amery considered the Government's action to be both inconsistent and cowardly.

If we do consider Japan to be wrong in this matter, and if we do consider that action should be taken against her, then, if we take any single-handed action, it should, as far as lies in our power, be action directed against Japan.

Mr. Amery himself did not consider that any action should be taken against Japan.

Four of the subsequent Conservative speakers had been among those who had signified their support of the motion tabled by Mr. Vyvyan Adams in favour of the Government taking the lead by proposing an embargo on the export of arms and munitions " to any

nation found to be in default by the Assembly of the League of Nations." The first of them to speak, Major J. W. Hills, took a line similar to Sir Austen Chamberlain's, although somewhat confusedly expressed and less definite. He supported the Government "entirely." "I support them in imposing an embargo now, and I support them in not confining the embargo to Japan." For the time being, he said, the Foreign Secretary was entirely right, but very shortly we should have to decide whether we were to go on refusing arms to both sides. Major Hills regarded it as "almost certain that the United States intend to support the embargo," and, from what Mr. Stimson had said, he believed that "they intend to support also the supply of arms to the innocent Power and the refusal of arms to the aggressor." That could only be done internationally. Major Hills believed that the proposal to grant the American President the requisite powers would pass the House of Representatives. He did not, however, commit himself to the view that this country should go further than it had done and supply arms to the innocent party while refusing them to the aggressor. "I do not express any opinion on that. It is a matter which the Government have to consider very carefully." But Major Hills was emphatically opposed to "enforcing sanctions against the Japanese." He said he was always afraid of the pacifists—"they are so bellicose." And he welcomed, "above all," the last sentence in Sir John Simon's speech, "in which he said that under no conditions shall we be involved in war."

Mr. Richard Law, the next of this group to speak, did not directly discuss the question whether or not any international arms embargo should discriminate against Japan. He agreed with Mr. Seymour Cocks that it was impossible to guarantee that we should not be involved in very serious trouble in the Far East, and said that the only thing that we have a right to demand of the Government is that they should take the course which is least likely to embroil us in trouble in the Far East, and on that point we must admit that they have taken the safest course.

The Government, however, was doing more than just playing for safety; they were engaged at Geneva "in trying to see what can be done in order to give some kind of reality and force to the decision come to by the League." But Mr. Law's stress was on the moral and humanitarian objections to the arms traffic. It was, he said, "indecent in any civilised country to do anything to encourage wars and,

even worse, to make profit out of wars." The Foreign Secretary's statement had " reassured a great many of us on that point." They could now be assured " that our own hands are in this particular matter clean." Mr. Law was sure that the statement would be received by the country and the world " with a feeling of the most profound relief," and he believed that the example set to the world would be very rapidly followed.

The third speaker in this group, Brigadier-General Nation, was plainly opposed to any discriminatory embargo, despite the fact that he had supported Mr. Vyvyan Adams's motion. He said he could not conceive that either the House or the people at large would countenance our supporting one side or the other in this Far East conflict.

> Our position should be that we have nothing to do with this war, that we will not support either side morally or with arms.

The Brigadier was " completely satisfied " with what the Government had done, and congratulated them on the Foreign Secretary's " very fine statement." Why had he put his name to Mr. Adams's motion? His own explanation was that, first, war was " a mug's game," and, secondly, that he had feared there would be " too much delay before any action could be taken by our Government." Perhaps the key to his attitude may be found in his expressed anxiety about the lack of progress in disarmament, and the resulting danger to this country. " No other nation has disarmed, whilst we are reduced to the point of danger." Apparently, Brigadier-General Nation was willing in these circumstances to support any proposal to ban the export of arms to any country. " While our own forces are cut to the bone we could not in any circumstances provide arms for other nations to fight with."

The speech made by Mr. Vyvyan Adams himself was even more remarkable, in view of the motion he had tabled. He reminded the House that in the previous February and March he had urged that licences for the export of arms and munitions to the Far East should be withheld, and congratulated the Foreign Secretary on " the extremely noble, fine and definitive action he has at last taken." He said he had always held the view that the arms traffic was both inexpedient and wrong. So far was Mr. Adams from thinking that Sir John Simon had taken up a position inconsistent with Britain's membership of the League of Nations that he declared :

To-night we have seen impersonated by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary the spectacle of Great Britain rising at long last to her full height and the full consciousness of her prestige.

Mr. Adams was glad we had taken " this unilateral action "—the decision that " Great Britain shall not make a single penny piece of profit out of the persistent warfare in the Far East." It was, he said, an entirely new departure in foreign policy, and he thought we should quickly be followed by other Great Powers. He even asserted that America had already declared her willingness to take the same course—a statement in support of which he produced no evidence. Mr. Adams then turned to the question of the sanctions of Article XVI. He did not think they would be invoked, but, if they were, then three courses were open to the Government :

In the first place, there is the possibility of using military force. I doubt very much whether in any circumstances in the present dispute that would be a moral line to take, because I hold the view that it is as hypocritical to seek to repel force by force as for the State to try to correct one murder by committing another.

Secondly, there was the " economic blockade," which, he said, Wallhead had suggested, although that Member had used the phrase " keen economic boycott."

That, also, is a possibility which I would like to put in a very remote position indeed. It is one of the cruellest devices. In enforcing an economic blockade upon Japan you would probably inflict upon Japanese women and children, perfectly innocent most of them, ineffable hardship.

Mr. Adams reproved George Lansbury for having advocated " this extreme sanction " in a speech in the country. Adapting the well-known lines in *The Merchant of Venice*, he quoted at the pacifist Leader of the Opposition " Hath not a Jap eyes ? " and so on. It was axiomatic, he proceeded, that the first people to suffer would be the Japanese women and children. He then came to the " third sanction and the third possibility," that of " not exporting arms to the Far East." That, " to some extent," we had already taken. It was " the least violent sanction," and by taking it we should not be " making the mistake of seeking to penalise a nation as you would punish an individual." It will be noted that Mr. Adams twice used the phrase " the Far East " when speaking of the arms embargo. At the same time he also spoke of an arms embargo as a sanction against Japan, and the phrase " to some extent " suggests that he

may have viewed the Government's decision as a step towards an embargo directed against Japan alone. Yet several passages in the speech can only be interpreted as supporting a complete embargo on all arms destined for the Far East, for China as well as for Japan. And the whole tone of the speech was pacifist in an extreme sense.

Sir John Simon's announcement clearly had at least as great an effect upon League enthusiasts on the Conservative side as upon those in the Labour Party. Mr. Vyvyan Adams and Major Hills were both prominent in the League of Nations Union. The former may have been the most extreme pacifist on the Conservative side, but, of course, he was no isolated phenomenon in the League of Nations Union. Pacifism, in varying degrees, prevailed in such circles. All were agreed in keeping the possibility of military sanctions well in the background ; and at that time enthusiasts for the Covenant had not made much progress in trying to convince themselves that economic sanctions were an entirely different and pacific instrument. Proposals to apply economic sanctions were put forward, therefore, cautiously, hesitatingly, reluctantly. Lansbury, despite occasional remarks in speeches, partly explicable in terms of his awkward position as Leader of his Party, was plainly unhappy in advocating anything in the nature of an " economic boycott " of Japan ; and the reproof administered by Mr. Adams, the Conservative pacifist, to the pacifist Socialist leader indicates the existence of strong opposition to economic sanctions, not only because of the danger that they might lead to war but also based upon humanitarian and moral considerations.

Five other Conservatives spoke in the debate. What they had to say provides further evidence of the divergencies of opinion on that side of the House. Mr. Oswald Lewis, while recognising that the Foreign Secretary's announcement would meet with " a very wide measure of approval in the country," was himself doubtful about it, if not actually hostile. He wondered whether the decision was not premature, partly because it might weaken the Government's position in trying to enlist the support of other nations, and partly because the immediate effect of the embargo would be to the disadvantage " not of Japan, the aggressor, but of China." The only alternative, said Mr. Lewis, was international action. That, he understood from the Foreign Secretary, was not discarded but was being pursued. He thought that, however slow and however difficult it might be, it was the only satisfactory method. Mr. Lewis pressed

for information about the proposals the Government was putting forward at Geneva. He hoped they would take the form of " progressive embargo upon exports to Japan." In regard to arms, Mr. Lewis repeated and developed an argument which had been advanced by Mr. Seymour Cocks. " Surely the Foreign Secretary does not suggest that the only way to get arms to China is to send them by sea." There were many land frontiers, he said, mentioning Indo-China, the Russian and Siamese frontiers and the Burmese frontier.

Captain McEwen, on the other hand, heartily approved of the Government's decision ; and his main topic in a brief speech was the suggestion, which he understood Lansbury to have made, that Article XVI of the Covenant should have been put into effect. He contended that had it been applied there was no doubt at all that it would have been the signal for war, and that it would have been against our Far Eastern possessions that the war would have been in the first place directed. Captain McEwen added :

> This contingency has been foreseen by many for a long time. I would go further and say that it is well known that the conditions of Article XVI are not practicable, and that, in fact, they are unworkable and ought to be revised—it is merely a case now of who will bell the cat.

Mr. Nunn approved the Government's resolve to keep out of entanglements in the Far Eastern war. He also considered the arms embargo decision to be entirely right, but he was not happy about the possibility of discrimination between the contesting parties later on. Mr. Nunn was opposed to any such discrimination :

> I think that the embargo should remain against both countries until we are absolutely certain, on more evidence than has been placed before us, that Japan has had no justification whatsoever for what she has done.

This speaker urged a further effort at conciliation, and suggested that the task should be entrusted by the League to America, France and Great Britain.

Mr. Thorp took a line closely akin to Mr. Amery's, but expressed it in an interesting form of his own. The Government's embargo was to apply to both countries, but it would give an advantage to the Japanese. Mr. Thorp proceeded :

> the present attitude of the world is that the League of Nations should exercise a moral and not a physical force. There are some of us who realise that at the present moment the ultimate sanction must inevitably

be a physical one, and that the League of Nations will not be able by physical means to enforce its will upon Powers which disagree with its decisions. . . . I suggest that this country, in a dispute of that kind, should carry out the military evolution of taking a pace to the rear with the left foot and a pace to the right with the right, and I think that that would meet the opinion of the country. . . . I think the House will be well advised to take up the attitude that, so far as we are concerned, we support the League, and we very much deprecate the unfortunate dispute that is pending in the East, but that we decline to adopt a policy which may be taken, and undoubtedly will be taken, as supporting the Japanese against the Chinese. I suggest that the House should hesitate for a long time before it takes sides, as it will be considered to take sides, in the present unfortunate dispute.

It will be noted that Mr. Thorp was opposed to the provisional arms embargo and also, by implication, to any international embargo, whether against both parties or against Japan alone. But the interest of his speech lies in his recognition of the futility of reliance on " moral force " alone.

The last Conservative speaker, Sir Nairne Stewart Sandeman, was avowedly and crudely pro-Japanese. His only reference to the arms embargo was in his final sentence : " I do not see why we should not give Japan munitions to help her to finish it, because the sooner it is through the better for China and for everybody in that country."

Two non-Conservative supporters of the Government also spoke in this debate. Sir George Gillett (National Labour) welcomed the Foreign Secretary's announcement about the embargo, but added :

> Some of us may think that it would be better if it were directed solely against the country which has had the verdict given against it, but we ought not too hastily to jump to such a conclusion.

Sir George was apparently content with the assurance that the Government were " taking action with the other nations on the lines indicated." He accepted the embargo, in other words, as a temporary and provisional measure. That seems also to have been the attitude of Mr. William Mabane (Liberal National), although he did not specifically refer to the Government's decision, and spoke of the need for " a new policy of boldness and resolve." He said that " if we are discussing an embargo on armaments we are really discussing a complete economic boycott," since there was no export which could not properly be considered as material for war in one

form or another. Mr. Mabane's whole argument was a little curious. It obviously puzzled Colonel Wedgwood, who followed him. He began with a criticism of the Leader of the Opposition and " those many sentimental people who endeavour to persuade us to adopt a policy that would lead us to war and then pass resolutions affirming that they would take no part in such a war if it arose." His own approach, he said, was " conditioned by the belief that on no account whatever should we be led into war "—his " guiding principle " was " that on no account should we be engaged in this dispute." In Mr. Mabane's view, there was not and would not be any war in the Far East between the Chinese and Japanese. It was not accurate to call it a war at all. There were no armies, as the West understood the term, to prevent the occupation of Jehol by the Japanese. The only war which threatened in the Far East, so far as he could see, was one that might be the result of the attitude taken up by certain Western Powers :

> I think we ought to face the reality that at the present moment there is only one thing that could compel the Japanese to get out of Manchuria immediately, and that would be the armed intervention of Western Powers. Are we prepared to face that situation ? Personally, I most definitely am not.

Mr. Mabane had previously maintained vigorously that an application of the sanctions of Article XVI at an early stage of the dispute would have involved us at once in war. He now proceeded to say that Japan might possibly be forced to come out of Manchuria by an ultimate application of " the provisions of Article XVI, by the application of the economic sanctions." This he described as " a quite different method " from armed intervention. He clearly overlooked paragraph 2 of Article XVI when he said that the method devised by the framers of the Covenant was that of the economic boycott, and that there would be the chance in the near future to discover whether or not Article XVI worked. Presumably, he also thought that circumstances had changed in such a way as to make the application of economic sanctions possible without any danger of war ; but he did not say what change had occurred. However, Mr. Mabane laid down one condition for the application of economic sanctions. The participation of the United States was " imperative."

When Sir John Simon replied briefly to the debate, he thanked the House for " the generally sympathetic way " in which they had received the Government's decision—" a difficult decision in a very

difficult matter." In stopping the export of arms to both countries, he said, it was not the purpose or the intention of the Government. to favour one country more than another. Their purpose was quite simple and definite.

> It is not possible—and I do not think that this proposition has been challenged in the whole of this debate—for a single nation, situated as we are in the Far East, on our own motion by ourselves, and without reference to others, to take discriminatory action.

The Government were faced with the simple alternative—" the alternative as between doing nothing and doing the one thing that we could do." Sir John Simon said that the Government really could not undertake to make any assertion on the subject of sanctions " without the most mature consideration as to time and circumstances." The Government's decision was a " very significant step," a very definite and a very grave one, and one which could not possibly have been taken by this country single-handed if it had involved differential treatment. Sir John agreed that " different considerations apply when you are considering what may be the possible interactions," but they were " bound to await the results of inquiries and consultations," and he thought it would be very imprudent, and in the end not at all useful, " if one tried to anticipate or define too precisely the result."

In the course of the debate the Leader of the Opposition had asked Sir John Simon if he was able to state the actual proposal in regard to an embargo which Mr. Eden was recommending to the committee that was to be set up. The Foreign Secretary then replied that he could not make a precise statement on that subject at the moment. There had been communications to a number of Governments. He had to await a report from Mr. Eden about the state of feeling at Geneva. He added : " If the object is to arrange some international action it is better to consult with one another without prejudice rather than for one country to try to dictate to the rest."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE EMBARGO

1. Sprawling

THE debate of February 27th, 1933, was an anti-climax. The proposal for an arms embargo had appealed to many as a safe way of doing something, or, at any rate, of acquiring the feeling that something was being done, about the Far Eastern situation. Public attention had been concentrated to such a degree upon the project that the Government's unexpected decision left a void it was not easy to fill. The form of the decision, and the grounds upon which it was based, exposed the obstacles in the way of an effective embargo, and, indeed, in the way of any international action against Japan ; and did so in circumstances which deprived of plausibility the customary attempts to throw the chief responsibility upon the British Government.

It was as though the Government had suddenly let go of its end of the rope, and sent its opponents sprawling in confusion. Needless to say, the critics of that type made the best of a bad job ; and they vented their extreme irritation and disillusionment in a renewal of attacks upon Sir John Simon. But, with their one much-publicised proposal for action appropriated (or, as they immediately began to suggest, misappropriated) by the Government, they had little or nothing to put in its place.

Moreover, the much-heralded Chinese resistance in Jehol proved a myth. The Japanese advanced with remarkable rapidity. They occupied Jehol City on March 4th ; and, within less than a fortnight of the start of the campaign, the whole province was in their hands. It had become plain some days before then that there was no prospect of international agreement on any kind of arms embargo ; and on March 13th the British embargo was removed.

Before that happened, interest in the Far Eastern situation had greatly diminished. Its decline afterwards was even more rapid. That was partly due to the developments in the Far East itself and in relation thereto, but it was due even more to the deterioration in the European situation. On the night of the debate on

February 27th the Reichstag was in flames. The emergency decrees of Hitler's Government, and the use made of them, brought the German scene back dramatically to the forefront. On March 5th came the German elections and the victory of the Nazis and their Nationalist associates. The German problem thrust the Far Eastern problem right into the background. Fear of large-scale warfare in the East was replaced by the danger of war in Europe. And the British " peace movement " concentrated its attention once again upon the Disarmament Conference.

2. Reactions to the Arms Embargo

Although Sir John Simon's announcement had had a generally sympathetic reception in the House of Commons, newspaper comments next morning were on the whole unfavourable. The papers of the Right, with the exception of the *Times*, were hostile or critical, and the *Times* itself was lukewarm in its approval. On the Left, the *Daily Herald* added to Labour's confusion by a frenzied attack upon Sir John Simon ; the *Manchester Guardian* gave very grudging and much qualified approval ; and the great protagonist of an arms embargo, the *News Chronicle*, could not rise above " a cautious welcome."

The Parliamentary Correspondent of the *Times* stated that the Government's decision had only been taken at a special meeting of the Cabinet on the morning of the 27th. The Government had previously made up its mind (as the Prime Minister had told the House of Commons) that an arms embargo must be the subject of international agreement. In the meantime, the Foreign Secretary's consultations with other countries had made it clear that there was no hope of a speedy decision. The United States, for instance, had pointed out that the Government had no power to prohibit the export of arms unless fresh legislation was passed, and there was no hope of any steps being taken in that direction during the few days that remained of the Hoover régime. The Cabinet, therefore, found itself in a special difficulty because no arms could be exported from this country without a specific licence for each consignment, and it was impossible for the Government to sit back and await developments. The decision taken, said this Correspondent, was at once communicated to Mr. Eden at Geneva, " and it was made plain that the step was a temporary one which the Government would review in the light of any decision taken at Geneva."

The *Times* editorial said that public opinion would certainly approve the promptness with which the British Government had acted. Great Britain was maintaining the lead over other countries which she had taken by the Arms Export Prohibition Order of 1931 in the all-important matter of controlling the arms traffic. Most other countries had not provided themselves with the power to control exportation by so simple an expedient as licences. " The British Government have therefore acted ahead of the others. But they do not, of course, intend that their action should be isolated."

The *Times* said that the obvious criticism of the Government's action was that it was unfair to China ; but it agreed with the Foreign Secretary that it was not feasible for one country acting alone to difierentiate between one combatant and the other ; and there was " the obvious practical objection that arms and munitions destined for China would be extremely likely, by whatever route they were dispatched, to fall into the hands of the Japanese Navy or Army." The most sensible course at the moment, the *Times* continued, was " to prevent shiploads or trainloads of British ammunition from being carried to the Far East at all, and to avoid risk of embroilment with a State with which this country has no quarrel."

The next step must be to modify, renounce or continue this policy in common agreement with the other arms-producing countries, espccially the United States of America.

Unfortunately, the capacity of the American Government to co-operate in the practical method of an arms embargo seemed to be very doubtful. The *Times* reiterated its support of renewed efforts at conciliation " at the opportune moment."

In the meantime the British Government have acceded to a very general demand that no profit should be made out of an unjustifiable conflict. Least of all must Great Britain become involved in it ; and Sir John Simon's aside—"however we handle this matter, I don't intend my own country to get into trouble "—won the loudest cheer of the debate and was clearly, our Parliamentary Correspondent says, the one point upon which the whole House agreed.

The Political Correspondent of the *Telegraph* said that Government supporters in the House of Commons, while generally approving the decision in the particular circumstances, were not enthusiastic about it, and were still inclined to be sceptical about the need for this country alone to make such a moral gesture to the world. He had been informed that the Government did not propose to continue

indefinitely as the sole upholder of the arms embargo. " If other Governments do not come into line the British Cabinet, it is positively stated, will reconsider the situation." Nor were the Government optimistic about the prospect of united international action. This Correspondent also said that the United States, in reply to the inquiry addressed to them, had pointed out they did not possess the constitutional power to stop exports, and would have to seek special powers for the purpose. It was held in London to be extremely doubtful whether Roosevelt, in his inaugural address on March 4th, would pledge the United States to take the necessary steps.

In its editorial, the *Telegraph* plainly revealed its disapproval of the Government's action. It did not directly oppose an international embargo on arms against Japan alone, but, in dealing with Lansbury's appeal for an embargo against Japan by this country, it said that his party belonged " to that school of emotion which dramatises the Manchurian imbroglio as a simple romance," whereas Sir John Simon went no further than was warranted by the Lytton Report, " a document which is packed with material that makes nonsense of the one-sided view of this dispute." Sir John, the article proceeded, had insisted strongly that a refusal of arms to Japan would be wholly ineffective unless all arms-producing countries took part in it by international agreement, which would take time, although the Government had already opened discussions. As to the question whether any action could be taken by this country alone, Sir John might be thought to have answered it on the 21st when he quoted President Hoover. The *Telegraph* gave the quotation, adding :

> Such action by one nation could make little difference to the carrying on of the conflict which it was desired to bring to an end. As a gesture of assumed altruism, it would be worthless. Nevertheless, Sir John Simon announced that the Government had, as from yesterday, adopted the policy of refusing to allow the export of arms to either China or Japan. His explanation of this decision was of a nature not to be treated without respect. But it will be realised that we do not endear ourselves to others by cultivating an attitude of moral superiority at their expense.

The double embargo, moreover, set a precedent which might well work to the disadvantage of States unjustly exposed to attack. As for the prospect of an international agreement, the *Telegraph* said it was " considerably more remote than Sir John Simon allowed himself to admit," and referred to " yesterday's decision in the United States Congress to refuse the necessary executive powers to the President."

However, the *Telegraph* warmly endorsed the Foreign Secretary's " insistence on the point that we shall not in any circumstances concern ourselves in the Far Eastern conflict." It quoted the words which Mr. Mander described eight years later, but not at the time, as " devastating " ; and said that was the answer to " the war-mongering enthusiasts of the League of Nations, whose real friends may well be thankful for the lead so firmly given against a reckless misuse of its functions."

The reference in this editorial to a refusal by Congress on the previous day to grant the President the power to impose an arms embargo requires explanation. According to a Reuter message from Washington (which appeared in the *Guardian* and the *News Chronicle* on the 28th), no action would be taken on the resolution during the current session of the House of Representatives. " The Democrats to-day blocked any action until the House reassembles for the next session." The message pointed out that the resolution had been approved by the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate on January 11th, and that the House Foreign Affairs Committee had also approved it but amended it by restricting any embargo to North and South America. On the 29th, the *Times* stated that action had been blocked in the House by the Democratic Speaker, Mr. Garner, and suspended in the Senate by Senator Bingham of Connecticut.

The *Times* and other newspapers reported on the 28th that the State Department had announced that the United States would co-operate with the League Advisory Committee, acting, however, under its own treaty commitments and judging each development on its merits. The Washington Correspondent of the *Times* thought it " in the highest degree unlikely that this session of Congress will give the President authority to act in concert with other Powers." He quoted Senator Borah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as having said : " I don't care what London does : I am not for it," adding that the Senator's colleagues of the Committee obviously agreed with him. According to other reports, Senator Borah objected to the British embargo because it took sides with Japan.

The *Daily Mail* carried only a rather brief report on the arms embargo on the 28th, and made no editorial comment. The *Morning Post* considered the embargo foolish, since it injured British industry without stopping war ; and the *Express* took the same line in its leading article, which was headed, " A Foolish Embargo." Both

China and Japan, it argued, would resent the action taken, but they would both secure all the munitions they required. " A dozen agreements will not prevent that." The only tangible result, said the *Express*, would be that " a few more millions will be added to Mr. MacDonald's Grand Army of the British Unemployed."

3. The "Herald" and Sir John Simon

In view of the effect of Sir John Simon's announcement upon the Labour Opposition, the attitude of the *Daily Herald* next morning is particularly interesting. Its report of the proceedings in the House was very inadequate. In its editorial, it made no reference whatever to the approval of the embargo by the official spokesmen of the Labour Party. The article was a long tirade against Sir John Simon, in the course of which, however, there was a strong denunciation of the inclusion of China in the embargo.

The editorial began with the words, " Sir John Simon has once more earned the thanks of the Japanese Government." How he was supposed to have done so was set out in a passage which is a gem of misrepresentation :

> Yesterday Sir John proceeded once again to defend the aggressor, and—in spite of the express declaration of the Assembly—to blame the victim of the aggression. He described the occupation, and virtual annexation, of three Chinese provinces, the invasion of a fourth, in sympathetic phrases. Japan, he said, had " taken the law into her own hands." What " law " ? To " take the law into one's own hands " is to do justice on a criminal. Does Sir John really mean that China is the criminal, that Japan has done justice in seizing Manchuria ? He excuses the Japanese on the ground that China has been " a neighbour extremely difficult to deal with." Is there any State entitled to overrun the territory of any neighbour who proves " difficult to deal with " ? This is the naked Imperialist doctrine of force : it is the repudiation of the Covenant, of the Kellogg Pact, of everything for which they stand.

The *Herald* was not the only newspaper, as we shall see, that was angry because Sir John Simon had repeated and defended the substance of his speech at Geneva on December 7th, 1932. Here is the passage in which, according to the *Herald*, Sir John had expressed " the naked Imperialist doctrine of force."

> What does the report say ? Let me at once agree with the right hon. Gentleman (Lansbury) on what is the *main point*, that there is no doubt at all that the methods that have been followed by Japan in this

controversy and the actions that she has taken *are not in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant of the League. To use a common expression,* Japan has taken the law into her own hands, and it is beyond any possibility of doubt or dispute that *the Covenant of the League lays down that you should not take the law into your own hands,* but shall use the machinery which the League provides. I hope I have stated that with as much bluntness and plainness as to satisfy everyone. I have no doubt about it at all. But you do a grave injustice if you stop there and do not admit that the case of Japan was one which involved many complications, that she has in fact had very severe trials to put up with, that she has been dealing with a neighbour who has been extremely difficult to deal with and that her situation, apparently her lawful situation, in Manchuria is something quite exceptional in the history of the world. Consequently, *in the first instance* the action of the Japanese Army does not in the least resemble the invasion by a foreign force of some other country, because Japan in fact has exceptional rights over strips of territory there.[1]

Later, asserting that the unanimous declaration of the League was " a great fact and a real contribution on the long view to world peace," Sir John proceeded :

I should regard it as wholly unfair to Japan if we did not recognise that her circumstances and her trials were undoubtedly exceptional, and I should regard it as wholly unfair to China, and not being a faithful member of the League, if we did not say that, after all, the Covenant of the League does not authorise people to take the law into their own hands, and that Japan has not acted in the way that the Covenant of the League suggested.

The *Herald,* and it was far from being alone, persisted in ignoring the fact that the report adopted by the League Assembly, like the Lytton Report upon which it was so closely based, was not a wholly one-sided condemnation of Japan. If Sir John Simon be said to have " blamed the victim of the aggression," the same must be said of both the documents referred to. What Sir John actually said was in accordance with, not in spite of, the express declaration of the Assembly. Nowhere in the Foreign Secretary's speech can be found any description " in sympathetic phrases " of Japan's " virtual annexation " of the three provinces and the invasion of Jehol. The *Herald's* distortion of Sir John's use of a common expression when he said that " Japan has taken the law into her own hands " needs no comment. That expression had been used in the *Herald* itself only four days previously by Lord Lytton. And so far from

[1] Author's italics.

suggesting that Japan was entitled to overrun the territory of China because China had been " difficult to deal with," Sir John Simon had expressly said that Japan's actions were not in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant.

The editorial then turned to the Government's action with the remark that it was " to square with the Simon doctrine," i.e. " the naked Imperialist doctrine of force." Great Britain, it said, " with smooth phrases about neutrality in a dispute," was to clap an embargo indifferently on both China and Japan, " knowing quite well that, in fact, this action will penalise the victim far more than the aggressor." Not a word did the article say about the grounds of the Government's decision. Not the slightest indication was given that the embargo was temporary and provisional. The article did not urge that the embargo should be applied against Japan alone ; nor did it express the view that no action at all should have been taken except on the basis of international agreement. It did admit that the material consequences would not be serious, since " other countries, less subservient to Japan, more careful of the spirit of the law, will doubtless supply China with munitions "—though it did not say that these other countries, " more careful of the spirit of the law," would doubtless ban the supply of munitions to Japan. It was, said the *Herald*, " the moral consequence " which was so grave.

Over and over again during the past year Sir John has by word and by act encouraged the Japanese militarists to further aggression. He has given them moral support. He has led them to believe that they could count on freedom from interference by the League.

The article proceeded to say that the Foreign Secretary had seized the opportunity on the previous day to declare that " in no circumstances will the Government authorise this country to be a party to the dispute." The final word, according to the Official Report, was " struggle." Sir John Simon had referred to Lansbury's comparison of the Far Eastern situation with what Sir John called " the fearful situation of 1914 to 1918," and had then said : " The Government have good reason to know, and I have had good reason to know for many months, how anxious is the task of so handling this matter as not to involve these frightful circumstances." In his final remark, Sir John plainly meant that in no circumstances would the Government authorise this country's participation in a Far Eastern war. It is possible that that is what the *Herald* itself took him to mean. Anyhow, the article said :

But the phrase will be understood in Japan to mean something very different and something very sinister. It will be taken to mean that under no circumstances will this country consent to the *enforcement* of the law of the Covenant against Japan. That is the one further assurance which the militarists of Tokyo wanted. It is the final encouragement to Japan. It is a deadly blow at the League. For if it means—as it will be taken to mean—that, *if and when the moment comes*, the British Government will repudiate its solemn Covenant obligations rather than *offend* the Japanese militarists, then the Covenant becomes another "scrap of paper."[1]

Did the *Herald* itself take the view that this country should be prepared to go to war in order to enforce the law of the Covenant against Japan? It is highly doubtful. The word "offend" strengthens the doubt. In any event, the moment had not yet come, in the *Herald's* view, for enforcing the Covenant or offending the Japanese militarists. Under what circumstances, one wonders, did the *Herald* think it might come? Japan, the article had said, was defying the League, it had virtually annexed three Chinese provinces, and was invading a fourth. What was the *Herald* waiting for?

4. The "Manchester Guardian" and Sir John Simon

The *Manchester Guardian* made no reference either in its news columns or in its editorial on the 28th to the passage in Sir John Simon's speech which the *Herald* pronounced "a deadly blow at the League," nor to that which Mr. Mander was later to describe as "devastating." In view of its editorial on the previous day, the *Guardian* could hardly refrain from approving the Government's decision. It had pressed for immediate and unilateral British action, and had not been sure that such action could be directed against Japan alone. Its approval was duly given, but grudgingly, and a note of bitterness ran through the greater part of its comments.

Arms, the *Guardian* began, were not to go to the Power which had been pronounced aggressor by the League, but neither were they to go to the victim of aggression. "Vice is condemned; virtue is penalised."

Let us be thankful for small mercies. We are saved from the shame of supplying to Japan the means of carrying on an unjust war.

Sir John Simon's passage about making profit out of war was quoted, and the article went on:

Since, in this respect, the Government has decided on the only policy

[1] Author's italics.

which could save our self-respect, we need not pay much attention to the phrases in which it was announced.

None the less, the *Guardian* devoted a paragraph to them, for " even yesterday, Sir John Simon was concerned to emphasise the difficulties of Japán's position when she opened a ruthless war." It was a great misfortune, resumed the *Guardian*, that China should be the sufferer by our policy. " Her acquittal by the League and the condemnation of Japan deprive her of a right which she exercised in common with all other countries," and " nothing could be more ironical, nothing more illogical." Moreover, a precedent was being established, which would be invoked " by all those who, for whatever motives, desire to escape the moral obligation not to deny to a wronged country existing facilities for self-defence." The article then said, somewhat strangely, that Sir John Simon had " said little about the Government's reasons," though he had " indicated that it fears the complications which might arise if Japan interfered with British ships carrying arms to China," and that was " a reason which must be respected." " But what is impracticable for a single Power may be practicable for a union of Powers."

The *Guardian's* position in the matter seems to have been that it wanted an embargo on the supply of arms to Japan by this country in any event, regardless of what other countries might do, and even though it might be necessary to ban arms to China also. But it also wanted, of course, an international embargo directed against Japan alone. It did not, in this editorial, bring out the fact that the Government's embargo was temporary and provisional, but recognition of that fact seems to have been implied. The *Guardian* asked, " What policy is the British Government actually proposing to the League, the United States and Russia ? " The debate, it complained, had not revealed " what policy our Government is advocating in its discussions with the other Powers." The *Guardian* declared that, " in a matter of League obligations," it should not be left to any country to take single-handed action. That suggests that its advocacy of action by the British Government was based upon broad moral grounds and not upon the ground of any " League obligation." So far as international action was concerned, a great deal, said the *Guardian*, depended on the United States, and " nothing will be done there until Mr. Roosevelt is in power."

But there are some things on which almost everyone will agree : that our present decision aids Japan rather than China ; that it is urgently

necessary for the rest of the world to face firmly, with a united front, a Power with Japan's propensities ; that the necessity is all the graver if it be true, as the British Government suggests, that peace would be imperilled by China continuing to enjoy a right which she has not deserved to forfeit ; and that there are other forms of assistance, such as finance, which can, and should, be refused to Japan.

The Political Correspondent of this newspaper emphasised the general surprise in the House of Commons at the Government's decision. He said there were reasons for thinking that the Government were " not over sanguine " about getting an international embargo, and that " they hold themselves free to reconsider their own embargo if no international agreement is reached." He added : " That almost suggests that it is a provisional embargo contingent upon (early) international agreement."

5. The " News Chronicle " and Others

The *News Chronicle*, which had been foremost in demanding " an act of leadership " by the British Government, can hardly be described as enthusiastic. Its editorial was headed : " Bold and Positive ? " It considered that the reservation about existing contracts being respected was " ominous." However, it was prepared to give Sir John Simon the benefit of the doubt on that point, and on that basis declared that the step taken was " defensible as a purely temporary measure, to be superseded as soon as possible by international action directly authorised by the League of Nations."

It was now " obvious " to the *News Chronicle* that international action alone could be effective. " Our country acting alone can do little." When the results of the Government's discussions with other nations were known, they would have to involve " a complete revision of the present makeshift and temporary arrangement." The refusal to make any distinction between China and Japan might be arguable, the editorial proceeded, " so long as we are acting, or attempting to act, alone," but " international action in support of an international verdict against Japan could not take this line," and ought not to be confined to an embargo on arms. The withholding of credits might prove at least as important. The *News Chronicle* summarised its reactions in these terms :

But, on the whole, it is no doubt not unimportant that the Government should really have taken some action. Assuming that the action

taken does not prove on examination to be a mere gesture, and assuming that it is understood to be a temporary measure to be replaced at the earliest possible moment by a far wider and more drastic one, it deserves a cautious welcome.

The reception of the Government's decision by both its political supporters and opponents was as mixed as were the views of all the political parties on the whole Far Eastern problem. Reactions varied, indeed, even among those people in the League of Nations Union who may be placed in the "collective security school." The columns of the *Times* on March 1st disclosed, at any rate, that Lord Cecil's reaction was very different from that of Lord Davies —the former, of course, was the most prominent exponent, or became such, of the peculiarly English version of "collective security," while Lord Davies was, perhaps, the leading exponent in this country of the Continental version. Lord Cecil, in a speech at Leeds on February 28th, said he was glad to learn that the British Government had decided to place an embargo on the export of arms to China and Japan. "It was the best thing that could be done in the circumstances." [1] But, Lord Cecil said, the embargo was likely to be more injurious to China than Japan. It was excellent as a first step, "but when a householder is fighting with a burglar law-abiding citizens have the right to insist that the burglar must drop his weapons first and the householder be given the right to retain his until he is assured of safety." Lord Cecil agreed with Sir Austen Chamberlain that an embargo on arms for Japan only was required. Presumably, Lord Cecil had in mind an international embargo of that type, although he also said: "To stop the export of arms to Japan was the least thing a nation belonging to the League could do." Lord Cecil urged that no financial assistance should be given to Japan, and added:

> I would go a step further. When a nation desires to express its

[1] In 1940, however, Lord Cecil was unqualified in his condemnation of the embargo. "... Japan was condemned after full and elaborate enquiry by the whole civilised world. The British Government was a party to this condemnation. Nevertheless, four days later she laid an embargo on the export from Britain of munitions of war to both China and Japan. In form, this was to declare that both countries were equally guilty, which was in contradiction to the resolution of the Assembly for which Britain had voted. In substance, it was even worse, since it was an advantage to Japan. She was fully armed. China was not, nor has she the means in her own country for remedying that inequality, and the British embargo increased her difficulty in doing so by imports from outside. This was so indefensible that in a week or two the embargo was withdrawn."—*The Great Experiment*, p. 235. Apart from the contrast with Lord Cecil's reported views at the time, this statement deserves to be noted for its suppression of relevant facts. Its effect is sheer distortion.

disapproval of another nation's action, it recalls from that nation's capital the Ambassador or Minister accredited to it. I should like to see Ambassadors and Ministers of all nations that are members of the League, and of every other great nation outside it, withdrawn from Tokyo. That would be a formidable expression of the public opinion of the world, and it would bring home to the people of Japan more than anything else the fact that the action of her militarist Government had placed that country in a position of moral isolation.

" A Drastic Proposal," commented the *News Chronicle.*

Lord Davies had a letter in the *Times.* The Government and the other members of the League, he wrote, had " condemned Japan as the aggressor," and it followed, therefore, that China was the victim of aggression. He then denounced the embargo decision. " To treat both Japan and China on a basis of moral equality is to stultify the Report of the Lytton Commission and the decision of the Assembly." Lord Davies spoke of " Sir John Simon's attempt to evade the obligations of the Covenant, and to pursue Germany's policy in 1914 of ' localising ' the trouble," of " a cowardly and probably futile attempt to avoid ' trouble,' which would end only in further chaos and confusion."

The concept of justice is ingrained in the fibre of the British people. That it should be reserved for a National Government to outrage this feeling, by seeking to escape from its solemn obligations, is a disaster as injurious to our interests as it is discreditable to our honour.

It seems legitimate to infer that Lord Davies was not averse to this country taking serious risks of being involved in war. Throughout the letter there was not a word to indicate that he recognised the temporary and provisional nature of the Government's embargo.

6. Any Response?

Germany was the dominant topic in the newspapers on March 1st, 1933. Editorial columns were silent about the arms embargo and the Far East save for a brief leaderette in the *News Chronicle,* which said that foreign comments on the embargo showed the need for getting on at once with an international agreement : " Our attitude will pass muster only as the briefest transitional stage pending international action."

The *Telegraph's* Diplomatic Correspondent said that foreign diplomatic circles in London appreciated that the Government's resolute opposition to active intervention and to any participation

in League " sanctions " had the almost unanimous approval of Parliamentary opinion. Though in such circles there was a greater diversity of opinion about the efficacy and expediency of the arms embargo, it was " fully realised that this measure should be regarded as strictly provisional and transitional," and its continuance must necessarily depend upon its adoption by the other principal exporting Powers, notably America. In this connection, the Correspondent stressed the importance of the Skoda works in Czechoslovakia. He added that the embargo had pleased neither Tokyo nor Nanking.

The *Guardian's* New York Correspondent wrote that there seemed no present likelihood of the United States following the British example. The officers of the State Department were opposed to it, and the Roosevelt Administration was expected to take the same position. Action would require Congressional legislation, which was impossible in the existing Congress, due to end on March 4th. It was certain that there would be much opposition also in the next Congress, due to meet early in April. The Correspondent said that Americans contended that an embargo against both countries really aided Japan ; that Senator Borah and several others would welcome an embargo against Japan alone ; but that there was little support for such action, which many people believed would be likely to lead to war.

7. " Geneva " Reactions

Reactions at Geneva, it seemed, were markedly adverse. The *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent wrote that the British Government's decision had been received with astonishment. So far as he could gather, it was unanimously condemned except in Japanese quarters. This " sudden decision " to take " isolated action," it was pointed out in Geneva, was in contradiction with Sir John Simon's previous statement that agreement by all the arms-exporting countries was required to make an arms embargo effective. " People ask what motive the British Government can have for an act which, on Sir John Simon's own showing, cannot be effective."

The Correspondent wrote of another Genevan contention. This was that the action was a breach of the undertaking " to abstain from taking any isolated action with regard to the situation in Manchuria " and " to abstain from any act which might prejudice or delay the carrying out of the recommendations " of the Assembly,

contained in the adopted report; and was even a violation of Article X of the Covenant. So much for the persistent demands that Britain should " give a lead " and " set an example " !

Judging from the reports, said the Correspondent, Sir John Simon's speech was " a defence of the action of Japan on the lines of his speech at the Assembly in December." There followed a characteristic example of this Correspondent's methods :

> His statement that the action of the Japanese troops bore no resemblance to the invasion of a country by a foreign force is in contradiction with the report of the Assembly, which said, quoting the Lytton Report, that " without any declaration of war a large part of Chinese territory has been forcibly seized and occupied by Japanese troops."
>
> It is also in effect a rejection of the recommendation that the Japanese troops should evacuate Manchuria.

Sir John Simon's actual words have been given above (pp. 462-3). The sentence partially quoted by the Correspondent from the Assembly's report began, " It is, however, indisputable that, . . .". Why " however " ? Because the previous sentence in the report, also closely following the Lytton Report, read as follows :

> Undoubtedly the present case is not that of a country which has declared war on another country without previously exhausting the opportunities for conciliation provided in the Covenant of the League of Nations; neither is it a simple case of the violation of the frontier of one country by the armed forces of a neighbouring country, because in Manchuria, as shown by the circumstances noted above, there are many features without an exact parallel in other parts of the world.

No wonder the *Guardian* Correspondent omitted those introductory words, " It is, however, indisputable that, . . ." Sir John Simon's statement, far from being in contradiction with the Assembly's report, was in accordance with it. Moreover, Sir John had quoted earlier in his speech the actual passage from the Lytton Report itself in dealing with Lansbury's references to the " invasion " of Manchuria.

The *Guardian's* Correspondent proceeded to contend that the Foreign Secretary had in effect " gone back on the policy pursued by the British delegation here since he left Geneva," and had put the delegation in an extremely difficult position. He " understood " that the delegation had no warning of Sir John Simon's intention. " Nobody blames Mr. Eden, who has won the esteem of everybody, and whose sincerity and good faith nobody doubts for a moment.

Next to Mr. Henderson, he is the best representative that Great Britain has had in Geneva for some years." It will be noted that in this Correspondent's dispatch there was no recognition of the temporary and provisional nature of the embargo, nor of the grounds upon which the decision to impose it was taken.

The dispatch on the same day from the Geneva Correspondent of the *Times* throws more light on the reactions there. He, too, reported that the Government's decision had caused " general perplexity," and " adverse comment " among the delegates ; and that it had been " an exceedingly difficult day for the British delegation, besieged with inquiries which it could not answer." He declared that the general opinion in Geneva was, and had been : 1. That an embargo on arms could not lightly be imposed against both parties to a dispute when one was in conformity with the League and the other was defying it ; 2. That any one-sided prohibition must raise delicate, and possibly dangerous, issues ; and 3. That in any case " absolute unanimity, not confined to the League Powers, would be the *sine qua non* of an enforced suspension of shipments." What, he said, was not by any means understood was the British Government's decision to place China and Japan on an equal footing before the consultations initiated by the British delegate in the Advisory Committee had been given the necessary time to develop. " Rightly or wrongly," this Correspondent continued, " Sir John Simon's announcement in the House of Commons was at first taken to mean that the British Government had decided on the principle of equal treatment, a decision which, it is held, would not only prejudge the issue now before the League and the United States but is also in direct contradiction with the unanimous decision of the League Assembly." He also quoted the phrase about abstention from taking any isolated action. It was asked why Great Britain had chosen to act alone.

It is noted that the refusal of licences was stated to be pending international consultations and decisions, but Sir John Simon's subsequent observations are taken to indicate a definite line of policy by many who have read them in the telegraphed summary. In some quarters, however, more emphasis is laid on the temporary character of the decision and it is suggested that the mind of the British Government may still be open on the question of equal or unequal treatment.

This Correspondent pointed out that Mr. Eden, when he raised the matter on the Advisory Committee, used the " careful phrase "

—" the problem of the export of arms in relation to events in the Far East."

Next day, March 2nd, a further message from this *Times* Correspondent said that the full text of Sir John Simon's speech had reached Geneva. " In some respects it has modified the first unfavourable impression ; but the main effect has still to be dispelled." Critics were asking, he said, why the British Government had not taken similar isolated action in the case of Bolivia and Paraguay. In regard to that conflict, as the British memorandum proposing an embargo against both States was careful to point out, the League had not been able to determine how far one or other was at fault.

Rather strangely, there seems to have been no message from the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent for another week or more. Whereas he had reported that the Japanese alone had not condemned the British embargo, the Tokyo Correspondent of the *Times* wrote on March 2nd of " Japanese irritation." Although, applied equally to Japan and China, the embargo favoured Japan, it was pointed out that that was not its intention. The risk existed, therefore, that it might be applied to Japan alone, in which case Japanese officials believed that Japan would have the right to search ships entering China. The spokesman of the Japanese Foreign Office, the Correspondent added, had said that " friends of England regard the action in the same light as the abandonment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1922 to please the United States."

8. Opposition on the Right

Newspaper references to the arms embargo, however, were few on March 2nd and 3rd. Far Eastern news was mainly confined to the rapid Japanese advance in Jehol. The German situation held the front of the stage, although, on the 3rd, there was middle page news from Washington in the *Times* that the banking crisis in the United States was growing hourly more grave. Even the *Guardian* and the *News Chronicle* had nothing to say about the Far East. The *Herald*, indeed, after its outburst on February 28th, did not return to the subject editorially until the arms embargo was removed, i.e. March 14th. In the *Times*, there were letters from Mr. George Lambert (afterwards Lord Lambert) and Sir Charles Mallet, on the 2nd and 3rd respectively, protesting against Lord Davies's

attack upon Sir John Simon : and the New York Correspondent reported on the 3rd about nitrate shipments to Japan from the United States.

The *Telegraph*, however, had an editorial on the reactions to the embargo on March 3rd. Its Diplomatic Correspondent that day said that little hope was now entertained of any international agreement, since neither in Paris nor in Washington was there any inclination to follow the British lead. French political opinion was opposed to a double embargo, and in practice would be equally reluctant to press for any one-sided embargo aimed at Japan only. In America, the strong pro-Chinese section of opinion would not acquiesce in a double embargo ; while official circles would fight shy of any one-sided measure which might lead to serious trouble with Japan. In both countries, the Correspondent said, industrial interests were working against any embargo.

The editorial declared the omens to be unpropitious. Such indications of foreign opinion as had been forthcoming suggested that our decision was " regarded with doubt and its form with disagreement." It was natural that those who regarded China as the victim of aggression should object to a step which penalised her equally with Japan, and, in practical effect, would penalise her the more severely of the two.

Thus, even idealists do not approve of our gesture. Still less does our gesture commend itself to that other large section of opinion abroad which, on political or on commercial grounds, deprecates any active intervention in the Far Eastern dispute. From our own point of view, its less happy consequences become more manifest with reflection. It has inevitably antagonised Japanese opinion while strengthening the impression in China that we are biased in favour of Japan.

The *Daily Express* also had editorial comment on the Far East that day (March 3rd), but it was unconnected with the arms embargo. The front page of the newspaper had splashed the news that the Chinese delegates to the League Assembly had handed their resignations to their Government, and the news of the headlong flight of the Chinese forces in Jehol. The editorial apparently regarded the resignations as a prelude to China's withdrawal from the League. It announced that the last phase of the League was being witnessed. Had America not deserted it, and had the scope of its activities been confined to purely moral effort, the League might have become a dominating world influence ; but when " it

arrogated to itself powers of judgment and punishment nothing could save it from eventual disruption." Great Britain, declared the *Express*, should have withdrawn from the League long before. There were only two possible endings to our participation—" either a war that was not of our making or a national humiliation." " We have avoided the war," concluded the *Express*, " but the arrows of humiliation are deep in our breast." On the previous day this paper had published a cartoon by " Strube." Under the heading " The Closed Shop," the cartoon portrayed China and Japan facing Simon, who was behind the counter. It set out the following dialogue :

Foreign Secretary : I am sorry, gentlemen, but we cannot supply munitions to nations at war.

The Customers : Then whom do you make them for ?

Foreign Secretary : Only for nations at peace !

On March 4th, an editorial, headed " Simon's Folly," said that the Strube cartoon summed up the grotesqueness of the whole situation. A child could have foreseen the consequences of the embargo. Britain had condemned Japan, and as a member of the League was pledged to support the cause of China ; but " Sir John Simon's interpretation of this obligation is to deny munitions to either combatant." No moral purpose would be served by this policy, for both countries would get their war supplies elsewhere : all it would do, said the *Express*, would be to create unemployment here.

That day the *Daily Mail* made its first editorial comment on the embargo. It carried a dispatch from its Special Far Eastern Correspondent, G. Ward Price, who reported that he was able to give an authoritative account of the Japanese Government's attitude after long conversations with the four chief members of the Japanese Cabinet. He said that the British public should realise that the embargo was producing a situation " which is heavily fraught with danger." The Japanese would not suffer by the British embargo, but they were profoundly disturbed, " because they believe it may be the forerunner of further adverse action, and because they interpret it as evidence that Britain, whom they had hitherto regarded as their only friend, is now turning against them." If, wrote Ward Price, the embargo were made discriminatory against Japan by the exemption of China from it, " I believe there would be grave danger that Japan might in turn institute a blockade of the

Chinese coasts, which would only too easily prepare the way for a clash." The British Government and the League should realise that they were playing with fire when Japanese public opinion was in a very inflammable condition.

The *Mail's* editorial said that the rapid advance of the Japanese troops in Jehol had made the British arms embargo look ridiculous. The Government would be wise to withdraw it without further delay. There was abundant justification for so doing. If it was meant as a lead to other Powers, it had produced not the smallest effect. The main result had been to cause serious tension with Japan. Meanwhile Skoda and Le Creusot were busy with orders while the machinery in British works was idle. " Our good relations with Japan and the welfare of the unemployed ought not to be sacrificed for a mere ' gesture.' "

The *Times* and several other papers reported, without comment, a resolution passed by the Executive of the League of Nations Union on the previous day (March 3rd). This resolution urged that " the British Government should by publishing the communications to other countries make it clear that the present measure is a purely interim measure, while they are attempting to secure concerted discrimination corresponding with the character of the verdict pronounced by Geneva," and asserted the " general principle that it is incompatible with the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact that any assistance, whether by the export of arms or by financial facilities, should be given to any country which has been declared to be guilty of aggression against another."

There was also a report of a speech made by Sir Herbert Samuel at Oxford, in which, it may be noted, he also said that Japan had taken the law into her own hands. In regard to the arms embargo, Sir Herbert said that it could obviously be only temporary. " It has been taken pending a decision as to common international action. It should not long be maintained." He expressed the view that Great Britain " should join in urging the League, together with the United States and Russia, to join in a world embargo on the supply of arms to Japan alone." That, he added, was not, of course, an act of war. In the *Guardian's* report of this speech, Sir Herbert Samuel proceeded : " There can be no excuse for its being so treated. There is no reason why it should so develop. It is the least that can be done if the authority of the League is to be supported."

The *Times* reported also a speech made by Mr. Amery at

Birmingham, in which he said that we had annoyed Geneva by imposing an embargo " against the sense of the League of Nations without waiting for collective action." We had annoyed China " because it is against their interest," and we had annoyed Japan " because Japan knows that while we were willing to wound her we are afraid to do so." It was, Mr. Amery declared, " a policy of weakness."

9. The Weeklies of the Left

The organ of the I.L.P. declared on March 3rd that the Government's embargo could be justified only from a theoretical pacifist point of view, and the Government was not pacifist. The position could not be left as it was. Japanese aggression had been condemned, yet the one action taken by the British Government would help Japan and hinder China. The *New Leader* proceeded to say that the Government should initiate both an economic and diplomatic boycott of Japan and " seek to get united action by other Governments on these lines." But it did not expect Governments to do these things. " The power of the organised working class must be exerted to its fullest extent."

In the Glasgow *Forward* on March 4th, however, " T. J." thought the Government right in stopping " the blood-money for the sale of murder-machinery to the Far East." It was all very well, he said, to argue that the embargo penalised China more than it did Japan, " but the shameful trade should be stopped absolutely and finally, and as Socialists we only get ourselves into a mess if we begin to argue (as some do) that we ought to permit our manufacturers to sell to one of the combatants." " T. J." contended that if there was to be discrimination against the aggressor nation, it should be done " by refusing monetary assistance, by withdrawal of Ambassadors and by economic pressure through a trade boycott."

In the *New Clarion*, " The Tyke " made briefly the familiar criticism that the effect of the embargo would be to play into the hands of Japan. It was " neutrality in the face of ruthless aggression." There was no demand, however, in this brief comment, for withdrawal or modification of the embargo. " The Tyke " urged a " further step "—the refusal of credit to Japan. In view of the internal situation of that country, that would have a much more immediate effect than an arms embargo.

The *New Statesman*, in its notes on March 4th, said that soft words were now plainly a waste of breath—" the Japanese have ceased even to thank Sir John Simon when he licks their boots." They were not disturbed by our arms embargo ; but there were other forms of pressure which they did fear, and it would be " criminal folly on the part of the Powers to delay in applying them."

This weekly had a long article on the subject of sanctions against Japan. That issue, it declared, could not be avoided much longer, though it had scarcely been touched on in the House of Commons debate. As for the arms embargo, " this unilateral action against both Powers has nothing to do with sanctions." It was, said the *New Statesman*, an action which all Governments should at once take on the outbreak of hostilities in any part of the world, and it claimed to have " repeatedly urged it upon the British Government during the last twelve months." [1] If the Government had done so in the early stages of the Japanese invasion, the taint of bloodshed would have been removed from this country, and other countries, it would have been highly probable, would have followed suit, and the extension of war in the East might therefore long before have been checked. It was still worth doing as a gesture, though it was of little practical value. Japan might well be grateful to us, for she had large stocks and very efficient arms factories of her own, and " unless the world joins us in the embargo, she can still buy from Schneider-Creusot, from Skoda, from the United States armament ring, or from one of the numerous branches of Vickers-Armstrong in various parts of the world." China would be more severely hit.

The British action cannot, therefore, be defended at this stage on any grounds of justice ; it is only acceptable because if this country acted alone in refusing arms to Japan and continued to send them to China there would be grave risk that Japan would seize them and that the real issue of the League versus Japan would be side-tracked by a dangerous private dispute between Great Britain and Japan. Therefore, muddle-headed and ludicrously belated as it now is, the Government's decision is to be welcomed. But it has nothing on earth to do with sanctions.

The *New Statesman* was amazed that Sir John Simon should still be willing to talk about " Chinese provocation, both parties being in the wrong, and such like irrelevancies." It was " almost incredible " that eighteen months of continuous aggression by Japan had

[1] This was a grotesque over-statement. The *New Statesman* appears to have urged the matter only once, on December 19th, 1931, see p. 60 above.

not " shamed Sir John out of making excuses for Japan." Once Article XVI was raised (and that, in the *New Statesman's* view, might happen at any moment), we had a definite obligation in honour and in law " to unite with the other member States of the League in using sanctions against Japan."

On the one hand, the *New Statesman* dismissed " those who support Japan "—who were " in effect saying that they welcome the conquest of China by Japan because it is a sign that the old law still prevails, that those who are strong must always prey upon the weak "—the outspoken ones among them adding on occasions that they rather welcomed the prospect of a Russo-Japanese war in the Far East. On the other hand, there were " a few Covenanters who would like to apply immediately and without modification all the sanctions laid down in Article XVI, including an economic blockade of Japan." These people, said the article, were " right in law, but only justified in practice provided that they have thought through to the possible consequences."

It was possible, the *New Statesman* proceeded, that Japan would regard the application of economic sanctions as an excuse for running amok, for seizing Singapore and possibly bombing Hong Kong. It took the view that " the risks of abiding by the obligations we have jointly undertaken with other Powers are far less than the risks of throwing our obligations to the winds and returning to the old conditions of international anarchy." Therefore,

> we are prepared to consider as realistically as possible the practical effects of any sanction proposed, only asking whether or not it is likely in this case to be effective and whether its value in coercing Japan is likely to be commensurate with the risk and damage it involves.

Sir John Simon, the article continued, must not be permitted " to befog the issue from the start by a pretence that Japan is not really the aggressor or on a different footing from China." Then there was " the latest excuse for avoiding the question of sanctions " —" that the United States, when it comes to it, may not be prepared to follow the clear lead given by Mr. Stimson." What clear lead Mr. Stimson had given in the question of sanctions the *New Statesman* did not explain. Anyhow, the answer, in its judgment, was that we did not know what the United States would do until we tried, and " Senator Borah's repudiation of an arms embargo on both parties is no indication that there will not be an overwhelming demand in the United States for sanctions against Japan," provided the members

of the League at once got down to considering what could be done to stop Japan.

The first practical step, it was said, was " to distinguish between an embargo and a blockade." " A blockade of Japan would be a terrible, and we believe an unnecessary step." Economic and diplomatic pressure must be applied cumulatively and progressively. The new League committee should already be considering the details of its application. America was expected to join the committee, which had a variety of proposals to consider—

> the practicability of joint embargoes on arms, on raw materials—oil, for instance, is a far more important matter than munitions from the point of view of the Japanese militarist—and on foreign loans.

An embargo on all foreign loans in London, New York and Paris would make Japan's military operations increasingly difficult.

> The main thing is that the committee should get to work, that Japan should see that the League and the United States mean business, and that there should be unequivocal acceptance everywhere of the fact that Japan is the aggressor, that her conquests will not be recognised and that her aggression will be opposed by every effective means in our power.

This article provokes questions. Did the *New Statesman* really think that there was any likelihood of the United States participating in the application of any of the " sanctions " specified ?—even of a joint embargo on arms ? Was it genuinely unimpressed by all the evidence to the contrary ? No doubt, American participation in an arms embargo was still a possibility, but what ground was there for any hope that the United States would change its attitude about economic sanctions ? Was it that the *New Statesman* was ill-informed about American opinion ? Or was the *New Statesman* only being bold in words ?

The *Economist* that same day (March 4th) was certainly less optimistic than the *New Statesman* about the United States. The outstanding fact about its foreign policy, according to this weekly, was " the clear indication that, as far as the Far East is concerned, the policy of Mr. Secretary Stimson is to be continued by his destined successor, Senator Hull." The *Economist* quoted a statement made by Mr. Hull on February 24th, 1933, as follows :

> There should be no laxity on the part of this or any other nation in the observance of both the letter and the spirit of the treaties and of international good faith. There should be sane, realistic and international

co-operation, keeping in mind our traditions and constitution, to aid in preserving the peace of the world.

These, commented the *Economist*, might be generalities, but " at least they serve to show which way the wind is blowing." The American reply to the League on February 26th was " equally significant," and the United States would co-operate with the new League committee. But, the article went on, it remained to be seen what line the United States would adopt on the burning question of an arms embargo. There were " conflicting reports about the present trend of American opinion." According to some accounts, " the same anxiety at all costs not to be involved in the conflict is paramount in American minds as in the minds of the British Government." This anxiety would incline America, as it inclined the British Government, " either to impose no embargo at all or to impose one impartially—i.e. in practice, with partiality towards the aggressor—upon both belligerents alike." On the other hand, Senator Borah was reported to be in favour of imposing an embargo on Japan alone.

In any case, no American embargo can be imposed, apparently, without fresh legislation, and it is now certain that no such legislation will be passed by the present Congress, but must wait until a new Congress comes into being.

The *Economist* thought it looked like another case of " too late." In the earlier part of this article, the British embargo had been discussed.

In form, this decision is impeccable. It is only a provisional measure, which is nominally subject to being superseded by some common policy to be agreed upon after consultation between the British Government and the Governments of the United States, the U.S.S.R. and the States members of the League of Nations.

Sir John Simon was given the benefit of the doubt about the reservation of existing contracts, and the article declared that " taken at its face value," the decision " at least gives to the Foreign Secretary the credit of having been the first to act." There was, however, a serious qualification. It was to be feared that " putting China and Japan into the same class in this matter, even for the practical reasons given by Sir John, a few hours after the definite condemnation of Japan by the League, may give the impression that Great Britain is half-hearted in supporting the verdict of the civilised world and will endeavour to maintain an attitude of aloof impartiality."

It would certainly not be in accordance with British opinion, said the *Economist*, if the action prejudiced the proceedings of the new League committee; and the Assembly might not unreasonably complain that, in spirit at any rate, Sir John Simon had violated the pledge "to abstain from taking any isolated action," etc.

The *Economist* also found the Foreign Secretary's speech disquieting because he had "sought to justify his identical treatment of the just and the unjust by reverting to his old thesis that the Sino-Japanese issue is 'six of one and half a dozen of the other'"—an assertion any ground for which the reader will search for in vain. It accused Sir John of quoting a passage from the Lytton Report out of its context, and so creating a misleading impression—another charge that it would be exceedingly difficult to justify and which the *Economist* made no attempt to justify. The passage was that already mentioned as quoted by Sir John Simon in connection with the Leader of the Opposition's remark about "the invasion of another country across a great stretch of the sea." Then came an allusion to a revised version of "what Matsuoka said," not, as the reader will have noted, the only one made in the comments on the Foreign Secretary's speech of February 27th, 1933.

It was bad enough when Sir John Simon took this line at Geneva in December with the half-ironic approbation of Mr. Matsuoka. After the Assembly's verdict on February 24th, to which this country is a party, it is an utterly untenable position.

This part of the article concluded with an appreciative reference to Sir Austen Chamberlain's speech, "far the best" in "sincerity and right feeling," and showing up "the hollowness of Sir John's assumption of virtue."

The *Sunday Times* had nothing to say about the Far East on March 5th. The *Observer*, discussing the position of the Disarmament Conference, urged that those who really wanted disarmament should stop baiting Japan, for without Japan there was not even the possibility of disarmament. In regard to the situation in the Far East itself, the *Observer* said that the swiftness of the Japanese advance had been expected by informed realists, who also expected that Japan would stop short at the Great Wall. Although Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang was a complicating factor in this respect, the *Observer* thought it reasonable to assume that in its essence the military issue was decided, and the diplomatic issue had to be faced. The *Observer* repeated its view that the solution could be found only

by direct negotiations between Tokyo and Nanking, and that Geneva's only scope for service was to encourage such negotiation. Turning to the arms embargo, this weekly said that the Government's motive was in the abstract noble, but that "in foreign policy isolated action in the abstract is always a mistake," and in this case the mistake had quickly proved itself. "It achieved neither a practical nor a moral end. Arms can, and will, be supplied in abundance by other countries; and the empty gesture has given no moral pleasure to any party."

The British Government has directed inquiries, through Geneva, of the other Powers as to the chances of a common policy. No answers have yet been received, but we all know what they will be. The British action was provisional and conditional on common action. Therefore, in the end it will simply have to be revoked, having achieved no other result than the weakening of British influence.

10. Withdrawal Envisaged

On March 6th the newspapers had to deal with the German elections, the impending visit of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to Geneva in connection with the Disarmament Conference, President Roosevelt's inaugural, and the financial crisis in the United States, where all banks and exchanges had been closed and Congress summoned for an emergency session. Jehol City had been occupied by the Japanese, and the *Guardian* found space for editorial comment on that event. The *Express* carried middle page reports from Le Creusot about armaments for the Far East pouring out of Europe and from Prague about "Skoda secrecy"; while the *Mail* announced that its Special Correspondent, Mr. Ward Price, was to have the unprecedented distinction of being received in audience by the Emperor of Japan.

In the House of Commons, the Foreign Secretary answered a number of questions about the progress of the arms embargo consultations. He said that there was no indication of universal agreement, adding:

> This leaves this country in a situation which cannot be allowed to continue, and this is the first matter which will be taken up by the Prime Minister and myself at Geneva this week.

In the course of supplementary questions, the following exchanges took place:

Mr. Lansbury : If the Government decide to reverse the decision taken last week, will this House have an opportunity both to discuss it and to vote on it ?

Sir J. Simon : I would remind the right hon. Gentleman that the decision announced last week was a provisional decision in order to give an opportunity of finding out what was the attitude taken up by other Powers. If, unfortunately, it turned out that the attitude taken up by other countries did not permit of universal agreement, there would be no reversal of the decision if we had to make a fresh announcement.

Mr. Lansbury : I should like to ask the right hon. Gentleman if he is aware that the decision that was arrived at was welcomed by a very large proportion of the people of the country, and if it is to be reversed this House ought to have an opportunity of discussing and voting upon it, because it will be a reversal, despite what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Lewis : Can the right hon. Gentleman state whether the Government of any country in the world has expressed unqualified approval of our action with regard to the embargo—any country in the world ?

Col. Wedgwood : Before the right hon. Gentleman answers that question, may I ask him whether it is necessary to have the approval and concurrence of foreign countries when we do the right thing ?

Sir J. Simon : I have already said that there is no indication of universal agreement, and it has been stated from this Box by the Prime Minister as well as by myself that, of course, we have always contemplated that the only permanent arrangement was one which would be universally accepted.

The Leader of the Opposition, not surprisingly, was opposed to withdrawal of the embargo, and his remarks implied that the Parliamentary Labour Party shared his view and was prepared to vote against withdrawal. The silence of Labour's daily newspaper, after its denunciation of the embargo, is, in such circumstances, understandable.

But the swift decline in public interest in the matter is indicated by the fact that only in the *Guardian* was there any editorial comment on the Foreign Secretary's statement. That paper stressed the absence of " any evidence that an international agreement is being earnestly sought for a prohibition of export to Japan alone." It declared that we had got ourselves into " a pretty mess." After quoting Sir John Simon's remark on February 27th about making profit out of the supply of arms, it said, " So we are now going to do the ' horrible thing ' because others do it too ? " Neither the Japanese nor the Chinese would love us any the more for that.

And in general, to take a " very significant, definite and grave step " forward and then, after a few days, to take it backward, is not a good way to increase one's reputation. But since Sir John Simon on February 27th declared that his policy sprang from " the most complete friendliness to both China and Japan," it is the sort of result that might be expected. It is also the sort that we deserve.

Apart from this *Guardian* article, there was only brief comment from the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, who said that official circles had all along made the point that the embargo would be revoked unless the British example were followed by the other Powers. In the news columns, there were reports in the papers about the Japanese advance to the Great Wall, but, even in the *Times*, where the American crisis took first place, Sir John Simon's statement was given an inconspicuous notice.

On March 8th, also, there was little in the Press about the Far East, save brief reports of the fighting near the Great Wall. The *Times*, *Telegraph* and *News Chronicle* carried, without comment, reports from Moscow that the Soviet Government had declined the League's invitation to join its Advisory Committee. The *Daily Mail*, however, made a great splash of Mr. Ward Price's " historic interview " with the Japanese Emperor, and his " historic message to Britain." It had an editorial on the subject, which insisted that the good relations between the two countries " must not be shattered by the mistakes of British sentimentalists," and trusted that within a few days the futile embargo on the export of arms to the Far East would have been lifted. It had done nothing but harm, said the *Mail*, and was a very poor return for Japan's " magnificent support " of this country during the Great War.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Mander asked what was the position in regard to the export of arms to Bolivia and Paraguay and Peru and Colombia ; and whether it was proposed to take the same individual action by this country as in the case of China and Japan. Sir John Simon answered the last part of the question in the negative. In regard to Bolivia and Paraguay, he explained that after consultations between Great Britain, France and Italy a memorandum had been submitted to the League Council suggesting that, under Article XI, Governments should be recommended to impose an embargo on the export of arms and war material to the two countries. The League Council, he said, was now considering the matter, and the embargo would not become operative until certain

non-member States, including the United States, imposed and applied a similar prohibition. In regard to Peru and Colombia, Sir John pointed out that the League was endeavouring to effect a settlement under Article XV, hostilities had ceased, and no question of an arms embargo arose.

The *News Chronicle* and the *Telegraph* both had leading articles on March 9th on the Chinese rout in Jehol. The former saw no reason to believe for a moment that the Japanese advance would end with the occupation of that province. It declared that the League's business was " to bring such steady pressure to bear upon Japan . . . as to compel her to abandon her defiant position." " But," asked this paper, " what means is it now proposed to adopt to make this effective ? " With that unanswered query the editorial abruptly closed.

The *Telegraph* considered startling the contrast between the Chinese debacle in Jehol and the defence of the outskirts of Shanghai in the previous year. Jehol, it said, was irrevocably lost to China, and it was surely good counsel that this should be frankly recognised by the Nanking Government and by " Young China." In this paper's view, " the very ease with which Japan has attained her objective will probably incline her to meet China more than halfway if China has statesmanship enough to accept the inevitable, lest worse befall."

There was an allusion to the arms embargo in the *Express*. It occurred in the course of an article by its Political Correspondent, which occupied two columns on the front page, and was devoted to the departure of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary for Paris and Geneva, in an " Effort to save Arms Conference." The British Ministers, it was said, were likely to have a cool welcome. Delegates believed that the British arms embargo had destroyed the last hopes of any disarmament agreement, and there was " bitter hostility." The contention was, apparently, that the embargo had wrecked the possibility of the League members continuing to act together in regard to Japan.

In a single sentence, the *Times* Geneva Correspondent reported that the League Council had sat in secret to consider (it was understood) the proposals for an arms embargo ; while the *Guardian* had an article by Viscount Snowden devoted to Japan's long-pursued aim to conquer China.

11. "Geneva" Suspicions

On March 10th the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent came back into the picture. Sir John Simon's remarks on the 6th, he wrote, had "strengthened the suspicion felt here when the embargo was announced that its real aim was to prevent a general embargo against Japan alone." This Correspondent invariably presented his own views and suspicions as the opinions or feelings of "Geneva" and, no doubt, there were others at Geneva who shared them. We have already noted the attribution of Machiavellian motives to Sir John Simon and the British Government by certain circles in that hotbed of gossip. Mr. Zilliacus, one may be fairly sure, was not inactive in that connection. At any rate, when he wrote his *Inquest on Peace*, so effectively published by Mr. Victor Gollancz in time for the General Election of 1935, he endorsed the suspicion which the *Guardian's* Correspondent had said "Geneva felt." He wrote of the "British Government's ingenious way of killing the agitation for action" (p. 27). Dealing (p. 24) with the British embargo, Mr. Zilliacus said :

> This move appears to have been deliberately designed to prevent any possibility of the Arms Embargo Committee set up by the Assembly coming to a decision. The British Government knew that there was a strong agitation on the part of public opinion at home as well as in other countries for action against Japan, and that there were several members of the Assembly Arms Embargo Committee, e.g. France, Czechoslovakia and Sweden, that were opposed on principle to an embargo applying equally to the victim of aggression and to the aggressor. These States argued that such action was incompatible with the Covenant. The British Government, for its part, refused to consider any international embargo against Japan only, and so the Committee failed to reach agreement, and after a fortnight the British embargo was quietly dropped.

This passage is a characteristic example of the sort of writing which so powerfully influenced opinion in this country in later years. It is perhaps a minor point that Mr. Zilliacus overlooked the fact that when the British arms embargo was imposed no "Arms Embargo Committee" was in existence, though Mr. Eden had proposed to the Advisory Committee the appointment of a sub-committee to consider the matter.

The *Guardian's* Correspondent, in his message published on March 10th, 1933, went on to say that if Sir John Simon meant universal agreement on a double embargo there never would be one,

while, if he meant an embargo against Japan alone, the question had not yet been discussed. He referred to Mr. Eden's proposal for the appointment of a sub-committee, and said that the Government's announcement of the embargo " was universally regarded here as a rebuff to the British delegation." The Advisory Committee, he added, was still waiting for the American reply to the invitation to participate in its work, " and there is no ground for any suggestion that there is no chance for universal agreement on the subject unless the British Government desires universal agreement on a double embargo."

On March 11th, and the following days, the attention of the British Press was devoted primarily to events in Germany, the conversations of the British Ministers in Paris and the fate of the Disarmament Conference. When the *News Chronicle's* editorial on the 11th was headed " Heading for War," the war referred to was a European war, not one in or arising out of the Far East. So with its editorial on the 12th, headed " You and this War Talk " ; and so also with Lloyd George's " Call to the Churches " to summon a world conference to avert war—his " passionate appeal for peace," as the *News Chronicle* described it on the 14th.

The Far Eastern situation, though in the background, could not be entirely overlooked, however. The *Times* and the *Telegraph* reported on internal Chinese developments, and, in particular, that Chang Hsueh-liang had been superseded as commander of the Chinese forces against the Japanese. Left-wing weeklies like the *New Leader*, the *New Clarion* and the Glasgow *Forward*, it is true, displayed no interest in the Far East at all from this time onward. The *New Statesman*, however, thought on March 11th that there was every prospect of a long and bitter war there and grave danger of others being involved in it. It declared it to be " sheer lunacy " for the League Powers and America to sit idly by. Soviet Russia, it was true, had announced that she would not join in any action, but, said the *New Statesman*, " the rest of us are still strong enough to put the necessary pressure on Japan." The pressure must be concerted, bold and comprehensive. " This is not asking for war with Japan, as some would have us believe. It is the surest means of abating Japan's warlike policy."

The *Economist*, in a note on Japanese military success, perceived that " the Japanese man-at-arms has a heel of Achilles," for there were two fatal weaknesses, it said, in Japan's position. The first

was that, economically, each military advance was not an asset but a liability; and the second that Japan's chance of permanently harvesting her military gains depended on the calculation that the economic crisis would continue to paralyse the rest of the world without paralysing Japan. The *Sunday Times* continued to be reticent. The *Observer*, however, had a note in which, after dwelling on the amazing rapidity of the Japanese occupation of Jehol province, it held that China must now accept the direct negotiations offered by Japan eighteen months before. " If Tokyo will give an undertaking not to transgress the Wall, Nanking would be wise to open negotiations without delay." In these comments of the weeklies, the arms embargo was ignored, or dismissed, as by the *New Statesman*, as " manifestly useless."

12. The End of the Embargo

On March 13th, Baldwin made the following statement in the House of Commons :

The decision of the Government announced by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on February 27th, that no licences for the export of any article mentioned in the Arms Export Prohibition Order, 1931, to either China or Japan would be authorised as from that day, was, as stated at the time, a provisional arrangement pending the opportunity of international consultation and decision. Since then, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have had the opportunity of discussing this matter with the representatives of various other countries, and they have now informed us that, in their opinion, there is no prospect of any international agreement upon the subject in the near future.

In these circumstances, no useful purpose would be served by maintaining an embargo observed by this country alone, and, accordingly, the Government have decided to remove it as from to-day. At the same time, the Government remains firmly convinced that the only satisfactory solution of a problem which is bound to recur in the future is to be found in an international agreement. Accordingly, it is their intention vigorously to pursue the conversations already begun as and when opportunity offers with the earnest desire to arrive at a form of agreement which will in the future secure uniformity of action on this important subject.

The Leader of the Opposition, in the course of the question he then put, asked whether the House would have a further opportunity of discussing " this very important matter." Baldwin suggested in reply that it would be appropriate to raise the question

when the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had returned. When, after their return, a debate took place on March 23rd, the spokesmen of the Opposition did not raise the matter.

Lansbury's question was " whether the Cabinet has now decided that the Covenant of the League and the obligations under the Covenant are of no effect and that no steps can be taken to stop an aggressive war," and whether Baldwin was aware " that it is not merely a question of what this country will do on the matter of the embargo, but very much a question of whether the League of Nations becomes absolutely futile in a crisis of this kind ? " Baldwin replied :

> This country, in my view, set a great example, but so far we have been unable to persuade anyone to follow that example and our practice now conforms to the practice of all other States whether members of the League or not.

Mr. Seymour Cocks then asked

whether the Government are trying to arrive at international agreement with the object of imposing an embargo upon Japan alone or on both countries ?

Baldwin answered :

> I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would have understood from what I have said that other countries are supplying both China and Japan.

When, a little later, Mr. Seymour Cocks asked for an answer to his question, Baldwin said :

> I have no details of the conversations which have taken place, but I can trust our own delegates in Geneva to do what they conceive to be their duty.

Miss Rathbone then asked :

> When the right hon. Gentleman told us that negotiations were going on with regard to the future, did he mean to imply that all hope has been abandoned of securing agreement with regard to the present Sino-Japanese dispute, or are we to understand that the negotiations still going on have reference to the Sino-Japanese dispute ?

Baldwin replied :

> I hope very much that the present dispute is practically over. The hon. Lady may take it from me that so far as my information goes there is no hope of other nations falling into line with regard to this dispute.

Two days later, on March 15th, Mr. T. Williams asked

whether the efforts of His Majesty's Government have been directed to securing an agreement between the principal arms-exporting Powers to place an embargo only upon arms exported to the State declared by the League of Nations to be the aggressor in the conflict in the Far East or whether their policy was to try and secure an embargo on arms exported to both combatants ?

Baldwin's answer was :

The efforts of His Majesty's Government have not been specifically directed to either one object or the other but to securing consideration of the matter with a view to the formulation of a policy acceptable to the world at large.

In reply to a supplementary question by Mr. Williams whether he did not feel " that the suggestion in the question might be much more successful, in view of the decision recently taken by the Government," Baldwin said :

If the hon. Member had had to act in this matter I think he would realise the extreme difficulty of getting any agreement, whatever the case presented, in view of the position of other countries.

When the House of Commons came to debate foreign affairs on March 23rd, attention was almost exclusively confined to the European situation, to the Disarmament Conference and Mussolini's proposals for a Four-Power Pact. Mr. Churchill made a passing allusion to the arms embargo which will be noted later. Apart from that, the only speakers to raise the matter were Mr. Mander and Mr. Vyvyan Adams. The former expressed great surprise at Baldwin's reply to Mr. Williams on the 15th, which he quoted. He said it looked as though the Government had been asking other Powers " whether they would be in favour of one of two things, whichever they liked most—an embargo on Japan alone or an embargo on China and Japan." Mr. Mander wanted to know whether that was really the case, and exactly what the Government's policy was. He urged that, if it was impossible to secure general agreement, the Government should arrange to have the matter debated in public before the appropriate committee at Geneva.

The representatives of the different States, if they are not prepared to play their part, and if we are the only country, as we may be, prepared to take action really to carry out our obligation under international treaties, should get up and say so in public, in order that theirs should be

the discredit and not ours, and that ours should be the credit if we were prepared to give a lead and others were not.

Mr. Mander wanted to know whether America was standing in the way. He then discussed the possibilities of action against Japan at some length :

It is often said that the League has no weapon of any kind at the present time to bring Japan to book. I disagree with that proposition very strongly. The League has powers. *It has military powers. It is not suggested by anybody that they would be of the slightest use in this instance,* but in the dispute between Greece and Bulgaria the question of a naval blockade was actually under consideration by the Council but not necessarily to be put into effect. There are other powers at the present time. It has been suggested . . . that the simultaneous withdrawal of representatives from Tokyo might have a profound effect upon public opinion in that country. . . . The question of the withholding of loans or credits to Japan is perhaps not a matter of very much practical importance at the present time because there are so few countries prepared to lend money to any other country, and least of all to Japan. There is a further weapon which might be used with certain effect upon Japan if there was unanimity in the use of it. Unfortunately, I do not think that at the moment it could be obtained, but if the nations were of one mind it is a weapon which the League might use. The weapon is the refusal of the rest of the world to accept exports from Japan. . . . there, *without endangering a single human life,* you have an economic weapon which could be used with complete effect.[1]

At the end of his speech on the same occasion, Mr. Vyvyan Adams came to the arms embargo. He had thought the Government's action " great "—it had given him " the keenest pleasure." But now the policy had been " reversed," and he felt " acute and bitter disappointment and depression."

One was no longer able to raise one's head proudly and say " No more blood-money for Great Britain." The primary consideration seemed to be the prosperity of armament factories.

Mr. Eden, replying to the debate on behalf of the Government, answered Mr. Mander before turning to the main topics which had been under discussion. The Government, he said, were eager to do all that lay in their power to promote agreement which would lead to effective action upon the subject of the embargo of arms to the Far East. They had not only taken the lead in fact, but had also initiated international efforts at Geneva. But it had now become clear that they could not hope in the space of any short time to

[1] Author's italics.

secure such international agreement, if only because for many countries it was necessary before they could take any action to obtain powers which they did not at present possess. Mr. Eden said that the experience had shown that if any effective action of this kind was to be taken in the future in parallel circumstances, machinery for the purpose would have to be set up, " not at the time when it is needed, but previous to the time when it is called for." Mr. Mander intervened to ask whether the negotiations were " on the basis of an embargo on the aggressor only " ? Mr. Eden replied :

> As far as we took the initiative at Geneva, it was to ask for an examination of the problem in relation to the export of arms to the Far East. It is a problem to be considered internationally and to be decided internationally. It is impossible for one nation to say what other nations should do except as the result of international agreement. Our attitude will be made clear when it comes to be discussed, but in spite of our initiative nothing has yet been done.

The House of Commons discussed foreign affairs again on April 13th, 1933, on the Easter adjournment. The outstanding topic was the persecution of the Jews in Germany. Mr. Attlee mentioned the Far East in his opening speech. It was, he said, for us to give a lead, and he believed that France and the United States would fall in with us. He asked whether we could not suggest a unilateral embargo on armaments to Japan, and whether that suggestion had ever been put forward, adding, " It rather suggests itself to my mind that perhaps the influence of armament firms has been too pressing." Mr. Attlee also asked : " Why should not we propose a world-wide boycott of Japanese goods ? " and declared that unless the world was prepared to take a strong line, " the Sino-Japanese dispute will be found to cut at the very root of disarmament, because it will be said there is no security for a member State of the League of Nations." At the end of the debate, in the course of some brief remarks, Lansbury pointed out that the Foreign Secretary had not said a single word about the Sino-Japanese question. Nor had anyone else who followed Mr. Attlee.

Apart from this single allusion to the arms embargo question in debate, interest in the matter was confined, so far as the House of Commons was concerned, to a few questions asking for information. The Advisory Committee of the League of Nations appointed on March 15th two sub-committees, one of which was to

consider the problem of the exportation of arms to the Far East, and the other to make recommendations as to the manner in which effect should be given to the Assembly's recommendation that no recognition should be given to the *de facto* situation in Manchuria. On March 29th Mr. Rhys Davies asked what progress was being made on the first of these matters. Mr. Eden replied that the sub-committee had met again on the previous day, when " attention was drawn to the fact that inquiries were already under way in connection with disputes in another part of the world in the course of which specific questions of principle and of execution have been put before the Governments," and it had been agreed that the members of the committee " should consult their Governments on these questions in order that the sub-committee might be in possession of the essential facts as soon as possible."

On April 25th, in reply to Mr. Mander, Sir John Simon said there was nothing further to add. On the following day Mr. Mander asked about arms embargo negotiations in regard to South America as well as to the Far East. In regard to Bolivia and Paraguay, Sir John Simon said that the League Council had discussed the draft of a declaration to be signed by Governments in favour of an arms embargo, but only twelve Governments (including the British Government) had so far announced their acceptance of the form of the declaration. Since efforts were still being made to obtain a settlement of the Peru-Colombian dispute, the imposition of an arms embargo was not for the time being under discussion at Geneva.

Thenceforth, the House of Commons apparently lost all interest in the matter, save that a month later (May 25th) Mr. Tom Smith asked whether the League's Advisory Committee had made any report on it.

13. Press and Other Reactions

The announcement of the removal of the arms embargo came as no surprise. It attracted relatively little interest, although there were leading articles in some of the newspapers. Only one paper protested. That was the *News Chronicle*. It said that there could hardly be a stranger contrast than that between the announcement and Lloyd George's " passionate appeal for peace." It denounced the lifting of the arms embargo as " a weak-kneed surrender by a Government which has no fixed convictions on the subject of a position into

which it was reluctantly forced by the pressure of public opinion." The article declared that " if the States of the League follow the British Government's example " (the *News Chronicle* seemed to forget that no other State had imposed any embargo !), " they will have made it an official League doctrine, publicly proclaimed, *that League members may rightfully sell arms to a State they have themselves condemned as a Covenant-breaker.*" The abandoned embargo, said the article, had done one thing if nothing else : it had " proclaimed to all concerned the conviction of the people of this country that *if you want to maintain peace, you must stop war.*"[1]

Pacifist and near-pacifist opinion deplored the withdrawal of the embargo. There was not much evidence of this, however, in the Press, though the Dean of Rochester wrote to the *Times* (March 16th) about the " grievous news," declaring that Christian feeling in the country had " rejoiced at the fine position taken up less than a fortnight ago " and would be " struck with shame and indignation at the withdrawal from it " ; and ten clergymen from Blackburn and district wrote in protest to the *Manchester Guardian* (March 20th).

After its fortnight's silence, the *Daily Herald* recovered its voice on March 14th. Its editorial was headed : " Sir John's Folly." As a practical step, the embargo was " pure folly." As a gesture, it was not moral but " entirely immoral." It had " served its ill-purpose " ; and its purpose, declared the *Herald,* was " not to stop the arms traffic, but to snub the League."

The *Daily Mail* said that day that it was " a pity that we did not look before we leaped." The net result of the embargo had been to handicap the British armament industries. Even if there had been every probability of an international agreement to forbid the export of arms, this paper argued, such a prohibition was to be deprecated. " It constituted an interference with international law, and it must have set up precedents disadvantageous in the future to a belligerent who should be involved in an unexpected war and be caught unprepared." The *Mail* then turned to the wider issue of the Far Eastern situation. The League, it maintained, was directly responsible for the fighting. " By the Lytton Report, with its one-sided findings, and by the ill-considered resolutions which followed it, the League encouraged China to offer a futile resistance. It deceived her into imagining that she would receive armed support from the Powers in the League." China's best course,

[1] The paper's own italics.

the article ended, would be to make peace with Japan forthwith and thus avoid future hostilities in which there was no prospect whatever of ultimate Chinese success. " Let her accept facts and end her quarrel with Japan as quickly as possible."

The *Daily Express* was brief and bright. Sir John Simon and Mr. MacDonald, it said, had thought to please their friends of the League of Nations Union, but they had only annoyed them. " The Leaguers said : ' You have condemned Japan. Why refuse to send arms to China ? ' As there was no answer to this the embargo was lifted. In the meantime Great Britain lost one good contract, while retaining Mr. MacDonald and Sir John Simon."

The *Times* agreed on March 14th that, since no other arms-producing country had either placed an embargo or shown any intention of placing an embargo on its own exports, the British policy was entirely deprived of usefulness. " In the meantime, the serious fighting in Jehol has come to an end ; and there is obviously no choice now but to give up the idea of concerting in this particular case a combined policy for the arms-producing countries." In the opinion of the *Times*, however, the British Government had no reason to be ashamed of their own policy in this matter, " which, though not proof against the charge of precipitancy, has been only superficially inconsistent." After the Assembly's resolution, it said, the Government had felt all along " that it would be unseemly to continue to export arms to the country which was defying that resolution ; that it was impracticable to attempt, single-handed, to prevent arms going to one combatant and not to the other ; and that only international action could be effective, whether the policy was to be total prevention or concerted discrimination." The *Times* referred to Baldwin's statement that the same sort of problem was bound to recur in the future ; and urged the paramount importance of every Government being able " absolutely and unequivocally to maintain supervision and control of the export of arms by their national firms." Britain's action, it concluded, had drawn universal attention to a pressing problem, if nothing else ; and it had also set the precedent of a great arms-producing country renouncing the prospect of making profit out of an armed conflict which had been declared by the League to be without justification.

The *Manchester Guardian* made no editorial comment on March 14th, but next day said what it had got to say on the matter

in the course of an article on " American Co-operation," which it said was essential to any sound settlement of the Far Eastern dispute. The United States, the article declared, had a fine record in China, and had taken the lead in announcing the non-recognition policy. Happily, too, the United States had joined the Advisory Committee of the League. " We could wish heartily that she will there exert the leadership of which the British Government is plainly incapable." President Roosevelt, the article proceeded, was seeking power to impose an embargo on the export of arms to any country in the world. " It would be a fine vindication of the elementary decencies if his Government would seek in the Committee to organise a general refusal to sell arms to the acknowledged aggressor." As for the policy of the British Government, it was, said the *Guardian*, " such as the history of the dispute would lead one to expect. It puts the aggressor and the injured on the same level. It exhibits ' complete friendliness ' to both. It will now sell arms to the war-maker, the violator of treaties, the oppressor of China, because ' no useful purpose ' would be served by refusal. Is it a ' useful purpose ' to sell arms to Japan wherewith to kill Chinese ? "

It would be difficult to find a more glaring example of the persistent efforts to play down British policy by playing up that of the United States which are so marked a feature of the conduct of the main body of the British Government's critics in this dispute. The British Government was declared incapable of leadership in the matter of an arms embargo. Yet it was the British Government which had taken the initiative, and given a lead. It was condemned for resuming the sale of arms to Japan, and the United States, which had never imposed any embargo on arms for Japan, was looked to for leadership. The American President, it is true, had had no power to stop the export of arms to Japan. He was now seeking such power, or so it appeared. But his predecessor had also sought it, and sought it in vain, as the New York Correspondent of the *Guardian* pointed out in its columns that same day. Moreover, the Correspondent's message said that the State Department's notification of the new President's intention was made to Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador in Washington ; and appended to the message was a note that, according to Reuter, the notification was made to Sir Ronald " in response to an inquiry "—in response, that is to say, to continued British initiative in the matter.[1]

[1] This was confirmed by the Washington Correspondent of the *Times* on March 16th.

On the same day also, the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent gave the text of Secretary Cordell Hull's reply to the League's invitation to the United States to join the Advisory Committee :

Believing that participation by a representative of the Government in the deliberations of the committee would be helpful, I am instructing the American Minister to Switzerland, Mr. Hugh R. Wilson, to be prepared so to participate, but without right to vote, if such participation is desired.

The Correspondent also quoted from an American Government statement, as follows :

The presence of the United States in this manner in the meetings of the committee will give an informative contact. It does not in any way impair the right of independence of judgment and freedom of action of the United States. The representative of the United States cannot take any action binding this country.[1]

It was again in the same issue of the *Guardian* that its New York Correspondent wrote :

It may be said that American willingness to co-operate with the League is based largely upon the conviction firmly held here that the League will take no drastic action against Japan. There is no reason to believe that the United States would co-operate in an embargo or boycott of any kind unless its present mood changes greatly.

In another letter to the *Times* on March 17th, Lord Davies said : " The arms embargo order was short lived. It may have been still-born, and, having served its purpose, its decease has now been made public. But we are still in the dark as to the real cause of its premature death." Lord Davies trusted that the blame would not be laid on the Members of the League. He wanted to know if they were asked to join in an embargo on the export of arms to the aggressor or to both the aggressor and his victim, because, if the latter, then their refusal to stultify their votes in the Assembly was logical and reasonable. He also wanted to know why the inquest

[1] In his *Memoirs* (vol. I, p. 372), Mr. Cordell Hull wrote : " The President and I decided to go this extra distance." Quoting the following passage from his public announcement, " We believe that the importance of the problem which is of common concern in this connection to the League, to the League Powers and to the United States calls for prorptness and accuracy in exchange of information and views ; that the dictates of common sense call for consultation with friendly and frank discussion among the nations ; and that the procedure thus suggested will contribute toward the serving of those ends—in the interest both of the United States and of all other countries concerned," Mr. Hull commented : " This statement indicates the caution with which, owing to the isolationist sentiment at home, we had to proceed in any move in the direction of the League."

had been conducted behind closed doors. " Surely the world has a right to know the attitude of other nations and their reasons for refusing to participate in an embargo, directed against the aggressor and to honour their obligations under Article XVI."

In any case we can no longer hug the illusion that we have reached a higher standard of morality and conduct than other nations. Nor can we protest that we do not intend to profit by other people's misfortunes. Either the gesture was a cynical exhibition of diplomatic hypocrisy or a glaring instance of misjudged and ill-timed statecraft which has weakened the authority of the League and diminished the prestige of the British Empire.

The *Economist*, on March 18th, considered the cheers which greeted Baldwin's announcement in the House to be premature, because of the State Department's notification to the British Ambassador. It ventured to hope that the State Department would have better success at its second attempt to get the requisite powers from Congress. Moreover, the United States was going to participate (without voting) in the work of the Advisory Committee. It was true that the Soviet Government had declined, " but its refusal is manifestly dictated by prudent considerations and not by lack of sympathy with the Committee's objects." In another place, the *Economist* referred to Sir John Simon's " aside "—all the more important since it " presumably expressed the Foreign Secretary's unstudied feelings on the subject "—that " he was enough of a patriot [*sic*] to be determined to keep his country out of trouble." If Sir John's dictum represented Government policy, and if the Government was really determined to keep out of war in the Far East at all costs, then, said the *Economist*, " our neighbours may well ask what is likely to be the attitude of the Government of the United Kingdom in the event of war in Europe—an eventuality which has been discussed, all over Europe, within a few days of the delivery of Sir John Simon's unfortunate remark."

The *New Statesman* that same day was not interested in the arms embargo. It was not too late, in its view, to check the Japanese advance. The United States Government had now agreed to co-operate with the League. " But is co-operation going to mean action or only thumb-twiddling ? " Mr. Wickham Steed, in the *Sunday Times* on March 19th, after quoting from Sir John Simon's speech on February 27th announcing the arms embargo, complained that the Government " proclaim our neutrality between what they have admitted to be right and wrong in the Far East."

14. The United States and the Arms Embargo

Further allusions in the Press to the arms embargo were virtually confined to the columns of the *Times* and the *Guardian*. By March 20th, the latter paper had reached the truly fantastic position that Britain alone was obstructing international agreement on an embargo against Japan. Discussing the Government's statement that there was no prospect of international agreement on the subject in the near future, it said that if the Government had in mind an embargo against both China and Japan, then it was obvious there could be no agreement. " But if they mean that there is no support for an embargo against the Japanese aggressor they are misleading Britain." The form of this sentence should be noted. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Chamber, the *Guardian* went on, had unanimously passed a resolution calling for a general arms embargo against Japan three days before Baldwin's statement. In the United States, President Roosevelt was going to ask Congress for discretionary powers of arms embargo against any country he might choose. The only other large-scale manufacturer of arms for export, Czechoslovakia, was " strongly for the assertion of the League's authority against Japan."

It is shameful that Britain should alone obstruct agreement.

It is interesting to note that on March 21st a message from the *Times* Washington Correspondent mentioned that he had been informed that the power President Roosevelt was seeking was to be understood as " potentially applicable not to the Orient but to the Continent of Europe." This, apparently, was the only hint that appeared in the British Press that the Roosevelt Administration was not intending to use against Japan any powers it might be granted by Congress.

On March 29th the *Guardian's* Geneva Correspondent reported that the League's Advisory Committee was unable to go further in the matter of an arms embargo until the United States Government had obtained the necessary powers. There was a Reuter message from Washington on the same day in that paper that the resolution had been approved by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. The *Telegraph* also had this item of news. On April 18th both these papers reported that the resolution had been passed by the House of Representatives itself. The *Guardian's* New York Correspondent commented, however, that stiff opposition

was to be expected in the Senate, the objection being that such power should be reserved to the legislature, " and specifically because it is feared that action under it might embroil the United States in war." That day a *Guardian* editorial said that the British Government " should urge on the United States that policy of the embargo against Japan alone which France is already anxious to adopt." The *Guardian* now seemed to be placing its reliance upon France ! A letter in that paper from the chairman of the Women's International League also pressed for an " arms embargo against the aggressor."

Lord Cecil did not mention the matter when he discussed the Far Eastern situation in the House of Lords on May 11th. Speaking for the Government, however, Lord Hailsham explained clearly the position of the League's sub-committee, and pointed out that the resolution put before the United States Congress had still to be considered by the Senate.

The British Press and public appear to have remained in ignorance of the memorandum sent by Mr. Cordell Hull to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and, so far as we are aware, no reference to this memorandum has appeared in any treatment of the Manchurian dispute in this country. According to Mr. Cordell Hull's *Memoirs* (p. 229), he dealt in his memorandum with objections that the resolution might result in involving the United States in war.

I pointed out that the action permitted would " certainly not be adopted by this Government without such effective guarantees of international co-operation as would safeguard us against the danger of this country's being involved in the conflict as a result of such action."

I told the Senate committee that if the resolution were passed the Government, in co-operation with other Governments, would embargo the shipment of arms to Paraguay and Bolivia. *It would not, however, embargo arms shipments to China and Japan.* Such an embargo would not be effective in restoring peace. Japan could supply her own needs by her own industries. China was dependent upon imports. *An embargo against both would militate against China and in favour of Japan. An embargo against Japan alone would probably result in a Japanese blockade of China's ports.*

" It is not our policy to have this Government posing before the world as a leader in all the efforts to prevent or put an end to wars," I said, " but on the other hand it is not our policy to lag behind the other nations of the world in their efforts to promote peace. The passage of this resolution is necessary in order that this Government may keep pace with other Governments of the world in this movement."[1]

[1] Author's italics.

In the early summer of 1933 the attitude of the United States towards the problem of security became more urgently important than ever because of the European situation and the threatened breakdown of the Disarmament Conference. In the *Guardian* on May 16th there appeared a message from its New York Correspondent earnestly warning Europeans not to be misled about the degree of international co-operation the United States was prepared to undertake. Both Congress and American public opinion, he declared, were "far more isolationist now than they were a few months ago and are firmly opposed to any action which might involve the United States in another European war which so many persons here believe is coming." No consultative pact, the Correspondent said, could receive the Senate's approval unless it left Congress full liberty of action in each individual case :

> President Roosevelt is a master politician, and it may safely be assumed that he will not propose to Congress any measure which could be described as embroiling the United States in a European quarrel.

It was on that day, May 16th, that President Roosevelt issued his disarmament appeal to the Heads of the nations represented at the Disarmament Conference. Although recognising what it called "the vagueness of the President's statement of the measures to be taken against an aggressor State," the *News Chronicle* in its editorial on the 17th declared that the message "obviously and immediately *ends the isolation of America.*"[1]

On May 22nd, 1933, Mr. Norman Davis, the American delegate to the Disarmament Conference, made a statement in which, after declaring that the United States was willing

> to consult with other States, in case of a threat to peace, with a view to averting conflict,

he said :

> Further than that, in the event that the States in conference determine that a State has been guilty of a breach of the peace in violation of its international obligations, and take measures against the violator, then, if we concur in the judgment rendered as to the responsibility of the guilty parties, we will refrain from any action tending to defeat such collective effort which the States may thus make to restore peace.

Even the *News Chronicle*, though it spoke of a "Great Day for Peace," referred also to "the extreme caution" of this pledge. The Opposition Leader, in the House of Commons on May 26th,

[1] The paper's own italics.

while recognising that the Davis statement was an advance on anything the United States Government had previously said, felt bound to say that the reservation behind it " militates very considerably against its effectiveness."

But the important point about the Davis statement is that it went beyond what American opinion was prepared to accept. Mr. Cordell Hull has explained in his *Memoirs* (p. 226) how the United States Government were " willing to make a declaratory statement whereby the United States would refrain from action tending to defeat collective efforts—sanctions—by the European nations, provided disarmament were agreed to generally." He added : " Bearing in mind the isolationist sentiment in the United States, this was a far-reaching decision." His predecessor, Mr. Stimson, has described the Davis statement as " the highest point of American post-war co-operation," adding that " it was not favourably received in Congress, and until late in 1938 the President and Secretary Hull, whatever their private sentiments, felt unable to play any part in the European struggle for collective security." [1] Indeed, within a few days after the Davis statement, Congress struck what Mr. Arnold J. Toynbee called " a serious blow " at the policy outlined in it.[2]

The *Times* Washington Correspondent, on May 19th, had foreshadowed strong and possibly effective opposition to the arms embargo resolution when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee came to deal with it. The New York Correspondent of the *Guardian* did likewise on May 22nd, quoting the warning given to President Roosevelt by Senator Lewis of Illinois that the United States would enter no pact to " decide as to the duty of a foreign nation to another foreign nation, or to adjudge one guilty of omission or commission in its relation to another foreign nation." That day, a *Guardian* editorial wrote that the Powers were not likely to agree upon an arms embargo against Japan, and were as little likely to agree upon financial sanctions. Its New York Correspondent, on May 23rd, said there was no doubt that anything which went further than such a consultative pact as the American Government was prepared to offer would be rejected by the Senate :

The opposition of the American Congress to making a definite advance in commitments either for active participation in sanctions or for passive

[1] *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 135.
[2] *Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1935, vol. II, p. 264.

co-operation in, for instance, a marine blockade has been strong and consistent ever since the end of the war, although it has not always been shared by successive American Presidents. Before agreeing with those enthusiasts who feel that now "American isolation is ended," it is as well to remember that in this matter the United States Senate has the last word. On May 28th the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the arms embargo resolution, but only after having amended it so that the President could not declare a discriminatory embargo. The amendment, moved by Senator Hiram Johnson, was as follows :

> Provided, however, that any prohibition of export, or of sale for export, prohibited under this resolution shall apply impartially to all of the parties in dispute or conflict to which it refers.

This news appears to have been reported in the *Guardian* and the *Times* only among the chief daily newspapers in this country. The New York Correspondent of the former paper proclaimed it an important victory for isolationist sentiment, but only one of several signs of growing isolationist spirit in the United States. The *Times* Washington Correspondent said that, "since punitive or passive action against an individual nation could be taken only, as now, under authority of a joint resolution by Congress," Senator Johnson declared that his amendment had preserved "the status of neutrality of this nation." This Correspondent drew attention to the fact that the emasculation of the arms embargo resolution had taken place "with the assent of the State Department." He wrote of the President's "delicate political nose," and the magnitude of his domestic task, to the demands of which the President would adjust the activities of his representatives in London at the World Monetary and Economic Conference due to meet early in the following month. The Correspondent quoted from an article in the *New York Herald Tribune*, which had said : "If the Administration is really going isolationist, it certainly ought to make the fact plain to its representatives abroad—and to the Powers with whom they are dealing."[1]

[1] According to the account in Mr. Cordell Hull's *Memoirs* (pp. 229-30), Senator Key Pittman, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, decided to accept the amendment, and conferred with President Roosevelt about it. Mr. Cordell Hull gives the text of a letter to the President in which he pointed out that the amendment was "directly in conflict with our position at Geneva as expressed by Norman Davis." The Secretary of State did not know whether the President had definitely committed himself, and his account does not enlighten us on that point, giving no indication of the President's response to his letter. "Pittman's committee, however, was obdurate in insisting that the embargo apply to both parties to a conflict, to the victim as well as to

The Roosevelt Administration had bowed to the developing isolationist trend, which in the next two years was to produce the famous Neutrality legislation. Naturally, it did not press the amended embargo resolution, which was eventually adopted by the Senate in February 1934, and passed into law in the following May. Thus, as Mr. Toynbee recorded in his contemporary *Survey*, " In the event . . . the Congress at Washington proved unwilling to empower the Executive to impose any embargo except on a basis of non-discrimination between the several parties to a conflict ; that is to say, the basis on which the Government of the United Kingdom had actually exercised their existing powers between February 28th and March 14th."

the aggressor. Consequently, we ceased to urge the passage of the measure, and it died. This was a real disappointment to me. It was the first of a series of efforts we made toward international co-operation which failed in Congress."

CHAPTER TWENTY

TO THE TANGKU TRUCE

1. The Last Months

ON May 31st, 1933, three days after the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate had passed out the arms embargo resolution with the Johnson amendment, an armistice was signed at Tangku, and the Manchurian phase of the long-drawn-out Sino-Japanese struggle was over.

Long before then, as we have said, interest in the Far East had waned in this country, and in the West generally. In the last three months, the Far Eastern situation and its problems were increasingly, and towards the end almost completely, overshadowed by other events and problems. The dominant fact was the rapid development of the National Socialist Revolution in Germany, with the accompanying menace of Hitler's foreign policy and the revival of German power under his dictatorship. Fear of another European war swept over the West.

In this country, the major reaction, both public and governmental, was heightened pressure for a Disarmament Convention. On March 16th Prime Minister MacDonald submitted to the Disarmament Conference a new draft Convention. Two days later, in Rome, Mussolini presented to the British Ministers his proposals for a pact between the four European Great Powers. Disarmament, security, revision of the peace treaties, were the connected issues which preoccupied statesmen and upon which public controversy was centred throughout the remaining weeks of the hostilities in Northern China.

While the brutalities of the Hitler régime, and particularly the persecution of the Jewish population, aroused widespread horror and indignation, there was a powerful renewal of the pressure for drastic disarmament by the former Allies. In many circles " strong words " were again directed against French reluctance. Meantime, with the new American Administration in being, the problem of war debts and the wider problems of currency stabilisation and trade restrictions were tackled once again. Preparations were made

for the long-deferred World Monetary and Economic Conference. The Prime Minister visited the United States towards the end of April, and was followed by other European statesmen. Before MacDonald reached America, that country, on April 19th, had abandoned the Gold Standard.

In May the tension in Europe rapidly increased. Once again the Disarmament Conference was threatened with deadlock. On the 11th a newspaper article by the German Foreign Minister, von Neurath, threatened German rearmament, and provoked counter-threats from Lord Hailsham and Paul-Boncour. On the 13th came what Sir Austen Chamberlain was to call " that terrible speech of Vice-Chancellor von Papen." Hitler was to address the Reichstag on May 17th. The day before, President Roosevelt issued his appeal to the nations. Hitler's speech, much more conciliatory than had been expected, eased the tension ; hopes were raised still further by the Davis statement of the 22nd ; and a week after the Tangku truce was signed the Disarmament Conference adjourned after having accepted the MacDonald draft Convention as a basis for further discussion.

Another matter figured prominently in Parliament, the Press and public attention during this period. That was the affair of the arrests in Moscow of British subjects employed by Metropolitan-Vickers, Ltd., their trial and the sentences imposed upon them ; the suspension of commercial negotiations between the two countries ; the embargo on Russian goods ; and the counter-embargo applied by the Soviet Government. In the first weeks of April, particularly during the trial, the matter took first place in the public interest.

2. The Press and the Far East

After the withdrawal of the British arms embargo on March 13th, the popular Press, irrespective of political colouring, paid only perfunctory attention to the Far East. We have stressed the other and graver preoccupations of the period. None the less, the contrast is striking, and certainly cannot wholly be explained by the impact of events nearer home. The decisive factor, undoubtedly, was the general realisation—not always admitted, and often reluctant—that nothing effective could be done about the Far East. With Japan now " declared the aggressor," as so many put it, and certainly defying the League, the concentration of attention upon matters

other than the widely proclaimed " test case " is in itself sufficient evidence.

When Japan gave notice of resignation from the League of Nations on March 27th, most of the newspapers made some editorial comment. The *Daily Mail* did not even do that, contenting itself with Ward Price's report on the event. After its advice to China on March 14th to make peace forthwith, the *Mail* did not again allude to the subject editorially. Indeed, the Far East seems to have been dropped from the paper altogether after March 28th. By way of contrast, this paper had twelve leading articles between March 15th and April 20th on the case of the Metro-Vickers men and Soviet Russia.

The *Daily Express* was much the same. On March 28th it found space in its editorial column to say that Japan's withdrawal from the League was " the end of a noble idea which was conceived in idealism, abandoned at birth by its author, and eventually prostituted to the machinations of European politics." Once again, a month later (April 27th), the Far East attracted editorial comment. This time it was in relation to two reports, one that China and Japan had come to terms, the other that the Japanese armies were turning to face the Soviet frontier. These events, said the *Express*, were " two phases of a single mighty happening." Japan was establishing her dominion on the mainland of Northern Asia, had taken Manchuria at the expense of China, and would secure her grip in the hinterland of her colony at the expense of Russia. Japan, the article ended, was " proving once more that it is the nation with the indomitable purpose which makes its own history."

The *News Chronicle* is more interesting. After its hectic editorial activity in the last week of February, campaigning for an arms embargo, its subsequent apparent indifference is all the more remarkable. It had protested editorially on March 14th against the withdrawal of the British embargo to which it had given so cautious a welcome. Afterwards, it only once devoted a leading article to the subject, and that was when Japan left the League. It then (March 28th) expressed the view that the withdrawal ended a " scandal." The League, it said, " in as close conjunction as possible with both America and Russia," would have to proceed to make its own arrangements for a real settlement in the East. For the moment its part might be " a watching brief," but the time for intervention might easily come sooner than seemed at

the moment possible. Thereafter there was editorial silence, unbroken even when the news of the Tangku armistice came at the very end of May. There was no advocacy of sanctions or any form of action. Even the arms embargo had lost interest for the *News Chronicle* ; its subsequent history, as set out above, appears to have passed unnoticed even in its news columns. By way of contrast again, this paper had seven editorials on the Moscow arrests and trial, to which, indeed, it sent its distinguished contributor Mr. A. J. Cummings, whose cables and articles on the matter attracted much attention.

The *Daily Herald's* second leader on March 28th dealt with Japan's notice of withdrawal from the League. It stressed the point that this did not absolve Japan nor relieve the League States from their obligations. Quoting Article X of the Covenant, the *Herald* said : " Either that is a solemn obligation, or every treaty . . . is a scrap of paper." This paper did not pass by without editorial comment the two main developments in the Far East during the months of April and May. The first of these was the penetration of Japanese forces south of the Great Wall and their threat to Peking. The second related to the inevitable disputes between Japan and Soviet Russia concerning the Chinese Eastern Railway. Another second leader on April 21st said that Japan was " making full use of that freedom of action in the Far East for which she is so largely indebted to the tireless exertions of Sir John Simon." It referred to what it described as a Japanese threat to seize the railway by force and so cut direct communication with Vladivostok; to the occupation of a wide area of China proper and the threat to Peking. The League Council when it met in May " must assuredly take cognisance of the new aggression against China," said the *Herald.* " The action which eighteen months ago would have been simple and effective has now become more difficult. Yet sooner or later the League must act—or renounce its own Covenant." The reader was left to infer what " action " the *Herald* had in mind. Nothing further was said in this paper about the Chinese Eastern Railway, perhaps because of the Soviet offer to sell the line (reports of which, coming from Tokyo, had appeared in the *Times* and *Telegraph* on April 20th, the day before the *Herald* article). Indeed, the Far East was not again referred to in its editorial columns until May 24th, when reports of truce negotiations had come in. The concentration of attention on other issues may be illustrated

by the *Herald's* ten editorials during this period on the Metro-Vickers affair, and its more than twenty leaders on the Disarmament Conference, the Four-Power Pact and Germany.

The *Times* and the *Telegraph* maintained a constant flow of news items about the situation in the Far East, but editorial comment was infrequent. Both papers had second leaders on March 28th. The *Times* considered Japan's notice of withdrawal from the League no less keenly regrettable because it was expected. Japan, it pointed out, would have a freer hand than ever in China, and might perhaps persuade that country to enter into direct negotiations for a settlement of the Manchurian dispute. The League, moreover, would become still more preponderantly European in character. The *Telegraph* made much the same points. The *Times* admitted that there was "obvious truth" in the Japanese argument that, China not being an organised State, ordinary relations could not be maintained with her; but the answer to that argument was "of course that precisely on account of these abnormal conditions the Powers chiefly concerned all undertook at Washington not to intervene separately in their own interests." The *Telegraph*, on the other hand, said that nothing was to be gained by discussing the text of the Japanese justification, though "juridically, Japan has broken the rules of the League of Nations." The article in this paper added a reference to "mischievous suggestions" and "loose talk about economic boycotts and embargoes" at Geneva, which, it said, could do nothing but excite unnecessary heat and resentment. "It will be soon enough to discuss such questions if and when they are formally raised." This paper's subsequent editorial comments were unimportant until on May 25th it dealt with the reported truce. It may be noted once again, by way of illustration, that in the period following the withdrawal of the arms embargo the *Telegraph* had ten leaders on Germany (mostly about the treatment of the Jews), ten on the Metro-Vickers affair and its repercussions, and no fewer than twelve (all in April) on the preparatory negotiations for the World Economic Conference.

Between March 28th and its final comments on the truce on May 26th, the *Times* had only one editorial, which appeared on April 22nd. This summarised the Far Eastern situation in the following terms. Japan's self-imposed task was to establish order and a protectorate in Manchuria. She was being led by it ever farther afield. Japanese forces would never have crossed the Great Wall

had it not been felt necessary to deal with the Chinese troops there. They had in vain proposed a neutral zone. The Japanese would almost certainly come to an amicable arrangement with the Chinese if the latter would agree to one which recognised the State of Manchukuo, and some such arrangement was the only alternative to perpetual armed conflict between the two nations. But Chinese armies were still challenging the Japanese. The Nanking Government was still talking of counter offensives. It had been deluding the public with a stream of official announcements reporting sanguinary successes against the invader, although in fact there was very little actual fighting. Popular feeling was being maintained at patriotic pitch, and no Chinese politician dared to make a stand against it. Even the Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek, who was believed to favour an accommodation with Japan, did not openly advocate such a policy, but was busying himself fighting the Communists in Kiangsi. All the time Japan and China were nominally not at war ; the usual diplomatic relations were being maintained ; and negotiations were going on between the Japanese authorities and the Nanking Government, the principal intermediary being the Mayor of Peking, a friend of Chiang Kai-shek. The *Times* drew attention to foreign interests, particularly to the harbour of Chinwangtao, which was in Japanese occupation. It was to be hoped that " the Japanese authorities will realise that, though Great Britain is at present engrossed in other affairs, there must some day be a settlement made with due regard for foreign rights." Japanese hands were very full, although the dispute with the Soviet Government in the north did not greatly disturb Tokyo ; and the Washington Treaties were in the background. " Some day all the Powers who signed them will have to consider, in the light of their terms, the new situation now being created."

The *Times*, plainly, was in favour of the Chinese reaching an agreement with Japan. That, too, was the view—directly expressed —of the *Observer*. On April 23rd it said that " the simple, deplorable reason " for the Japanese penetration beyond the Great Wall was " that the North Chinese forces and the Nanking Government have chosen not to leave bad alone, but to make it worse." At any time in the past year and a half, declared the *Observer*, it was " mad to encourage China," for Japan could work her will. " Now, as before, the only sensible policy for China is to make the best of a bad business and to accept the inevitable." That view was repeated

in subsequent comments. Similarly, in regard to the Chinese Eastern Railway, the *Observer* held on May 7th that Russia was nearly as powerless as China, and on May 14th that the Russian offer to sell her rights in the Chinese Eastern Railway was wise. It declared that the *de facto* delimitation of existing spheres of power in the Far East was irrevocably fixed :' " We shall see no alteration in our time."

The *Manchester Guardian,* discussing Japan's notice of withdrawal from the League on March 29th, said that every new Japanese statement made it more essential " that the League should not cease to seek after ways and means of upholding the Covenant and China." Despite other preoccupations, this paper found space for much editorial comment on the Far East in the month of April. On the 10th it expressed the view that Japan was thrusting farther and farther into China because she could not help herself: " for China will not treat and cannot be decisively defeated." In this editorial the *Guardian* referred to the Japanese occupation of Chinwangtao. It repeated its suggestion (made at the time) that when this port had first been endangered in the previous January the British Foreign Office had offered Japan a " deal."[1] On April 12th it had an unimportant leader on Russo-Japanese relations, and next day one on a speech made by General Araki.

On April 18th another *Guardian* editorial proclaimed that the Japanese campaign was proceeding according to plan. " We ought," it said, " to defend the force of treaties ; we ought to strengthen China ; we ought to uphold the Covenant in the East so that it will be stronger in the West ; we ought to exert ourselves energetically in order that we shall not be unjustly shut out from the trade opportunities that still remain to us in China. We do none of these things, or do them insufficiently." The *Guardian* thought that " even now it might not be too late for action if we had a policy and were prepared, along with the League and the United States, to press it." It urged the policy of the arms embargo, and a refusal of financial assistance to Japan. And, " in any event it is necessary to insist and reinsist that the world condemns her attack on China and will never accept its results." The *Guardian* urged that assistance

[1] " . . . a London newspaper which is in close touch with the Foreign Office threw out a broad hint that Britain would look favourably at the conquest of Jehol provided that the Japanese refrained from entering Northern China. The Japanese found these kindly comments useful at Geneva, and they conquered Jehol ; now they display their gratitude by capturing Chinwangtao. That is the issue of this would-be ' deal.' "

should be given to China in her administration. " China should be made to feel that, whatever the present success of the Japanese aggressor, the League and its friends desire to go on helping her, if she will have their help, to a better and more stable condition, and that, however long the interval may be, they will one and all refuse to recognise the results of Japanese aggression. If they would do that the period would not be so long after all."

Next day (April 19th) another leader discussed the Chinese Eastern Railway position. The Soviet Government, it said, would not risk a war if it could possibly help it, " but protests, unbacked by force, are music in the Japanese soldier's ears." Thereafter, for the rest of April and for the greater part of May, even the *Guardian* had nothing to say editorially about the Far East. Even its news items were, for the most part, brief. When, on May 18th, its third editorial returned to the subject, the occasion was provided by some questions in the House of Commons on the previous day.

3. The Lindley Incident

A message had appeared in the *Guardian* on May 9th from its Ottawa Correspondent. It stated that Sir Francis Lindley, the British Ambassador in Tokyo, in an interview published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, had expressed " sympathy with the policies of Japan in Manchuria." The interview, as published, was said to read as follows :

> The Japanese had much provocation for their actions in Manchukuo, Sir Francis said. They had driven the Russians out and thereby gained rights themselves, and the way in which the Chinese were undermining these rights exhausted their patience and led to their military occupation, first of Manchuria and later of Jehol. His opinion is that they will not advance further in China proper. The Chinese, Sir Francis continued, were extremely anti-foreign and have caused Britain much trouble, necessitating the dispatch of many British troops to Shanghai ten years ago. At the present time they are seeking the friendship of other nations, but that is only because they desire allies against Japan. Asked if it were not better from a trade viewpoint to cultivate friendship with China, Sir Francis replied : " Japan's friendship means more to Britain than China's. Japan has always been a good friend of Britain and rendered extremely valuable aid during the Great War."

The *Guardian* itself made no comment on this report at the time. On May 11th Lord Cecil had a good deal to say about it in the

House of Lords. He had initiated another debate, this time on the Far East as well as on disarmament. Much of what he had to say has already been dealt with in another connection.[1] In the course of his remarks, Lord Cecil expressed the view that the attitude of the Government during the Sino-Japanese dispute had been "lacking in firmness and consistency," and he quoted in full the interview alleged to have been given by Sir Francis Lindley as showing "the kind of spirit which, at any rate in some parts of the Government machine, exists." It was, he said, "the familiar doctrine of those who think that the Japanese are right." It seemed to him absolutely inconsistent with the public statements made by the British Government, and if Sir Francis Lindley had really made the statement, it seemed to him to be in conflict with the best traditions of the diplomatic service. But the important point, Lord Cecil continued, was that it gave the impression, "which unfortunately is very widespread, I am told, that in Tokyo it is believed that the British Government have never been in earnest in supporting the attitude of the League of Nations or the attitude even of the Lytton Report."

Lord Cecil was careful not to commit himself about the accuracy of the reported interview, both before quoting it and afterwards, but the remarks attributed to Sir Francis had not, so far as he knew, been contradicted. Lord Hailsham, in the course of his reply on behalf of the Government, said that it was the first he had heard about the matter and could therefore say nothing about it except that Ambassadors were precluded from defending themselves against any criticism or attack, and that he would be very slow to believe that Sir Francis Lindley had been guilty of any indiscretion or impropriety.

Almost a week later, on May 17th, the matter was raised in the House of Commons, when questions were asked by Mr. Mander, Mr. McEntee and Mr. Lunn. All three apparently accepted the authenticity of the reported interview. Mr. McEntee said that sympathy with the policy of Japan in Manchuria had been expressed, and Mr. Lunn said that Sir Francis Lindley had "justified Japan's seizure of Manchuria." Mr. Mander asked whether the views expressed represented those of the British Government. Mr. McEntee asked whether the Foreign Secretary would "suggest greater reticence on a matter on which Great Britain as a nation has taken a different attitude at Geneva." Mr. Lunn asked whether

[1] See pp. 314-5 above.

the Government proposed to abide by the findings and recommendations of the Assembly's report of February 24th, and, if so, would issue instructions to Sir Francis Lindley accordingly. Sir John Simon replied that until he had had an opportunity of seeing Sir Francis he could not comment on the matter beyond saying that the Government's policy had already been clearly defined and was, of course, one of loyalty to the Assembly's report. In reply to a supplementary question, Sir John added that he could not " assume that a dispatch in an English paper in the form of a telegram from Ottawa about something which is supposed to have been said in Winnipeg is in all respects quite accurate."

These proceedings in the Commons caused the *Guardian* to break an editorial silence of a month's duration on the Far East. It declared on May 18th that Sir John Simon's statement about loyalty to the Assembly's report was " impeccable," but " what does it mean ? " Successful violence, it said, had led the Japanese to further violence ; the need of common action in the face of Japanese aggression was all the greater ; and it was apparent that no treaty rights were safe against a Power whose appetite had grown with eating.

Yet this is the occasion chosen by a high official of the British Government, Sir Francis Lindley, the Ambassador in Tokyo, to make a public statement justifying Japanese action. If this Ambassador has been reported rightly, he has been worse than indiscreet. But foolish words do not break bones, even when they fall from an Ambassador. The melancholy fact is this. Sir Francis Lindley's interview is far more representative of British policy than Sir John Simon's reassuring statement. Great Britain has so far consistently refused to join in any common action which would stop Japan. " Loyalty " is a cheap word when it implies no positive obligations.

On May 29th, in the House of Commons, Mr. McEntee asked the Foreign Secretary whether he was in a position to make any further statement with regard to the interview attributed to Sir Francis Lindley expressing sympathy with the policy of Japan in Manchuria. Sir John Simon's reply was :

I am informed by Sir Francis Lindley that the report of an interview with him which was quoted in the Press in this country as having been published in Canada is not correct. He did not, in fact, say anything in explanation of Japanese policy that had not already been said in the report of the Lytton Commission.

The *Guardian*, it appears, had nothing to say about this denial. Nor, so far as we are aware, had Lord Cecil, despite the fact that his remarks in the House of Lords were given wide subsequent circulation. They were reproduced at length, for example, in the *China Review* for July-September 1933. This reproduction has a special importance because Mr. Zilliacus was to lift it from the *Review* and insert it in his influential *Inquest on Peace*. It occupied, indeed, more than three-quarters of the section in that work devoted to " The Nature of British Policy " in the Sino-Japanese conflict.

4. In Parliament

The history of the arms embargo during this period in Parliament has already been dealt with. We have seen how minor a part it played in the Commons debate on March 23rd, and how very little was said about the Far East in the next foreign affairs debate in the House on April 13th. It has also been noted earlier that when the House of Lords discussed foreign affairs on March 30th, Lord Cecil, who initiated the debate, devoted his remarks entirely to the Disarmament Conference. Lord Ponsonby, the pacifist Opposition Leader, did make a brief reference to the Far East on that occasion before proceeding to talk about disarmament and connected matters. He did not know if the Government had explored all the possibilities of action by the League, and drew attention to two, first, " the withdrawal of diplomatic representatives if hostilities continue," and, secondly, " an economic boycott " (which he afterwards alluded to as a " blockade "). Lord Ponsonby said he only wished to draw attention to the point " because the inability of the League to act has, to some extent, rather weakened its authority in the world." Lord Hailsham's brief reply was that it would be very unfortunate if any impression gained ground abroad that H.M. Government were considering any such proposals, and that it seemed to him " rather a curious fact that those who are most ardent in their professions of desire for peace seem to be the readiest to encourage us in courses which could only lead to war." The only other speaker to mention the Far East was Lord Halsbury, who said that Japan was undoubtedly in the right and under the necessity of doing what she did.

Questions in the House of Commons after the arms embargo issue ceased to arouse interest were few and rather mixed. On

May 3rd Morgan Jones asked two questions. The first was whether the Government would instruct the British Minister at Peking to offer his services with a view to negotiating an armistice between China and Japan, to which Baldwin replied that that was not considered likely to lead to good results. The second was whether the Government, in view of Japanese occupation of a large area south of the Great Wall, proposed to ask for an extraordinary meeting of the League Assembly. Baldwin answered that, according to his information, the Japanese troops were retiring, and that the situation did not appear to afford sufficient reason for the Government to take the step suggested. On the same day Mr. Seymour Cocks asked for a statement on Japanese-Soviet relations, and on May 10th Mr. Mander wanted information about the proposed sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

The questions relative to the alleged statement by Sir Francis Lindley on May 17th were accompanied by one from Morgan Jones suggesting that the League's Advisory Committee should be requested to declare that all States which had accepted the Assembly's report were bound to consider invalid any sale by the Soviet Union of its rights in the C.E.R. to Japan. Sir John Simon was not clear that such action would be appropriate in the circumstances. On May 22nd Morgan Jones repeated his question of the 3rd in more specific terms: he asked whether the Government would instruct the British Minister to China "to suggest an armistice between the Chinese and Japanese forces that would leave the latter during such armistice in possession of the occupied Chinese territory." The Prime Minister said in reply that the action suggested would be inappropriate unless it corresponded to the wishes of both parties to the dispute. He added, in answer to a request for information, that the Japanese forces were advancing again, and that their object was said to be to produce conditions which would prevent further attacks from the side of China. Morgan Jones then said: "May we take it that the Japanese forces are at liberty now to occupy the whole of Chinese territory without incurring any prospect of protest from the other Powers at Geneva?"—to which MacDonald replied: "Certainly not."

On May 25th Mr. Neil Maclean asked for information about the proposed sale of Russia's interest in the Chinese Eastern Railway, and suggested that the Government should take steps to secure recognition of Chinese sovereignty. Baldwin, in reply, said it was

understood that the Soviet Government had offered to sell their rights to the Manchukuo Government, but it was not apparent to him that that involved any obligation on the part of the signatories of the Nine Power Treaty. He added, ironically, that he would be very sorry to assume that the Soviet Government would do anything to infringe the sovereignty of another country.

Apart from questions for information about the reported truce, little else occurred at Westminster in relation to the Far East during this closing period. Another foreign affairs debate took place in the Commons on May 26th, but, with the exception of Lansbury, no participant made more than a passing allusion to the Far East. The Opposition Leader, who quoted some of the parliamentary questions and answers, said that the answers were ludicrous ; and, after remarking, in connection with President Roosevelt's appeal to the nations, that " it would be an excellent thing if we got Britain and America to say that they would not send troops out of their own country any more," inquired what the Government were going to do " now that the Japanese Government has defied the League." Even Mr. Seymour Cocks devoted his speech to Germany and the general problem of security as an essential condition of disarmament. In this connection, however, he made two references to the Far East. Criticising the new security clauses in the British draft Disarmament Convention drawn up in the light of Norman Davis's statement, he repeated a statement by Lansbury that it had taken the Powers eighteen months to determine who was the aggressor in the Far East, and asked, " What kind of defence is that going to be to any nation ? " And, in regard to a contention that the League could only exercise moral force, Mr. Cocks said that the moral verdict of the world against Japan was not very helpful to China.

On May 31st, the day on which the Tangku armistice was signed, Mr. Cocks asked whether the Government proposed to take any action, or to propose any action to the League Council, against the aggressor in the Sino-Japanese conflict, and Sir John Simon replied that the initiative lay with the Assembly's Advisory Committee.

5. The Armistice

Press comments on the termination of hostilities were few. The *Herald,* on May 24th, said that the Japanese armies were dictating

a truce to China at the gates of Peking. Many people, it proceeded, would shrug their shoulders : after all, Manchuria was far away, China was " only China," and peace was peace. But that was a " terribly short-sighted view." To weaken the League, even in the Far East, was to weaken it everywhere. There was only one guarantee of peace, declared the *Herald*, and that was " the surety that, universally and certainly, international law and international justice will be firmly and inexorably enforced." There was yet time. " A ' truce ' is being dictated by armed force. But the peace can, even now, be made and enforced by the League and in accordance with the law. It is no paradox, but a sober fact, that the future peace of Europe, as of all the world, may depend upon the vindication of the League's authority in the Far East." How it was to be vindicated the *Herald* did not say.

The *Guardian*, on May 22nd, said that the friends of China could not blame the Nanking Government if it shrank before the prospect of a long and bloody martyrdom. The fault, it declared, lay with the League. China had been consoled with words and left to find her remedy herself. There was no prospect of an arms embargo nor of financial sanctions. If China accepted the Japanese terms she would do so under protest, and it was improbable that any Government which signed them would endure for long. On the 24th the *Guardian* repeated this view. The Nanking Government, it said, might find itself unable to refuse whatever terms the Japanese were pleased to offer, but could the Japanese be certain that the Nanking Government would last if it subscribed to a peace which left Manchukuo in possession, and even if it were to survive, what likelihood was there that China would regard the terms as binding in the future ?

On the 25th the *Telegraph* considered that, in the interests of China herself, nothing was more obvious and certain that the sooner the Nanking Government came to a full settlement with Tokyo the better it would be for what remained of the Celestial Republic. It seemed that " face-saving " considerations had counted even in the choice of date for arranging the provisional truce. The League Assembly had pronounced in China's favour on February 24th. Having received no satisfaction at the expiration of three months, China was technically entitled on May 24th to declare war upon the aggressor. " Instead, and very wisely, she enters into arrangements for a truce, and thus, according to the face-saving argument, she magnanimously renounces her right to declare the war she can no

longer wage." The outstanding fact, said the *Telegraph*, was the creation of a vast new State in the Far East under the tutelage and direction of Japan. True, Manchukuo had not been " recognised " by the European Great Powers or by the United States, " and President Hoover's Administration even said that it would never be recognised. . . . Nevertheless, there it is." No manœuvres, the editorial concluded, would extricate China from the plain necessity of negotiating a settlement with Japan on the basis of existing facts.

The *Times* had an editorial on the matter on the 26th. Peking had been saved from Japanese occupation by a timely truce. The latter had saved the Japanese from a most embarrassing success, but it might well have saved the Chinese Central Government from complete disaster. As usual, the *Times* was the only newspaper which gave any real information about the internal politics of China. In this editorial, it said that for months past " the petulant students, the secure and distant Cantonese, and the partisans of unemployed war lords have urged the Government to flood the North with troops and to harass the Japanese until military and financial exhaustion compelled them to abandon their protection of their Manchurian client State." Some, but not all, of the members of the Government seemed to accept this policy, and a hundred thousand soldiers of sorts were collected about Jehol. " The Japanese blew " and " the card-castle collapsed." Mr. T. V. Soong, the *Times* proceeded, drew the obvious moral from a shameful rout, yet, within a few weeks, Mr. Wang Ching-wei, the acting head of the Nanking Executive in Mr. Soong's absence, announced that the *moral* of the Army was excellent and that it would take the offensive. " It attacked and was repulsed : it attacked again, and this time the Japanese, instead of confining themselves to sorties from the Great Wall, advanced on a wide front towards Peking and Tientsin." Only then, according to the *Times*, did prudence assert itself and the Chinese Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-shek, was allowed by his colleagues to send the Mayor of Peking to open negotiations with the invaders and to prevent a disaster which might have had incalculable consequences. And even then the Chinese Foreign Minister protested and threatened to resign.

The *Times* went on to discuss the terms of the truce. The chief difficulty, in its view, was the demand for the abandonment of the anti-Japanese boycott in the Peking region, particularly since the Nanking Government had " never ceased to maintain, in the face of

not a little evidence to the contrary, that the boycott is always and everywhere a spontaneous and irrepressible manifestation of a patriotic resentment against Japanese Imperialism." However, the *Times* thought there were ways by which " face " might be saved. " The Chinese authorities in the North cannot be expected to kill the boycott, but they need not necessarily ' strive officiously '—or officially for that matter—' to keep alive ' an agitation which will otherwise perpetuate friction between the Northern provinces and Japan." To Chiang Kai-shek and the ablest of his colleagues, the *Times* said, what mattered most was not Manchuria, or Canton, but undivided control of the wealthiest and most populous provinces of China and of the great river which enriches them. That was a realistic policy. Its success was essential to Chinese unity. But " it is still uncertain whether jealous rivals and youthful Chauvinists will permit him to pursue it to the end."

6. Sanctions?

Our investigation shows one thing very plainly—the absence in this country during the last phase of the Manchurian affair of any real demand that the League of Nations should apply against Japan the sanctions (however they might be interpreted) of Article XVI of the Covenant. The Assembly had adopted its report of February 24th, 1933. Japan had refused to accept it. She had withdrawn from the Assembly, and soon afterwards given notice of departure from the League itself. Military operations had been continued first in Jehol and then south of the Great Wall, and Japan had eventually secured an armistice which provided effective security for her new protectorate, the State of Manchukuo. Yet at no point had talk of sanctions reached anything like the height they had briefly attained during the fighting at Shanghai a year before. Opponents of sanctions had had little cause then for any real alarm. But in 1933 they had no occasion for alarm at all, and in fact they showed very little.

The sanctions of Article XVI, it may be said, were not applicable. Certainly, as has been noted, the legal position was extremely doubtful. Certainly, also, the *Herald's* contention at the time of the Assembly meeting that the sanctions of the Article would come automatically into operation against Japan in certain eventualities was unsound, and nothing more was heard of it from that quarter

after the debate of February 27th. But those who had toyed with the idea of applying sanctions against Japan were not influenced by juridical niceties. Indeed, they (and others) habitually spoke very loosely about the League Assembly having declared Japan the aggressor, which, juridically, it certainly had never done. Article XVI, it is true, was never invoked. But there was not the slightest shadow of a demand in this country from any quarter that it should be.

We have seen how, by the time of the debate on February 27th, suggestions about sanctions had been watered down, in most cases, to a demand for the imposition of an arms embargo. The announcement and subsequent withdrawal for lack of support of the provisional British embargo demonstrated clearly enough that there was no prospect of the requisite support being forthcoming for any kind of sanctions. Some apparently continued to cherish the illusion that international agreement might be possible on an arms embargo directed against Japan, but weeks before that illusion was shattered by the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate interest in the matter had petered out.

In nearly all instances, throughout the dispute, advocacy of sanctions had taken the form of demanding their application in certain hypothetical circumstances, and, above all, conditionally upon the participation of the United States. Now and again, it is true, that condition had not been specifically stated, as in the resolution of February 22nd passed by the joint meeting of the T.U.C. General Council and the Labour Party's National Executive. It will be remembered that the first part of that resolution said that, in the event of Japan rejecting the proposals of the League Committee of Nineteen, all sections of the Labour Movement should pass resolutions calling for the application of an economic boycott in accordance with Article XVI.

But what steps were taken to implement that after Japan had rejected the proposals? We have seen how the Parliamentary Labour Party acted on February 27th, how confused were the demands presented by its leader, how its leading spokesmen welcomed the Government's arms embargo, how they urged further efforts at conciliation, how even Mr. Seymour Cocks made his proposals for economic pressure upon Japan dependent on American co-operation. There was no attempt to organise a campaign in support of an "economic boycott." The Parliamentary Labour

Party did not raise the matter in the House of Commons after February 27th or after the withdrawal of the British provisional arms embargo. If the first part of the resolution of February 22nd had been due, as, indeed, was obviously the case, to the influence of persons outside Parliament, and, in all probability, to certain trade union leaders in particular, these people did not maintain their pressure. The trade union leaders were conspicuously silent in the succeeding months. An unimplemented resolution, not even verbally renewed, constituted no real demand for the application of an economic boycott. Sir Stafford Cripps, in an interview after the withdrawal of the arms embargo,[1] thought it more urgently necessary than ever to take some action against Japan, and he suggested it should begin with the withdrawal of Ambassadors. "If that failed a monetary embargo could be imposed. If that failed to withdraw the Japanese from Jehol we could apply economic sanctions and close our ports to her." Sir Stafford, on that occasion, appeared to have League action in mind, for he went on to speak of the League facing its obligations, and he did not mention the United States. But that was an isolated utterance, and Sir Stafford himself certainly did not follow it up in the House of Commons. It would be absurd to magnify into a demand for the application of the sanctions of the Covenant Mr. Attlee's query on April 13th about "a world-wide boycott of Japanese goods."

We have noted how small a part the Far East played in the series of foreign affairs debates which took place between that of February 27th and the Tangku truce at the end of May; and how little was said on the subject by Labour speakers. The *Herald* could get no further on February 28th than to talk about enforcing the Covenant "if and when the moment comes." When, a month later (March 28th), it said "sooner or later the League must act," and when two months after that (May 24th) it wrote about vindicating the authority of the League, it was using words that might look well on the record, but it was not presenting, still less pressing, any demand that the League of Nations should apply sanctions against Japan. The *New Statesman*, it may be said, did demand "economic and diplomatic pressure," but it did so only "if Article XVI were raised," and *if* the United States participated, and then in the form, if practicable, of embargoes on arms, certain raw materials and loans, and decidedly not in the form of a blockade.

[1] *Manchester Guardian*, March 14th.

The League of Nations Union made no demand that the League should apply the sanctions of Article XVI. It was always careful to make League action conditional upon the co-operation of the United States. Its resolution of March 3rd, even so, spoke only of refusing arms and financial facilities. That of May 15th urged on the Government " the necessity of taking, in co-operation with the other members of the League and the United States, the measures necessary to put a stop to this state of things "—a fine, comprehensive phrase. But what measures, on May 15th, 1933, did the L.N.U. Executive consider likely to secure the co-operation of the United States? Lord Cecil, in his Leeds speech on February 28th, had also urged international refusal of arms and financial assistance, and even withdrawal of Ambassadors from Tokyo. He did not, however present any such proposals in the House of Lords until, on May 11th, he spoke of several possible steps, one of which he mentioned—an international ban on Japanese exports. Mr. Mander's suggestions for possible action, it will be recalled, were, on March 23rd, withdrawal of Ambassadors, withholding of loans, and, if necessary, a ban on Japanese exports. The *News Chronicle*, on February 28th, did not get beyond withholding credits, apart from an arms embargo; and by a month later it had reduced League action to a " watching brief." As for the *Manchester Guardian*, the great verbal upholder of the Covenant, it had got at the same time (March 29th) to seeking after ways and means of doing the upholding; and, on April 10th, still not having given up hope of an arms embargo, it wanted refusal of financial assistance to Japan, but placed its real emphasis upon the need to give technical assistance to the Chinese Administration as a longer-run policy.

PART FIVE

POST-ARMISTICE

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE AFTER YEARS

1. Warmongers and Warmongers

IT is easy to call upon a Government to " take action " to achieve this or that objective. You need not go deeply into questions of ways and means. You can, indeed, attach conditions (carefully but not conspicuously) which are unlikely to be fulfilled, and which you may even know cannot be fulfilled. And when the objective is not achieved, when failure in that sense is plain, it is then all the easier to blame the Government. When there is no longer any possibility of the kind of action you had vaguely and conditionally suggested from time to time, you can be bolder and more specific about what ought to have been done. You can overlook your previous conditions, or, at any rate, minimise their importance. When danger is over, you can condemn the Government for not having taken risks you would certainly not have taken yourself. You can suggest, and even say, that you would have been prepared to take those risks. Or, alternatively, you can maintain that there never were any serious risks, and that it is shameful that the Government did not do what you had carefully refrained from urging that it should do. Of course, you will be challenged, and when challenged you will find yourself in difficulties. You may not be able to get away with it, not altogether anyhow. But you can persist, and more often than not with impunity. Your challengers cannot be everywhere. They may not, indeed, be as active as you are ; and, anyhow, they are at a great disadvantage. After all, the desired objective was not achieved, and all sorts of unfortunate consequences can be plausibly attributed to the failure. And you were not the Government.

The temptation to pursue such a line of conduct is not easily resisted by disappointed idealists or by eager politicians. In 1933 and the following years the idealists of the " peace movement," the pacifists and Covenanters, were bitterly disillusioned ; and the politicians of the Opposition were even more bitter, and eager for any stick with which to beat the " National " Government and its hated leaders, for " 1931 " and its consequences dominated their

whole outlook. In such circumstances, the temptation proved irresistible. Manchuria became and remained a major item in attacks upon the Government and its foreign policy.

After the Assembly resolution of February 24th, 1933, and the debate of February 27th, as we have seen, the Far Eastern situation itself was rapidly and increasingly overshadowed by other events. After the armistice of May 31st it attracted very little interest. If there had ever been a time for coercive action of any kind against Japan, it had obviously passed. Manchukuo was a "non-recognised" fact. Although from time to time the Government might be asked what it proposed to do, or it might be said that something ought to be done, about the Far East, criticism was directed almost exclusively against its past policy in that respect. In the circumstances, recrimination was easier and safer, and the hesitant became bolder. In the House of Commons there were constant echoes of the active propaganda campaign outside, but, in the House, the critics could be directly challenged.

During the years 1933, 1934 and 1935 the self-styled "peace movement" in this country redoubled its efforts in support of the Disarmament Conference and resolutely opposed even the slightest increase in expenditure on the defence services. This was the period of the East Fulham and other "peace or war" by-elections, of Votes of Censure against the expansion of the Air Force and against Government White Papers on Defence, of fiercely contemptuous attacks upon Mr. Churchill and other "militarists" and of the so-called "Peace Ballot." In its propaganda the "peace movement" was much given to using the argument that rearmament was bound to lead to war. The advocates of rearmament were denounced in the country by their less scrupulous opponents (the much larger proportion) as "warmongers," and the general dread of war was most effectively exploited in criticism both of the Conservative Party, which was pressing for rearmament, and of the Government's modest measures in that direction. But the continued and increasingly virulent propaganda against the Government in regard to the Sino-Japanese dispute of 1931-33 exposed the critics to counter-attack. The charge of "warmongering" had been made against them, as we have seen, during the dispute itself, with some excuse but with little justification. It was now renewed, and with greater plausibility. The general pattern of the controversy about Manchuria was the same as that of the brief "sanctions" controversies during

the course of the dispute itself, but it was conducted in the past tense. It may be simply set out in these terms : " The Government did nothing—or worse "—" What would you have done ? "—" Impose economic sanctions "—" That would have meant war."

The " peace movement " critics of the Government were often obliged, under pressure, to admit that the imposition of economic sanctions against Japan might have involved this country in war ; but such admissions, as we shall see, were extremely reluctant, embarrassed and evasive. We find these critics indignantly denying that they had ever advocated war against Japan. That was perfectly true ; but, since they had developed the habit of saying that economic sanctions ought to have been applied against Japan, they had to meet the argument that such sanctions would have meant war. Invariably, what their answer came to was that there would have been no real risk. No one maintained that more strongly than Lord Cecil. Those among the critics who had advocated economic sanctions, it must be remembered, had invariably made action conditional upon the participation of the United States of America as well as of the other League States. Hence their eagerness to believe that the British Government had " rebuffed " the United States, and their rashness later on in jumping to the conclusions they wished to draw from Mr. Stimson's book. The " peace " critics of the Government could not justly complain when their contention that economic sanctions should have been applied was taken seriously in public controversy ; but the exploitation and counter-exploitation of pacific sentiment for party ends, deplorable in itself and disastrous in its effects, incidentally obscured the fact that during the period of the Manchurian dispute advocacy of economic sanctions had been tardy, hesitant, spasmodic, limited and safeguarded by unrealisable conditions.

2. Mr. Mander Sees More Clearly

The House of Commons debates illustrate the process described above. The first foreign affairs debate after the Tangku truce took place on June 13th, 1933. There were a few references to the Far East.

Mr. Attlee complained that British policy, as reflected in the action, " or rather the inaction," of the League in the Sino-Japanese dispute, had shown that there was no security. The Far Eastern

matter was " an open sore in the body politic." It was all very well to say that there was an armistice. What the world was waiting for, said Mr. Attlee, was " action."

It is all very well to say there are grave reasons for not taking action in the Far East. Of course there are grave reasons ; but I do not believe in a policy of buying off militarism by concessions, and I do not think the Foreign Secretary believes in it.

Mr. Mander, discussing security as Mr. Attlee had done in relation to the disarmament problem, was now worried about one of Sir John Simon's remarks in his speech of February 27th. It was not the one he was to describe in 1941 as " devastating "—nor was he devastated by it, only completely baffled. It was Sir John's final remark, " In no circumstances will this Government authorise this country to be a party to the struggle." Mr. Mander said : " I entirely fail to understand how the Foreign Secretary could make any such statement having regard to the foreign obligations which we have undertaken and to which he has declared our adherence to the full on so many occasions." Perhaps Mr. Mander did not clearly understand the nature of our obligations. He went on to discuss the question of sanctions, but not specifically in relation to the Far East. There were, he said, three main policies. There was the policy of doing nothing, which seemed to him to be the Government's policy—" certainly it has been their policy with regard to the Far East." The second was the policy of military sanctions, " a matter which is to be avoided if we can possibly do so, although there may be cases where it would arise, and, if it arose, I would not shrink from using them in defence of world order." Mr. Mander, it will be recalled, had definitely ruled out military sanctions in regard to Japan in his speech on March 23rd, 1933. The third—and this was " the real weapon of the League "—was economic sanctions ; and Mr. Mander wanted that carefully studied. Two other things, he added, might be done—the withdrawal of Ambassadors and an embargo on arms—but they were of minor importance compared with economic sanctions.

It will be recalled that Richard Wallhead, alone on the Labour benches, had on February 27th advocated " a keen economic boycott " of Japan. This time he argued : " We ought to have used the economic boycott." He evidently took the view that the opportunity had been missed. Wallhead described the policy of the Government and of the League in the dispute as " the most calamitous

exhibition that we have had for a considerable time." The League, he said, " took not the slightest notice of anything " the Lytton Commission had said. " They allowed the Japanese Government to go on in its own sweet way." Wallhead found an explanation of " the supine policy " of the British and the other Governments " in the attempt to build up a power against Russia in the Far East." He went on to say that Russia would have had far more excuse for invading Manchuria than ever Japan had, because of " her own railway " and Japanese objectives. Whether Wallhead remembered that Russia had invaded Manchuria in 1929 in order to protect " her own railway " against the Chinese, and had done so with the tacit consent of Japan, we do not know. He proceeded to make the following extraordinary comment :

> She [Russia] showed her pacific intentions by the way she handled the entire situation as far as the Far Eastern question was concerned, and one could have wished that our own Government had shown something of the same attitude of mind that was exhibited by the Russian Government.

It was after these remarks that Wallhead came to say that we ought to have used the economic boycott ! Apparently, to him, Great Britain had been " supine," but had not given any indication of " pacific intentions."

Mr. Neil MacLean, the only other speaker to mention the Far East, thought that the British Government " might have taken up a firmer attitude at the beginning of the trouble in the Far East."

In these comments—except in Wallhead's case—we have hardly got beyond the first stage of the argument, namely, " nothing was done, nothing is being done."

3. The Argument Develops

The Leader of the Opposition, who opened the next debate on July 5th, 1933, had a good deal to say about the Far Eastern situation, but it nearly all boiled down to the question " Is nothing else to be done ? " There was, perhaps, a hint of something more in Lansbury's statement that it was no use replying " by asking if we want to go to war "—there was, he said, " at any rate an inference that we were very bellicose about it." And also in his remark : " If Japan is allowed to remain in possession of that territory after the protest of the whole world, it seems to me to prove that the

League as a means of preserving justice and fair play is really impotent."

Sir Austen Chamberlain, who followed, apparently thought so, for he expressed the opinion that Lansbury was " inclined to press dangerously those particular provisions of the Covenant which deal with sanctions against the aggressor." Sir Austen's speech on this occasion was an important statement of his views on the Manchurian dispute, and will receive attention later. One final reflection of his may suitably be noted here. Lansbury, he said, was " inclined to say that it is the failure of the League to assert its authority in the Far East which has encouraged Powers nearer home to look to achieve their ends or equally illegitimate ends by violence and force. I think the right hon. Gentleman is confusing cause and effect. As I read the situation, it was the confusion in Europe, the known rift between the Great Powers which a little time ago were working harmoniously together, that encouraged events and pushed them forward regardless of obligations and regardless of the League."

With Mr. Eden's reply to the Opposition Leader on this occasion we have an illustration of the second stage of the argument. Lansbury, he said, had " offered no constructive suggestions as to action which should have been taken either by this country or by the League itself which has not been taken." Mr. Eden pointed out the position in regard to the arms embargo, and the need, as a first step, that countries should have the necessary powers, such as we had ourselves, to make an embargo operative. He also stated that the machinery of non-recognition had been agreed upon.

4. What Would You Have Done?

When the House of Commons next debated foreign affairs, on November 7th, 1933, the central topic was the withdrawal of Germany from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations. There were, however, some allusions to the Far East.

The Leader of the Opposition again raised the matter. The Opposition's charge against the Government all through, he said, had been their supineness in this matter. There could be no respect for treaties " if you sit down and accept that situation merely by getting a resolution through the League Assembly condemning what has taken place." Action, said Lansbury, " ought to have been taken long ago to deal with that." A Member interrupted to ask " What

sort of action?" Lansbury's answer baffles interpretation. It was as follows:

I have already told the House what sort of action. [Presumably on some former occasion.] It is provided for under the League of Nations. I am standing by the League of Nations right through and all the time, even though some of the provisions would be against what I would like to do. I should stand by it, because it is only by collective action that anything can be accomplished. All nations who signed the Kellogg Pact agreed that disputes of whatever nature or of whatever origin that might arise among them shall never be settled by other than pacific means. It may very well be that I do not understand the English language, but when I read that and cheered it in this House, I thought that it meant that we were outlawing war altogether, and that there would not be any more need for armaments.

Mr. Mander was certainly getting more critical. He thought the Government's action over Manchuria was "an absolutely fatal blunder and a fatal precedent for what has been happening recently." "I believe," he added, "Chancellor Hitler has done exactly what the Japanese did. They used force and got away with it and no one did anything to them."

Mr. Churchill, on the other hand, did not agree "with those poor friends of the League who say that just because the League was incapable of dealing with the situation in the Far East, on the other side of the world, it will have no efficacy in dealing with the European situation."

What could you expect of the League in far off Asia? China and Japan —what do they care for the League of Nations. Russia and the United States—neither of them members of the League. Those four countries comprise half the population of the globe. They form another world, a world in itself, and you should not judge of the success or power of a great international institution like this by the fact that it has not been able to make its will effective at the other end of the world. Very different is the case in Europe.

Mr. Attlee made two references to the Far East. It was the failure over the Sino-Japanese dispute which, he said, was "perhaps the overriding matter that has caused most trouble in regard to disarmament." It had apparently "been put quietly to bed now." Later on, Mr. Attlee said he did not believe the League would be effective "as long as we have the unrighted wrong of the Far East remaining."

In his reply to the debate, Mr. Eden disagreed with the Opposition Leader and Mr. Attlee about the effects of the handling of the Far Eastern dispute.

> It never seems to me that anyone, judging at once the authority and the limitations of the League, would have anticipated any other course of events, so far as the League was concerned, than actually took place.

Mr. Eden quoted from Lord Grey's speech in March of 1932, in which the latter had expressed the view that the Far Eastern dispute was not a test case, and had asked, What more could the League have done? That, said Mr. Eden, was "a question to which we have never yet had a positive answer."

The argument—in the House of Commons—had not got beyond the first two stages. A week later it reached the third and fourth stages.

5. Sanctions and War

The East Fulham by-election had taken place on October 25th, 1933, resulting in a turnover of over 19,000 votes against the Government. Three weeks before that the Labour Party Conference at Hastings had pledged itself to take no part in war, and had favoured the policy of a general strike in resistance to any war. On November 13th the Labour Opposition moved a Vote of Censure on the Government in regard to disarmament. In the course of the debate the controversy in the country about the Sino-Japanese dispute was brought in all its main features on to the floor of the House of Commons.

The opening speaker was the avowed pacifist Morgan Jones, who introduced the subject of the Far East by asserting that it had had a profound influence upon the disarmament problem. Japan, he said, had been encouraged—"I will not say deliberately, but encouraged almost inferentially, certainly by this Government, in the policy which she prosecuted in the Far East." Not only so, but leading Members of the Tory Party had in the House deliberately encouraged Japan.

Morgan Jones was immediately challenged to give names. Under pressure, he mentioned Mr. Amery and Sir Austen Chamberlain, and a Member, he thought, from Liverpool. Sir Austen then asked Morgan Jones to justify his charge, and, after an interesting exchange,[1] flatly denied that there was the slightest foundation for

[1] See p. 572 below.

it. Morgan Jones persisted in refusing to withdraw, and ended his remarks on the Far East by saying :

The effect of the policy pursued by the Government and supported by individual Members of its own supporters in this House was to encourage Japan, which led ultimately to the conquest of large sections of territory and the development of the belief—and this is the important point in this discussion to-day—that strong and important Powers could do what they would, without expecting *any violent action* on the part of the League of Nations against them.[1]

The Prime Minister protested most strongly against the charge that the Government by their action at Geneva had encouraged Japan, and sharply reproved Morgan Jones for his conduct in regard to Sir Austen Chamberlain. He proceeded to say that Morgan Jones had " laid down the law that the League of Nations ought at that time to have taken violent action against Japan." Morgan Jones indicated dissent. The Prime Minister said he had taken down the words, " Violent action should have been taken against Japan." Those were not Morgan Jones's words, and, it seems likely, were the words put down by the Prime Minister as his note—a very natural interpretation—of what Morgan Jones had said. MacDonald proceeded :

What sort of violent action ; and when he said that was it part and parcel of an official pronouncement from the Opposition ? Can anyone imagine an appeal being made to East Fulham on the cry : " Violent action by the League of Nations " ? Some of us never thought very much of the old cry that we should end war by war.

Sir George Gillett, a National Labour Member, took up the matter later in the debate. When " ardent pacifists " like Morgan Jones asked that action should be taken against Japan, he asked in turn : " What action do they consider that the Government ought to have taken at that time ? " Sir George contended that if an economic boycott of Japan had been organised the inevitable result would have been that Japan would have attempted to break the boycott " and would have taken action in China which would have brought us face to face with the question of whether we were going to war in order to defend China or not." He found it extremely difficult to understand the outlook of those who, " on the one hand, say that they are pacifists and, on the other hand, ask that this violent action should be taken in regard to Japan."

[1] Author's italics.

The next speaker was Richard Wallhead, who repeated his view that the Government's policy in the Far East had been disastrous and largely responsible for the difficulties in Europe. He was asked, " What would you have done? " His reply was : " Hon. Members ran away from it." The Lytton Report, Wallhead continued, had condemned Japan. The Foreign Secretary had made no pretence about his view that Japan was acting illegally, but had excused her from the realistic point of view. Wallhead appeared to argue that the Government's policy was " a breach of the Covenant "—

She [Japan] flouted the League, and we stood by and saw Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant broken, because it is a breach of Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant not to stand by and enforce the decisions of the League when it pronounces judgment.

That was a hopeless misunderstanding of the legal position, and Vice-Admiral Taylor interrupted : " Then does the hon. Member suggest that the League of Nations could have brought the sanctions clause of the Covenant into force? " Wallhead appeared to miss the legal point. He proceeded :

I will speak for myself. . . . I say that Japan should have been checked by the immediate establishment of an economic boycott. I believe that economic boycotts can be made successfully, and although you may tell me that an economic boycott is a dangerous weapon, the situation is dangerous anyhow, and is becoming increasingly dangerous. . . . I say that the Government could have stood by the League and assisted in carrying its decision out. I should not ask that this country should act by itself . . .

A little later Wallhead said :

The Leader of my party only a day or two ago said that in no circumstances would we consent to rearmament. Nor will I ; I am a pacifist.

That was not the end : for Lord Winterton, the next speaker, followed the matter up, asking for an official answer from Sir Stafford Cripps (who was to wind up for the Opposition) to the question whether or not the Labour Party " would have applied economic sanctions to Japan last year." The Official Report proceeds as follows :

Mr. Wallhead : I spoke for myself.

Earl Winterton : Judging from the cheers which the hon. Gentleman received he spoke also for his party. Suppose that the result of putting into operation those economic sanctions had been—as they well might have been, and as every expert in the country will tell you that they would have been—that Japan had treated it as an act of war ; would the hon.

Member have advised this country and the other countries concerned to go to war with Japan? Would his party, the pacifist party, have supported the country in that war?

Mr. Wallhead: I said "If the contingency arose."[1]

Earl Winterton: I am perfectly willing that the hon. Gentleman should answer if he wishes to do so, but I thought that it would be better for his leader to answer.

Mr. Wallhead: I said that I should deal with that situation when the contingency arose. I said that we should be acting with the rest of the world supporting the League of Nations.

Earl Winterton: You cannot act in these things when the contingency arises; if you wish to be responsible statesmen you will have to say how you will act in such a grave situation.

Mr. Seymour Cocks did not pursue this topic when he made some remarks on the Far East in the course of his speech. The Government, he declared, was greatly responsible for the failure of the League. Japan had done all that she had done "with the bland acquiescence of our Foreign Secretary and Foreign Office." Over and over again in the previous year, before the crisis reached that point, they had begged the Foreign Secretary and the Under-Secretary . . . "to say something or do something which would restrain the action which the militarist party of Japan, as against the civil party, were taking at that time." Mr. Cocks was talking about the early days of 1932, for he went on to say:

> They refused to do anything of the sort. They refused not only to protest, but to sign a note which the United States sent and asked us to sign, to say that we would not recognise any territory taken as a result of the breaking of those treaties. By this action we encouraged Japan to go forward.

Mr. Cocks thus revived his old inaccurate charge about the Stimson Note of January 7th, 1932.

When Sir Stafford Cripps spoke on this occasion, he had a good deal to say about the Far East, and it was in striking contrast to his attitude six months before. The setting of his remarks was the charge that the Government was responsible for the non-success of the Disarmament Conference. The Government's policy, he said, would lead to war "because they have failed absolutely to give their unstinted support to the collective peace system which has been set up." We had "to abandon the idea of being able to support peace by our own armed strength and go in boldly for the policy of collective peace."

[1] No such words appear in the report of his speech.

This phrase sums up the curious attitude which at this time was being developed in Labour Party circles and which enabled the party in the following years to combine support of " the collective peace system " or " collective security " with uncompromising opposition to any measure of rearmament.

Sir Stafford said that " the tragedy of the Disarmament Conference started with the Sino-Japanese dispute," and a little later he made the point in these words : " It is because of the Government's action and failure of action, in regard to the Sino-Japanese dispute, that we say that they caused the first serious setback to the cause of disarmament." This had, indeed, become one of the favourite Opposition contentions, and it must be remembered that it was upon " the cause of disarmament " that the efforts of the Opposition were centred.

An echo of the mutual charges of " warmongering " going on in party controversy outside Parliament came when Sir Stafford Cripps quoted from the report of a speech by the Minister of Agriculture in which the Minister had recalled how the Leader of the Opposition and his friends " had ' howled ' for sanctions to be taken against great nations in the East, a course which might have led this country to the verge of war." That Lansbury and his party had " howled for sanctions " against Japan was, to put it mildly, a gross exaggeration, but Sir Stafford Cripps did not make that point. He did not deny the " howling "—nor did he deny that sanctions might have brought us to the verge of war. On the contrary, for he proceeded : " Exactly. If it had led this country to the verge of war, it would have been a war that was fought to support the collective peace system." Developing his argument, Sir Stafford said :

> having bound ourselves by those solemn covenants we have got, in honour, to support that system. (Hon. Members : What with ?) With economic boycott and with armed forces if necessary. (Hon. Members : Bombs ! War !) Hon. and right hon. Gentlemen do not seem to realise that this country is pledged at the present time. It is not a question of this country selecting what it will do ; it is pledged in honour.

That, presumably, was Sir Stafford Cripps's answer to Earl Winterton's question. It was not, it is true, a direct answer. Sir Stafford did not actually say that the Labour Party would have imposed economic sanctions against Japan. He did not actually say that he himself would have supported an economic boycott and

armed action if necessary. But that was the plain implication, and it was confirmed by later remarks. Sir Stafford went on :

Japan was declared an aggressor by the whole world, and it was the duty of this country, whatever personal sympathies and national sympathies were, if it desired to support the collective system, to take, or to urge upon the League of Nations to take, immediate steps to stop the Japanese entering into Manchuria.[1]

The Government, declared Sir Stafford, had " sabotaged the whole collective system." And he referred to a resolution passed by the League of Nations Union on July 27th, 1933, suggesting (in Sir Stafford's words) " that His Majesty's Government ought to invite the assistance of the United States of America to help the League of Nations in the boycott of Japan." [2] He did so, he said, " to show that there is a large body of opinion in this country, and not only on these benches, that takes the view that economic action ought to have been taken against Japan in the interests of the Covenant of the League."

The reader will note the words " ought to have been taken." Sir Stafford did not say " ought to be taken." And the important point is that Sir Stafford's line in this speech was not that of the Labour Party, nor that of Sir Stafford himself, during the whole period of the Manchurian dispute from the seizure of Mukden in September 1931 down to the Tangku truce in May of 1933. It was taken up only after the episode was over. When he had spoken on February 27th, 1933, it will be recalled, he had certainly not demanded " immediate steps to stop the Japanese entering into Manchuria " ; he had not even demanded an immediate application of the economic sanctions provided for under the Covenant in order to evict the Japanese from Manchuria. While urging a further effort at conciliation, he had only gone so far as to suggest " first steps," namely an arms embargo and the refusal of credits. And he had not gone much beyond that in his *Guardian* interview of March 14th.

[1] This phrase is curious, but was not unusual. It was like Lansbury's " invasion of Manchuria across a great stretch of the sea." The Japanese, of course, had been in Manchuria for more than a quarter of a century before the dispute began. They were in control of the whole of Manchuria before " Japan was declared an aggressor by the whole world," which was Sir Stafford Cripps's way of saying before " the League Assembly adopted the report of February 24th, 1933 "—so evading the legal issue.

[2] The L.N.U. urged the withdrawal of chiefs of diplomatic missions from Tokyo and " concerted economic pressure by such a measure as the general refusal to accept imports from Japan." Its statement added : " The need for American co-operation in collective action on these lines would be essential to its success."

Sir John Simon, closing the debate on November 13th, concentrated on the Disarmament Conference. He had little to say about the Far East except to complete Morgan Jones's discomfiture by quoting the latter's extremely complimentary references on February 27th to Sir Austen Chamberlain's preceding speech on that occasion. Sir John, however, did allude to some of the things said in the debate when he spoke on November 24th. Mr. Attlee had then suggested, in passing, that the King's Speech should have contained a paragraph on these lines :

I regret the continued occupation by Japan of the territory of China, a country which relied on the pledges of my Government and others for its protection ; and I regret that the failure to support by action the principle of pooled security has endangered the League of Nations and has led to insecurity throughout the world and a renewal of armaments.

Sir John Simon, after a reference to what he said had become " part of the stock-in-trade " of the Opposition, suggested that Mr. Attlee's paragraph might be put more simply and tersely, as follows :

I much regret that in these difficult circumstances we have not gone to war with Japan.

Commenting on Sir Stafford Cripps's view that the League of Nations should support the collective peace system—" a question-begging phrase "—with economic boycott and with armed force if necessary, he said that he " began to understand why the hon. and learned Gentleman was so anxious to insist that our Army, Navy and Air Force had not been reduced in size."[1]

Another echo of the Opposition's propaganda campaign was heard in this debate when Mr. Edward Williams said :

Most people who are thinking of our foreign affairs know that, after the Foreign Secretary apologised for the conduct of Japan—for that is virtually what his speech meant—the British Government was not prepared to carry out the substance of the Lytton Report.

Mr. Eden intervened to say : " Nothing of that sort was ever said by any representative of the Government," to which Mr. Williams replied :

The Foreign Secretary definitely said he was not prepared to carry out clauses 10 and 16 of the treaty, and they were not carried out.

[1] On February 6th, 1934, Mr. Attlee said that on this occasion (November 24th, 1933) he and Sir Stafford Cripps had been denounced for suggesting that we had to honour obligations. " We were called warmongers."

To unravel that mixture of confusion and misrepresentation would have involved Mr. Eden in a very much longer intervention.

6. And So On

So it went on. Of particular interest are the exchanges in the House of Commons about economic sanctions and war. The chief episodes are dealt with below. (Author's italics throughout.)

On February 7th, 1934, after he had given his version of the Matsuoka story, Richard Wallhead was interrupted :

Vice-Admiral Taylor : Is the hon. Gentleman arguing that the Government in not taking some economic or other action against Japan was wrong, and does he mean that we should have taken that action ?

Mr. Wallhead : Our Government should have backed up general action by the League of Nations.

Vice-Admiral Taylor : That would have meant war with Japan.

Mr. Wallhead : That is an assumption which my hon. and gallant Friend is unable to prove. I think that from the records and statements made by various important individuals there was sufficient evidence to show that *we could have had the backing of France and of the United States of America.* I feel convinced that, if this country had had the backing of France and of the United States of America, and the moral backing of several other Powers, probably that influence would have been sufficient to have deterred Japan from the line she was taking.

7. Mr. Seymour Cocks

When, on March 11th, 1935, the Labour Party moved its Vote of Censure upon the Government in connection with the White Paper on Defence, which announced increased expenditure on the Armed Services, there were a number of references to the Far East. Mr. Seymour Cocks had quite a lot to say about Manchuria. Urging the need " to bring overwhelming forces on behalf of law against an aggressor "—" the principle of collective security "—he was asked whether his party would have gone to war with Japan. The Official Report records his answer as follows :

As a matter of fact, I do not think that it would ever have come to war in that case. (Laughter.) It is of no use for hon. Members to laugh at that. That is the view of most people. After all, are we such a small, paltry nation that the Japanese nation would want to go to war because we told her to keep the law ? (Hon. Members : Yes.) I doubt it very

much indeed. The prestige of this country is still high, thank God, and so is the power of this country. (Laughter.) Why do hon. Members laugh at that? If we have a strong collective system we should carry out that system despite threats that if you carry it out war will be the result.

Mr. Cocks, apparently, did not appreciate the incongruity of his remarks with the Vote of Censure he was supporting.

Earlier in his speech he had raised his King Charles's Head of the Stimson Note of January 7th, 1932. The Opposition's charge against the Government, he said, was not that of refusing to go to war with Japan in defence of the obligations of the Covenant and of the Nine Power Treaty :

The charge against the Foreign Secretary is that when the Government could have made some effort to prevent Japanese aggression, in company, for example, with the United States of America, we deliberately refused to do so.

The Lord Privy Seal (*Mr. Eden*) : Will the hon. Member tell me when that was so?

Mr. Cocks : I have often said it in debate with the right hon. Gentleman.

Sir A. Chamberlain : That does not make it true.

Mr. Cocks : When I had a passage of arms with the Lord Privy Seal on a previous occasion I had the document in my pocket. What I mean is that when the United States Government drew up a Note in which they informed the Japanese Government that any territory annexed by her in defiance of the Covenant and the Nine Power Treaty would never be recognised by her, it was understood we were approached to put our signature upon that agreement. . . . It has always been held that we were approached in that matter and refused to put our signature to that document, and that consequently the United States issued it by herself. What we did was to issue another Note in which we said that as Japan had stated she was going to support the open door policy, there was no need for us to take any action. That open divergence between the two Governments certainly strengthened the Japanese militarists.

Mr. Eden : It is untrue to suggest that at any time when the United States took the lead we were not prepared to follow.

Mr. Cocks : There was a lead, and we did not follow it.

Mr. Robert Boothby, the next speaker in the debate, contended that the Labour and Liberal parties had no case in regard to the White Paper because they were on the horns of an impossible dilemma :

On the one hand they advocate action against the transgressors of

international law and the principle of collective security, and on the other they deny to the British Government the means of taking that action or any action, and when pressed on the crucial point as to whether they are prepared to recommend this country to go to war in the last resort against an aggressor—I took the case of Japan and Manchuria as a typical instance—they hedge every time. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Cocks) said he did not believe Japan would go to war. His belief is very interesting, but we cannot be sure of that. Suppose Japan called his bluff; is he prepared to send the battle fleet to Singapore to take on the Japanese battle fleet in a direct war?

Mr. Cocks: I gave a full answer to that point immediately I made the remark.

Mr. Boothby: There is no battle fleet in the world but our own in a position to take on the Japanese, because the United States of America are not members of the League of Nations and will not subscribe to it. Have we any reason to suppose that America would join us? (An hon. Member: That is what we have to find out.) We might find out too late. That suggestion seems to me to be the last refuge of the argument. Have we to go to war with Japan in order to find out whether America would join us?

8. Mr. Mander Grows Bolder

On May 18th, 1934, Mr. Mander had been definitely bolder:

An hon. Member asked a perfectly proper question: "What can you do to Japan? What weapons have you got?" The answer is that the League could, if it thought fit, apply economic sanctions to Japan. He may retort: "Would not that involve a possible risk of war?" *It might*; but life is full of risks, we cannot do anything that does not involve some risk. To take economic sanctions under certain circumstances is infinitely better and involves probably less risk than to insure the certain danger which will come if we allow armed force to walk naked in the world without opposition or obstruction.

From that, one might conclude that, *in May 1934*, Mr. Mander was prepared for this country to take the risks of war with Japan; though, of course, his statement was carefully qualified. At any rate, he had certainly come to appreciate that the economic sanctions, some of which he had tentatively suggested on March 23rd, 1933, and which he then said could be applied without endangering a single life, might lead to the military action which he had then definitely ruled out.

By March 11th, 1935, Mr. Mander had become much more

decisive about the past, and very forgetful of some of his previous utterances :

The Government give as one of the ways in which they have worked actively for the preservation of peace the Four-Power Pact in the Pacific and the Nine-Power Pact. It seems to me a considerable piece of audacity on their part to pray that in aid, because they *allowed* Japan to tear both those treaties into shreds before their eyes. *They never breathed a word or lifted a finger to prevent it.* If I am asked what I would have done, I would say that the Government might at least have consulted with America to see how far she was willing to participate in an economic boycott. If she had said that it did not interest her, the responsibility would have been clear to the world, but, as things are, a share of the responsibility rests upon us. *If there had been co-operation for an economic boycott*, the answer I would have given is that I would have faced that and all the consequences there might have been. That would have been a far wiser and cheaper method of dealing with it than the appalling situation in the Far East and throughout the world which we have at the present time, largely as the result of that weakness in connection with Manchuria.

Sir M. Sueter : Would the hon. Member have gone so far as to declare war on Japan ?

Mr. Mander : I said I would have faced all the consequences, and if one of the consequences had been that Japan declared an attack on *the whole world*, we should have had to meet it.

It will be noted that Mr. Mander's willingness in 1935 to face all the consequences of an economic boycott against Japan in 1933 was dependent upon the co-operation of the United States, and, apparently, of the "whole world." He proceeded to vote for the motion of censure upon the Government for its White Paper on Defence.

Winding up for the Labour Opposition in the same debate, Sir Stafford Cripps replied to a question from Sir Austen Chamberlain as to what the Labour Party would have done as regards the Sino-Japanese dispute :

As I understand it, when we signed the Covenant of the League of Nations we honestly meant to keep it. That was a multilateral Covenant in which we agreed with many other nations that in the event of certain things happening we would take certain action if we were called upon to do so. It was our duty, *in co-operation with the other nations who were equally bound*, to do our utmost *immediately that aggression became apparent* to take every possible step to stop the aggression, in the first place, no doubt, by recalling the Ambassador, and if that failed, by economic pressure. If

that failed then, *in co-operation with other nations equally bound to take action*, by armaments if necessary. . . . We find not the slightest difficulty in answering the question of the right hon. Gentleman.

Sir Stafford, despite the qualifications, had travelled far in retrospective fantasy.

9. In 1936

Passing on just over a year, Mr. A. V. Alexander (now Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough) was opposing the Navy Estimates on March 16th, 1936. We take the following passage from the Official Report of his speech :

I should be glad to know whether the right hon. Gentleman (Mr. Oliver Stanley) contemplates running a naval war in the East ? Does he ? Do the Government ? Are they arming in that direction ? I should like to know.

Mr. W. Astor : Does the right hon. Gentleman suggest that there is no danger in the Far East ?

Mr. Alexander : I do not say so at all. I have asked the Government to tell us whether they would contemplate a naval war in the East. . . .

Mr. W. Astor : Surely it does not lie with us.

Mr. Alexander : I think it would lie with us very much whether we chose to fight a naval battle in the East—

Admiral Sir Roger Keyes : Or put your tail between your legs and run away.

Mr. Alexander : That is what your Government did— . . . That is exactly what your Government did over Manchukuo.

Lady Astor : Would you have fought ?

Mr. Alexander : I am always tempted to give way to the Noble Lady.—

Lady Astor : Answer the question.

Mr. Alexander : If I had had the opportunity of exercising any authority, I would certainly not have taken the seventeen months of muddling futility that this Government took, finally leaving it until it was too late to take any effective action in support of collective security against Japan in the case of Manchukuo.

Admiral Sir Roger Keyes : Would you have fought ?

Mr. Alexander : My own view, and that of many of my colleagues, which we are quite prepared to maintain, is that, if you will give the right lead to the League, and if you will give your lead effectively, first, morally, and then by economic sanctions, *in the great majority of instances there never will be any question of having to resort to hostilities.* It is the lack of " guts " that really leads to the whole problem.

10. In 1937

Another year on, March 2nd, 1937 :

Mr. Emrys-Evans : Hon. and right hon. Gentlemen opposite have a habit of going into past history rather than discussing the present. I think that the question of Manchuria is important for this reason. There was a question in which, apart from China, the nearest member of the League of Nations was thousands of miles away. America and Russia were not members of the League of Nations then, and of course America is not a member of the League to-day. The only way of bringing pressure upon Japan was to send an expedition to the Far East. Did hon. and right hon. Members opposite tell the country of the dangers that would be involved and did they point out that the forces of this country would be sent far away from Europe, leaving these shores unprotected, in order to enforce the decisions of the League ? If we had gone to the country and told the people that their sons were to be killed because Manchuria was to remain a part of China, would the Government have received the support of the people ?

Mr. T. Williams : The hon. Gentleman . . . fell into the same error as many of his colleagues in imputing to hon. Members on this side a desire to go to war with Japan in 1932 and to send British husbands and British sons to fight for Chinese territory. No hon. Member on this side ever suggested anything of the kind. No hon. Member sitting here ever asked the Government to send British soldiers to China or Japan.

What we said was that the moment the then Foreign Secretary, the present Home Secretary, declared that he had made up his mind that sanctions should be ruled out and that conciliation alone should be used in that case, disarmament was made well-nigh impossible.

As I view it, we at that moment abrogated our obligations to the League and Japan, having been given a free hand in China, declared subsequently to the Disarmament Conference that she would not be governed by any decision reached at that conference. No matter how long the Disarmament Conference continued after that there was little or no hope of its success.

Our view is that if the League had effectively applied sanctions, Japan could have been defeated in her enterprise and the League could not only have preserved itself but made itself an effective force for the preservation of international peace, *without sending a solitary soldier to Chinese or Japanese territory.*

Mr. Emrys-Evans : That is the point. The hon. Gentleman's opinion is that sanctions could have been enforced without sending a soldier to Japan. We do not share that view.

PART SIX

COMMENTARY

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE PARTIES AND THE DISPUTE

1. Divided We Stand

THE Sino-Japanese dispute of 1931-33 became a matter of acute party controversy—after it was over. Not that party controversy about it was absent while it was on. That goes without saying. After all, there is always a Government, and, therefore, always an Opposition. The Opposition is always united as against the Government: the Government party or parties are usually united against the Opposition, although not united to the same degree in support of the Government. Moreover, the official Labour Party Opposition really did detest the "National" Government of the period, and particularly the non-Conservative leaders who were mainly responsible for conducting that Government's foreign policy, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

It was not easy but peculiarly difficult for the Opposition to approve anything done by the Government, although occasionally the feat was accomplished. When that happened, it was usually in the sphere of foreign affairs. That may seem surprising. It should not be so. The truth is that, in that sphere, there was a wide measure of agreement between the political parties about what should and what should not be done. Basic agreement existed, at any rate, between the Government itself and most of the leading members of the Opposition, and between the main bodies of their respective followers in the country. That is why criticism of the Government's conduct of foreign affairs had to be made so largely by way of seeking to identify Government policy with the views expressed by those members of the Government parties, particularly members of the Conservative Party, who were out of harmony with that policy. The most fruitful sources of ammunition for purposes of attack were provided by such men as Mr. Amery and Mr. Churchill, and, best of all, by the Beaverbrook and Rothermere newspapers. In the same way, counter-attack could be most effectively made by drawing upon the utterances of the more extreme pacifists, or the more extreme Leftists, or the more zealous Covenanters; and,

in the circumstances of the period, it was an easy task to identify the views expressed by people in those groups with the official Opposition.

Indeed, most of the controversy about the Sino-Japanese dispute, at the time, was not between the opposing parties as such. Not until the autumn of 1933 did the Labour Party really get going in criticism of the Government's foreign policy. It was the Nazi revolution in Germany, and more particularly the destruction of the trade union movement and the Social-Democratic Party there, which alarmed Transport House and powerfully re-directed its attention (for several years absorbed, in an unusual degree, in domestic economic problems) to international politics. Opportunity for attack upon the Government was provided by the virtual breakdown of the Disarmament Conference and the prospects of Government measures for strengthening the Armed Services; and when experience showed that exploitation of the opportunity brought striking electoral gains the temptation proved irresistible. In this respect, the East Fulham by-election was the real turning-point.[1]

During the course of the Far Eastern crisis, comparatively little serious criticism of the Government's policy came from the Labour Party. That, however, was partly due to internal differences on the subject, sharper and perhaps even more varied than the differences which existed within the ranks of the Governmental coalition. Controversy about the Far East cut across the Government-Opposition alignment. That explains why it was so much more prominent in the Press than in Parliament, though in both, for reasons already given, the attention devoted to the matter was relatively slight, only attaining major proportions at a few brief periods. There was never any real confrontation of the parties on the subject until some months after the crisis was over. Such confrontation as there appeared to be was the formal confrontation of Government and Opposition. The parties stood against each other. But they stood each divided. That, of course, is nearly always the position. It is a question of degree. And, in this matter of the Sino-Japanese dispute—as, indeed, of foreign policy generally throughout the inter-war years, despite appearances produced by electoral tactics—the internal party differences were very considerable.

[1] This point is clearly brought out in Dr. Samuel Davis's thorough analysis of the British Labour Movement's attitude towards foreign policy in the years 1933-9, a thesis which, it is to be hoped, will shortly be made available to the general public.

2. The Labour Opposition

The position of the Labour Party during the dispute was, as we have seen, confused and indecisive. The party might call for "action" without specifying what kind of action. It might urge the Government to give a lead. It might complain that nothing effective was being done. But it gave no clear lead itself. It could not even give a clear lead, towards the end, on the question of the arms embargo, a proposal upon which the various groups within the party were more likely to agree than upon any other, and the only one which had wide popular backing.

Months after the Tangku armistice, party spokesmen were complaining that economic sanctions had not been applied against Japan. They implied and began to say that they had urged the application of economic sanctions. That the party had done so became the line followed in its propaganda. "When we urged that economic sanctions should be applied to Japan," said Mr. Attlee in the House of Commons on October 22nd, 1935, "the answer . . . was . . . 'You are clamouring for war.'" But Mr. Attlee, we must suppose, had got mixed up. Possibly he had come to believe that the party had actually said what it was saying it had said. Probably he had himself wished at the time that economic sanctions might be imposed: there were elements in the Labour Party, for the most part closely associated with the League of Nations Union, favourable to such a policy.

However, throughout the whole course of the 1931-33 dispute, the Labour Party in Parliament, in which Mr. Attlee was a leading figure, never presented anything like a clear demand that this country should apply, or should propose to the League of Nations the application of, economic sanctions against Japan. Twice, as we have seen, the directing bodies of the Labour Movement outside Parliament suggested something of the kind. There was, first, the Manifesto of the National Joint Council of Labour on February 22nd, 1932, at the height of the Shanghai fighting. That suggested, tentatively, contingently and conditionally, that the Government should propose "graduated measures of financial and economic constraint." The Parliamentary Labour Party did nothing to follow that up. Nor did the Labour movement outside Parliament. The Shanghai fighting, which had occasioned this suggestion of a

sanctions policy, ceased soon afterwards ; but the suggestion was not even pressed at the time.

The second instance came exactly a year later, when, on February 22nd, 1933, the resolution of the joint meeting of the T.U.C. General Council and of the Party's National Executive added to the Parliamentary Party's demand for an embargo on all arms destined for the Far East a demand for an " economic boycott." We have seen what happened. In a hopelessly confused speech at the opening of the debate on February 27th the Leader of the Opposition voiced a vague demand for sanctions, immediately watered it down, and concentrated upon the question of the arms embargo. It would be ridiculous to describe the Labour Party's line on that occasion as one of " urging economic sanctions." Nor did the Parliamentary Labour Party itself so describe it in the report of its activities submitted to the Party Conference at Hastings in October. Its record of the line taken in the debate read, accurately enough :

> On February 27th the Party initiated a debate on the situation and laid stress on the desirability of the Government taking some action with respect to the export of munitions.

The Leader of the Party and the majority of his Parliamentary colleagues were not in favour of a sanctions policy. Lansbury's speech was only a reluctant and half-hearted response to pressure from certain outside elements ; and the Parliamentary Party immediately took the opportunity provided by the Government's announcement of the arms embargo to evade any further response. Lansbury may have had this episode in mind when, on June 25th, 1937, he said in the House :

> I was very much called to task because as leader of the party I gave up pursuit of the proposal that there should be interference in Japan. I gave it up because I was convinced that the kind of interference that I was being asked to demand could only have resulted in the war against China being very much extended, bringing much more horror in its train than has been the case.

The Opposition Leader was certainly not called to task publicly. What is more important still, the people who presumably called him to task behind the scenes did not themselves pursue the proposal. As we have seen, the " economic boycott " suggestion was not followed up at all. The picture drawn later of a Labour Party " urging economic sanctions " in the Sino-Japanese dispute is, in truth, absurdly false.

What is most striking, however, is Labour's lack of interest in the dispute at the time. The relative indifference to what was happening in the Far East was even more marked in the party and movement outside Parliament than it was at Westminster. That, no doubt, reflected the general attitude in this country. Labour's interest, like that of the public in general, was really aroused only during the brief period of the fighting in Shanghai early in 1932. Manchuria was another matter. In the first phase of the dispute, afterwards so widely held from different angles to have been of decisive importance, interest could scarcely have been less than it was—whether one takes the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Labour Press or the organised political and industrial Labour Movement. And the brief burst of interest at the time of the Shanghai fighting was followed by a relapse into indifference out of which the Labour Movement was only partially and momentarily shaken by the arms embargo campaign towards the end of February 1933.

We have seen[1] how insignificant a part the Far Eastern crisis played in the proceedings of the Newcastle Trades Union Congress at the beginning of September 1932, and how what discussion took place there on the subject was incidental to a Left-Wing "war resistance" campaign. The proceedings at the Leicester Labour Party Conference in the following October were even more remarkable. At that conference, interest in international affairs was concentrated upon the Disarmament Conference. A long resolution on "Disarmament and Peace" did, it is true, mention Manchuria. A brief final paragraph read :

> The Conference further demands that the British Government, in view of the presentation of the Lytton Report on Manchuria and the incidents on the frontier between Bolivia and Paraguay, shall do everything in its power to vindicate the authority of the Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

But in the debate on this resolution not a single speaker—not even Arthur Henderson—alluded to the subject ! Yet, as we have seen, a little over a year later Sir Stafford Cripps was to say that the tragedy of the Disarmament Conference had started with the Sino-Japanese dispute. Can this Labour Party Conference be said to have "urged economic sanctions" ? Certainly, there was no "howling" for sanctions, to use the reported expression a year or so later of the then Minister of Agriculture. But, perhaps, October

[1] Pp. 225-7 above.

of 1932 was too soon! How, then, about the resolution of February 22nd, 1933, and the "economic boycott"?

When the Trades Union Congress met at Brighton early in September 1933, there was no reference in the General Council's Report to that resolution, nor to the meeting at which it was passed. If, as may well have been the case, prominent trade union leaders had at that meeting brought pressure to bear in favour of a policy of sanctions, or if they had subsequently taken the Leader of the Labour Party to task, they certainly kept remarkably quiet about these things. They had not a single word to say to the Congress on the matter. Nor did any delegate show the slightest curiosity. Indeed, from beginning to end, both of the General Council's Report and of the proceedings at the Congress itself, not a word was said about the Far East.

That was not because the General Council's Report and the Congress refrained from all discussion of international affairs. Far from it. Much was said about Germany. There was a long discussion on an important Memorandum on Dictatorship and the Trade Union Movement. There was a good deal about disarmament and war. And a "war resistance" resolution, instructing the General Council to organise an intensive campaign against war preparations and to work with the International Federation of Trade Unions to boycott war if and when it occurred, and for an organised refusal to assist in any shape or form in measures calculated to help in its prosecution, was remitted to the General Council for consideration.

The Labour Party Conference at Hastings in the following month displayed almost as complete a lack of interest in the Sino-Japanese dispute. The resolution of February 22nd, 1933, was recorded in the Report of the National Executive Committee, and we have dealt with the explanation given by Mr. Dallas to Mr. Lionel Elvin about the inclusion of the words "and China." Nothing was said about the "economic boycott." Indeed, there were only a very few passing allusions to the Far East in the rest of the proceedings.

It was on this occasion that the conference unanimously passed a resolution, sponsored by the Left-Wing Socialist League, instructing the National Executive, in conjunction with the T.U.C. and the Co-operative Movement (*inter alia*), "to pledge itself to take no part in war and to resist it with the whole force of the Labour Movement," envisaging "a general strike" as one of the means

of organised resistance " in the event of war or threat of war." The acceptance of this resolution by the Executive is in itself remarkable enough. Even more striking, perhaps, are the facts that it was supported by Mr. Noel-Baker (a prominent member of the Cecilian group) and that Mr. Dalton (a more realistic Covenanter) accepted it on behalf of the Executive. There is little doubt that both these men—and the Executive—disliked the resolution. Mr. Noel-Baker said that if he had " one difference " it was that he regretted the resolution was not based " on the Kellogg Pact and the Covenant of the League of Nations," and Mr. Dalton's " only criticism " was that it did not " commit us to the economic and financial boycott of any war-mongering State—Hitler, or any other person who may disturb the peace and murder the workers of the world."

The passing of this resolution was followed by an address[1] by Arthur Henderson, in the course of which he tried incidentally to assume that the resolution was consistent with support of " the collective peace system." The weakness of the Labour Party Executive in accepting this resolution indicates, as plainly perhaps as anything could do, the state of feeling in the ranks of the party at the time. The Executive gave way to the " war resistance " movement, sponsored by the Marxist Left-Wing but appealing strongly to the pacifist and near-pacifist elements, and, of course, to the widespread dread of war and detestation of armaments so powerfully stimulated by developments in Germany.

The pacifists in the Labour Party were the group which showed the earliest and most active concern about the Sino-Japanese dispute ; and the Leader of the Party was himself a pacifist. The Covenanters —those who were to be advocates of " the collective peace system," an expression only coming into vogue during those years—were throughout the dispute, within the party as outside it, uncertain of their ground and unable to exercise any marked influence upon the party's line. They had not yet fully worked out their policy of " collective security short of war," involving advocacy of economic sanctions against an aggressor State and resolute opposition to " national " armaments. The more realistic elements, particularly among the trade union leadership, were astonishingly quiescent, largely, no doubt, because of domestic preoccupations in the earlier stages of the dispute, and, as time went on, because of their alarmed absorption in the European scene. The various groups of the Left

[1] Afterwards published under the title *Labour Outlaws War.*

showed only spasmodic interest in the Far Eastern dispute. For the most part, their concern with it was incidental to their attitude of extreme hostility to the " National " Government and to " capitalist imperialism." They were either avowedly hostile to the League of Nations or contemptuous of it. If and when they displayed any special interest in the Far East it was on account of Soviet Russia. Their attitude towards the dispute was closely correlated to the ups-and-downs of Japanese-Soviet relations.

In two things all these different elements in the Labour Party could unite for the time being. They could unite in supporting the cause of disarmament and opposing any British rearmament, and, of course, in attacking the Government of the day. They were quite incapable of agreement on any policy in regard to the Sino-Japanese dispute.

3. The Liberal Party

Pacifism and near-pacifism were influential in the Liberal ranks ; perhaps relatively even more influential than in the Labour Movement. General support of the League of Nations, and much passionate enthusiasm for disarmament, were combined with sharp disagreements about security and sanctions. Such disagreements had been marked during the whole period of the controversy about the Geneva Protocol, towards which the Liberal Press had been strongly antagonistic : [1] they persisted when the Far Eastern crisis raised the issues in a practical form. Indeed, when confronted by a situation which they had not seriously thought was ever likely to arise, those who had supported the Protocol in order to promote the cause of disarmament themselves became hesitant.

[1] The following forceful reply by the *Daily News* to Professor Gilbert Murray in 1927 may serve as an illustration : " Professor Murray, who is a staunch defender of the Geneva Protocol, denies in our columns to-day that it would increase British responsibilities. It would only, he says, ' define and restrict ' them. It certainly defines them, and defines them rigidly. But how can he imagine that it restricts them ? Surely an instrument which, after ruling out war altogether by a stroke of the pen, so to speak, not only intensifies the sanctions to be taken against an offending nation, but compels every signatory State in the last resort to make war against her, however remote the issue may be, can hardly be said to restrict our national responsibilities. The objection on these lines to the Protocol is that, as Mr. Ormsby-Gore once said, it would make anybody's quarrel everybody's quarrel ; and British public opinion is deeply suspicious that Britain, for various and obvious reasons, would be called upon to play a leading part in *these obnoxious punitive operations*. In our opinion, the theory of rigid automatic intervention embodied in the Protocol is impracticable at the present time ; and those who are seeking to re-impose it on public attention are not really serving the cause of the League or of the peace of the world." (Author's italics.)

The Liberal Party, on the formation of the "National" Government in 1931, was in fact, if not in form, divided into three main groups, the followers of Sir John Simon, those of Sir Herbert Samuel and the personal adherents of Lloyd George. The last-mentioned group were in opposition to the Government, but took no active interest in the Far Eastern crisis. Lloyd George himself does not appear to have expressed any opinion on the matter, save for a reference to the Government's ineptitude. Whatever the different shades of opinion may have been among the Simonites (who before the end of the dispute had become the Liberal Nationals), they supported their leader, the Foreign Secretary. Under the name of the Liberal Party, we are dealing here with Sir Herbert Samuel and his associates.

The leading representative in the Parliamentary Liberal Party of the Cecilian group in the League of Nations Union was Mr. Mander; and we have noted his attitude during the various stages of the Manchurian affair. When he came to write his book in 1941, Mr. Mander was completely silent about his party's attitude towards the dispute. It is true that he was silent on many things. He purported to quote "chapter and verse," taking *Hansard* as his main source, and covering the whole period from August 1931 down to the outbreak of war in 1939. But, when dealing with disarmament and defence, for example, he gave no quotations at all from either Liberal or Labour speakers prior to March 1934.

Such large gaps were necessary, indeed, if Mr. Mander's thesis was to have any plausibility. But, in the case of the Sino-Japanese dispute, there were special reasons for his silence. The Liberal Party was supporting the Government, and its leaders were in office, during the whole of the first year of the dispute. It was not until September 28th, 1932, that Sir Herbert Samuel and his associates resigned from the "National" Government. It is true that, as a result of the "agreement to differ" of January 22nd, 1932, they had been accorded by their Cabinet colleagues freedom to express their disagreement with Government policy in regard to import duties and cognate matters; and it was on the same issues that they resigned in the following September. They did not resign over the Far East. Nor had there been any "agreement to differ" about that. On January 25th the *Manchester Guardian* drew attention to the point, and repeated it on February 22nd.[1] Even

[1] "One must assume, in the light of a recent constitutional innovation, that the Liberal members of the Cabinet see their way to influencing Government policy on other

after resignation Sir Herbert Samuel did not lead his party into general opposition to the Government. Not until over a year afterwards, November 16th, 1933, did the Liberal Party cross the floor to the Opposition side, and the reason given for the action was the Government's " lack of zeal " in the matter of disarmament !

No doubt the withdrawal of the Liberal Ministers from the Government had a certain liberating effect upon the Liberal Press and the Liberal rank and file in the country. But, whatever criticism of the Government's Far Eastern policy came from such quarters, it received no endorsement from the Liberal Parliamentary leaders. Sir Archibald Sinclair (who succeeded Sir Herbert Samuel as Leader of the Liberal Party after Sir Herbert had been defeated in the General Election of November 1935) gave his verdict on the Manchurian affair in the House of Commons on April 6th, 1936, in these plain terms :

I was a member of the Government—in what I am going to say I will be frank, although a great many, particularly hon. Members above the Gangway, will not agree with me in this—when there was a Japanese aggression in China. I thought this was a lawless and terrible aggression. It is not true that the Government or that the League did little at that time. They sent the Lytton Commission to Manchuria and they refused to recognise the results of the Japanese action. *I believed then and I believe now that there was nothing more that we could have done. The arm of the law was not strong enough to enforce the law on the other side of the globe. I believed that then and I still believe it now,* but I do believe that the arm of the League of Nations is strong enough to enforce the law of nations against Italy in her aggression upon Abyssinia.[1]

Lord Samuel, in his *Memoirs*, while revealing no lack of willingness to criticise the " National " Government of the period (and particularly Sir John Simon), passed the same judgment :

I had left the Cabinet before the Manchurian issue came to a head in 1933, and did not share responsibility for the course taken by the

than fiscal questions. A handsome beginning in this respect would be for them to insist on a greater regard being paid to our obligations under the Covenant. And if their loyalty to the League, like their disbelief in tariffs, left them in a minority of four they might at least use their new privileges to ventilate their disagreement with the rest of their ministerial colleagues."—January 25th, 1932.

" The Liberal members of the present Government have acquired the right to ventilate their differences with their colleagues. Have they so forgotten their past principles as to allow themselves to be associated with a policy whose only effect, if it be continued, will be to nullify the League of Nations, alienate America and gravely injure our commercial interests in the Far East ? "—February 22nd, 1932.

[1] Author's italics.

Government; but what I knew of the facts did not allow me, in this instance, to join in the accusations levelled against it of culpable weakness. It is true that the handling of the question at Geneva by Sir John Simon, then Foreign Secretary, gave rise to much criticism that was well founded. *The blunt truth remains that even if the will for action were there, the means were lacking* (p. 271).[1]

Lord Samuel went on cogently to present the grounds for his judgment in a passage which we shall have occasion to quote.

It should be noted, moreover, that, although out of office in 1933, Sir Herbert Samuel did not then criticise Sir John Simon's handling of the matter at Geneva. We have already dealt with his speech on February 27th, 1933. It contained no note of criticism. It was even interpreted, in one quarter at least, as "carefully friendly to Japan." And, indeed, Sir Herbert not only expressed precisely the same view about the Lytton Report as that for voicing which Sir John Simon was so much attacked, but used language about and in relation to Japan which ought to have incurred, though it did not, the extreme displeasure of the *Manchester Guardian*:

It is not in the least an attitude of enmity or hostility to Japan. For years we were proud to be the allies of Japan. We were the first country to give her a helping hand when she came out from her isolation into the full comity of nations. This country has a profound respect for the culture of Japan, for her intelligence, her high culture, her art and her literature, and has an admiration for her modern efficiency. We should be fully as ready to side for Japan as to side against her, and, if in this matter public opinion is running strongly against the action of the Japanese Government, it is solely upon the merits of the case.

It is recognised fully that the wrongs, as the right hon. Gentleman has said, are not all on one side. The Lytton Commission, which was a wholly impartial mission, fully recognised that fact. They appreciated the Japanese standpoint as well as the Chinese. They did not recommend merely a return to the *status quo*. On the other hand, they proposed large changes, having regard to the special interests of Japan, and the most significant feature in the whole of this matter is the complete unanimity which has been obtained for international action along certain lines.[2]

[1] Author's italics.

[2] Similarly, in his speech at Oxford on March 3rd, 1933, Sir Herbert Samuel claimed, according to the *Times* report, "that the League of Nations had handled the Far Eastern problem with the utmost patience. It had recognised the real grievances of Japan, and had realised that China was a difficult neighbour. It had proposed definite remedies, but it had felt bound to condemn the action of Japan in taking the law into her own hands. It had delivered a clear and impartial judgment, and that judgment was against Japan." On this occasion again, Sir Herbert does not appear to have made any criticism of the Foreign Secretary or of the Government's policy.

In view of the attitude of the Liberal leader, not only in relation to Manchuria but also—and even more so—on questions of disarmament and defence, it is not surprising that he hardly made an appearance in Mr. Mander's volume of "chapter and verse." We can only discover one reference to him—a brief quotation from a speech in March 1935.

The Liberal leaders in the House of Commons did not lack, of course, distinguished Liberal support from outside in their line about the Far Eastern dispute. They had, in particular, the backing of Lord Grey and of that eminent publicist J. A. Spender.

The divergencies of opinion within the Liberal Party about the Manchurian question are sufficiently illustrated by the four speeches made from the Liberal benches in the debate of February 27th, 1933, and by the respective attitudes of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *News Chronicle*. The party itself never at any time urged the application of economic sanctions against Japan; its leadership was opposed to such a policy, and divisions and doubts prevented any real pressure upon the leadership from within the party's ranks. Even the *Guardian*, all the more exasperated as it might be, exercised a restraint in its specific demands which was due, no doubt, both to tardy recognition of the futility of anything but coercive measures and consciousness of the practical difficulties in the way of such measures.

4. The Conservative Party and its Allies

The parties and groups supporting the "National" Government had the advantage of being in a position to follow a Government policy which, at any rate after the post-Election reconstruction of the Ministry and Sir John Simon's appointment as Foreign Secretary in November 1931, was at least clear and consistent. That policy, moreover, undoubtedly had the genuine approval not only of the parties or groups in association with the Conservative Party but also of the main body of that party itself, quite apart from the normal support forthcoming against any Opposition criticism. Indeed, there was little, if any, serious opposition within the Conservative Party to the Government's policy after November 1931 in relation to the Sino-Japanese dispute as such. And, in so far as it is possible to speak of Conservative Party policy, that policy can legitimately be described only as the policy of the Government.

None the less, the inevitable divergencies of view within the ranks of the Government parties, and particularly within the Conservative Party, were by no means unimportant. Criticism of the League's handling of the matter, more especially in the initial stages, was considerable, and it implied, in greater or less degree, criticism of the methods by which Government policy was being carried out. More direct types of criticism arose from serious disagreement with the general policy of the Government in regard to foreign affairs and associated defence problems.

The Conservative Party shared the general dread of involvement in another war, but Conservatives, like others, were not agreed as to the best way of averting that catastrophe. What distinguished the party, taken as a whole, from the other parties in the country was its more realistic approach, arising in large measure from the fact that it was better informed and more concerned about defence problems and the limitations of British power. Because of the practical difficulties and dangers, Conservative opinion had always shared the predominant British objection to any extension of this country's definite and specific military obligations ; and in similar fashion had always viewed with apprehension the contingent military obligations of the Covenant, despite the freedom of action which the provisions of that instrument gave.

With the deterioration in the international situation from 1929 onwards, Conservatives generally had become increasingly anxious about the country's ability to defend itself and the Empire and to fulfil its obligations ; but this anxiety was felt in widely varying degrees. Conservatives were not all equally interested ; some were more realistic than others ; the facts of the developing situation were differently appraised ; and there were marked differences about both the nature and worthwhileness of the risks that were being taken in pursuit of an international disarmament agreement, and differences also about the political tactics which should be adopted in the circumstances. These cleavages of opinion in the Conservative ranks can be seen plainly enough in the two debates on the London Naval Treaty (which had special relevance to the Far East) on May 15th and June 2nd, 1930. They persisted and were intensified with the economies consequent upon the financial crisis of 1931, the Far Eastern crisis itself, the course of events in Germany and the lack of progress at the Disarmament Conference. In 1933, with Hitler's advent to power and its

far-reaching repercussions, the conflicting viewpoints were more frequently and vigorously expressed. They ranged from the "isolationism" of Lord Beaverbrook to the "pacifism" of Mr. Vyvyan Adams.

In regard to the Sino-Japanese dispute, the Conservative Party was united on one thing. Sharing the general view that this country should not by any act of its own become involved in any Far Eastern conflict, and not sharing the illusions clung to so persistently in some quarters about the attitude of the United States, Conservatives were, apparently, all agreed in opposing the application of economic sanctions against Japan. The great majority had additional, though diverse, reasons for rejecting any such policy, but that was the common and decisive ground. Many, possibly most, in the not completely unreasonable hope that the United States might be prepared to co-operate in this one respect at least, approved of the idea of an arms embargo directed against Japan only: beyond that none, it seems, were prepared to go. And there was strong opposition in Conservative quarters even to that proposal. Indeed, apart from the one central point of agreement, upon which the Government's own policy was based, a great diversity of opinion existed among Conservatives about the Far Eastern dispute, although, it must be repeated, the opinion of the main body was in line with that of the Government itself.

Much has been said and written about the "pro-Japanese" attitude of the Conservative Party, and, of course, the same charge was made against the Government itself and against Sir John Simon in particular, with even less justification. It is a crudely ambiguous charge, anyhow. That Japan had a strong case as against China was, as we have seen, a widely held view, by no means confined to Conservatives, and, indeed, endorsed by the Lytton Commission and stressed subsequently by Lord Lytton himself. Nor was this view seriously challenged in any quarter. The "pro-Chinese" (to use an equally misleading expression) habitually dismissed it as irrelevant. But recognition of Japanese grievances, and sympathy with Japan's difficulties in dealing with the Chinese anarchy, did not prevent, and in most cases was accompanied by, a disapproval of Japanese actions which steadily increased as events proceeded. It is none the less true that, just as some of those who passionately desired to uphold the Covenant tended to regard China as an entirely innocent victim, so some of those who were alarmed at the possibility

of this country being involved in a Far Eastern war, or who were anxious for purely commercial reasons to see orderly conditions established in Manchuria, tended to justify Japan's behaviour. Much of this, it seems, was little more than "making the best of a bad job." But it provided some sort of basis upon which, by the use of a familiar controversial device, accusations could be levelled against "the Conservatives," and through them against the Government, of having "deliberately connived at Japanese aggression."

The "isolationist" Press was used in this way, although from its own angle it was in extreme opposition to the Government's policy. The *Daily Mail* (and other papers in its group) could justly be labelled "pro-Japanese," particularly in 1933, yet its main purpose, plainly enough, was to prevent war with Japan and, as the international situation worsened, to improve relations with that country. In 1933 it was already campaigning for increased armaments. The *Daily Express* and its satellites were relatively much more detached in their sympathies. Their main concern was to oppose all foreign commitments, including those involved in League membership. It is impossible to say what influence the "isolationism" of these sections of the Press may have had upon the Conservative rank and file—it undoubtedly expressed the sentiments of large numbers of "non-political" people—but its effect upon the Conservative Party in the House of Commons was certainly negligible.

It was more effective to quote politicians, but in this respect the available list was very limited. Even Mr. Zilliacus could not do better than to refer to "Sir Austen Chamberlain, Mr. Amery, Sir Nairn Stuart Sandeman and others," who, he wrote, gave "striking expression" to "the undercurrent of Conservative opinion."[1] Even so, his inclusion of Sir Austen Chamberlain was, as we shall see, indefensible. Sir Nairne Stewart Sandeman, it has already been pointed out, frankly avowed himself "entirely pro-Japanese," apparently on the ground that any Government was better than none in Manchuria. His speech on February 27th, 1933, in which he said that he and very many others were getting rather tired of the League of Nations, was the only one of the kind delivered in the House of Commons throughout the dispute. It was crudely expressed, and cut no ice, although there was one shrewd point in it when he asked the Opposition Leader why he had not

[1] *Inquest on Peace*, p. 31.

made a similar outcry about the case of Russia and Mongolia. Mr. Amery's case is important but, before dealing with it, what of the " others " ?

5. Mr. Churchill

The name of Mr. Churchill may well spring to the reader's mind. Mr. Churchill, however, said astonishingly little about the Manchurian dispute, and very little indeed about it in the House of Commons. That may have been due, in part, to other preoccupations, and to two prolonged indispositions. The first public reference of his to the matter appears to have been on November 17th, 1932, in an article in the *Daily Mail* on the defence problem and the danger from the air. Mr. Churchill was then starting in earnest his campaign against the Disarmament Conference and in favour of rearmament. The reference to the Far East was incidental : " We can only hope that the pacifist forces, which have reduced and also crippled the Navy of Britain, will not go on to involve us in a quarrel with that leading Oriental Power whose naval strength has grown as ours has been cut down."

In his speech at Queen's Hall, already alluded to, on February 17th, 1933, Mr. Churchill devoted a passage to Japan.

> Now I must say something to you which is very unfashionable. I am going to say one word of sympathy for Japan, not necessarily for her policy, but for her position and her national difficulties. I do not think the League of Nations would be well advised to have a quarrel with Japan. The League has a great work to do in Europe. God forbid that it should collapse, and I have no patience with the penny-wise economies which grudge the English contribution to its structure. But when you come to the Far East, you are asking the League of Nations to attempt a task very remote from their sphere of influence. The professed Socialists and professional pacifists would lure them on into a dispute which the League of Nations has no power to carry through. There is no more use affronting Japan than there would be in ordering the Swiss and Czechoslovak navies to the Yellow Sea. They are, I believe, the only navies forthcoming at the moment. I hope we in England shall try to understand a little the position of Japan, an ancient State, with the highest state sense of national honour and patriotism and with a teeming population and a remarkable energy. On the one side they see the dark menace of Soviet Russia. On the other the chaos of China, four or five provinces of which are actually now being tortured under Communist rule. I am told we must conform to American opinion. I have a great regard for American opinion. But it certainly does not lie with the United States, who have tied up our Navy in the

trammels of unreasonable treaties, to urge us to engage in a quarrel with an island Power with which we may disagree, but for whom we have a lasting sentiment and regard.[1]

In holding that the League of Nations lacked the power to coerce Japan, Mr. Churchill, of course, was expressing a widely-held view, but his references to Japan's difficulties suggest that he went further in his conclusions than did most people who realised the League's impotence. More light is thrown on his position by a series of speeches in his constituency on February 26th and 28th, 1933. On the former day, the day before the debate in the Commons, he said that he knew of no reason why a wise and honourable foreign policy should not enable this country to stand aside in the event of a war between foreign countries and to prevent the fire from spreading. The Government had been right in refusing to extend our commitments in Europe or elsewhere, and " under the present constitution of the League of Nations we could not be forced into war against our better judgment of what was right or wrong." The first duty of British statesmen, he thought, was " to make sure that we were not drawn into any war "—it was only their second duty " to try to prevent others from fighting, or to try to bring their quarrels to an end." Coming to the Far East, Mr. Churchill said that British interests required us to keep out of the quarrel " and not wantonly throw away our old and valued friendship with Japan." It was to the interest of the whole world that law and order should be established in the northern part of China, he added. Mr. Churchill thought that a clear-sighted policy should be able to secure the Open Door and a fair chance for our trade in all parts of China. " It was no use dragging the League of Nations into the Far East, where their influence could only be very small and where they had no means whatever of controlling events." These points about the Far East were repeated in Mr. Churchill's speech at Waltham Cross on the 28th, when he particularly emphasised the importance of the League of Nations in Europe, adding : " We must not blame the League for not attempting tasks beyond its strength and absolutely outside its scope."

In this same speech on February 28th Mr. Churchill commented on the Government's decision about the arms embargo. He had not spoken in the debate on the previous day. He now said that it was

[1] These remarks attracted scarcely any comment in the Press. The *Manchester Guardian*, however, dismissed them in a few lines. " Mr. Churchill, so tender to violence, so fearful of ideas, was yesterday claiming sympathy for Japan because of his twin bogies of Russia and Communism ; fortunately he is powerless."

a difficult question to decide, but " on the whole I believe you will feel with me that a wise decision has been reached."

It would be quite impossible for us as one single nation without the aid of other countries to discriminate between the two countries which are at war. We have no means of preventing arms which were being consigned to China being captured by the Japanese Navy.

We do not intend in any way to become embroiled in the conflict which is proceeding at the other end of the world. We could quite easily stop the export of arms from our own ports, and as I understand that all the existing contracts which have been made are to be carried out, and as we all hope that the actual fighting will not last very long, I think we have been able to adopt the correct attitude without serious loss to our own manufacturers.

This last sentence was quoted by the *New Statesman*, which said that Mr. Churchill had made " excellent nonsense " of the Government's decision.

On March 23rd, ten days after the Government had removed the embargo, Mr. Churchill included a reference to the matter in his general indictment of the Government's foreign policy, dominated by MacDonald, and having disarmament as its " staple." He said that he had welcomed the arms embargo—" in all the innocence of my heart, carried away by the excellent speech of the Foreign Secretary "—

I said that I thought it was the best thing to do. What happened to me? I hardly had time to turn round when the Government themselves had abandoned this policy, which they had put forward not only on the grounds of a policy and expediency but on those higher considerations of honour and avoidance of blood-guiltiness which made such a very great appeal to their audience. *Let me say that this treatment of the arms embargo has seriously affected our relations with Japan.* We have abandoned the arms embargo now. We have not the advantage of the high morality which the Foreign Secretary preached to us, and *we shall have to pay for it very considerably in after years if, as may well be the case, some special intimacy should grow up in trade matters in that part of the world between Japan and Germany.*[1]

The form of Mr. Churchill's criticism was itself open to an obvious criticism, if it be taken seriously, since he had been well aware that the arms embargo was provisional. He had approved it, and had thereby approved, in advance, of its abandonment in the event of non-realisation of the conditions which would have

[1] Author's italics.

permitted its retention in another form as part of an international agreement. But the real import of Mr. Churchill's criticism is clear. He was disturbed, not about any failure to apply the provisions of the League Covenant, but about the worsening of our relations with Japan. In his view those relations had been seriously affected, not as a result of any coercive action against Japan, but merely because of " the high morality " preached by Sir John Simon ! And he prophesied that we should suffer for it in a certain contingency.

The obvious implication is that, in Mr. Churchill's view, the Foreign Secretary ought not to have prejudiced our relations with Japan even by the enunciation of high moral principles—despite the fact that Mr. Churchill himself had been weak enough to allow his judgment temporarily to be swayed by Sir John's eloquence ! Mr. Churchill's attitude can only be understood, of course, in the context of his speech—one best remembered, perhaps, by the phrase " Thank God for the French Army."

He made another incidental allusion to the matter in a more famous speech over a year later, on July 30th, 1934. Referring to Baldwin's statement that our frontiers were the Rhine, he went on :

> If the Labour Opposition . . . had their way I gather that we should now have added the cold, unforgetting, unforgiving hostility of Japan to all these other serious preoccupations, and that the acting Leader of the Opposition would be reminding us that our frontiers were the Yangtze.

Mr. Churchill's attitude can be summarised in these terms : The League is powerless to coerce Japan ; be careful, therefore, to avoid incurring Japanese hostility, and be as sympathetic and understanding as possible ; we have serious enough problems in Europe as it is. But Mr. Churchill did very little to press his view.

6. Mr. Amery

It was Mr. Amery's intervention in the debate on February 27th, 1933, which attracted the attention both at the time and in subsequent controversy. He, certainly, was not impressed by Sir John Simon's high morality nor carried away by his eloquence. As we have seen, he maintained that, if the Government were to be consistent, any arms embargo should be directed against Japan. But, Mr. Amery went on :

> I confess that I see no reason whatever why, either in act, or in word, or in sympathy, we should go individually, or internationally, against

Japan in this matter. Japan has got a very powerful case based upon fundamental realities. Consider what Japan spent in blood and treasure to defend Manchuria against Russian annexation. Consider the extent to which her labours in Manchuria made that country much the most prosperous part of that loose congeries which is called China for the purpose of not paying a subscription to the League of Nations. Consider how that very prosperity has increased the flow of Chinese population into Manchuria. When you look at the fact that Japan needs markets and that it is imperative for her, in the world in which she lives, that there should be some sort of peace and order, then who is there among us to cast the first stone and to say that Japan ought not to have acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism? Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned if we condemn Japan.

In these remarks, often to be quoted in later years, Mr. Amery laid himself open to the charge of being "pro-Japanese." None the less, it is clear that they were only incidental to his main argument. Mr. Amery proceeded:

At any rate, it seems to me that Japan has an arguable case based on those essentials which go far deeper than the verbiage of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Both the Lytton Commission and the League, he said, had started from principles, those of the Covenant, which were "utterly unreal and not applicable to the circumstances of an ever-moving and changing world."

The realities of the world depend upon the necessities of government, of order and of development, and wherever nations internally or externally are incapable of fulfilling those functions, they will go down against other nations whose need for peace and for development demands that there shall be order.

Mr. Amery illustrated his point in these terms:

You may have a bloody war with hundreds of thousands of troops on both sides between the different provinces of China, but because China is technically a single member of the League of Nations no one concerns themselves with that problem, nobody asks who is right and wrong. Arms are supplied equally to both sides. But because in this Manchurian question—Manchuria, after all, for many years was an independent State—the Japanese, who have long-established rights in that country, take more vigorous action, it at once becomes a matter for formal condemnation by the League. I do not know that that matters except that you do not preserve peace by ignoring realities.

Mr. Amery's speech was primarily directed against the unrealities of the League Covenant and the Disarmament Conference, against " the worship of unrealities to which this country, above all countries, has been giving itself at Geneva." The " particular issue " of Manchuria was his illustration. If China had plunged into a disastrous war with Japan, it was largely due to her misplaced reliance on the League. Was Japan, he challenged, likely to disarm in the near future—even when she had dealt with China—in view of the kind of attitude taken up by the European nations and the United States over the Manchurian business? As for the proposal for the abolition of all air forces and the internationalisation and civil control of aviation with which we were " playing about at Geneva," it was, said Mr. Amery," as dishonest as it was silly." It was silly " because it cannot possibly be carried out. Japan alone will prevent it." He ended with the remarks :

> I am afraid that there is a good deal of conscious or unconscious hypocrisy when we talk about the League of Nations, about disarmament and about peace. I have endured it for a good long time. At any rate, I have freed my soul this afternoon.

This forthright criticism of the British Government's policy was later to be widely misrepresented as an expression of the real underlying views of the Conservative Party, and, therefore, of the Government. Those who, like Mr. Zilliacus, misused it in that way did not point out that it was, as Mr. Mander said in his speech that day, " a violent attack upon the whole foreign policy of the Government." Nor did they point out that, while only one or two of the subsequent speakers gave Mr. Amery some measure of support, he was severely criticised from both sides of the House. His views were repudiated, on the Government side, by Major Hills, Mr. Richard Law, Brigadier-General Nation, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Vyvyan Adams among the Conservatives, by Mr. Mabane, the Liberal National speaker, and by Sir George Gillett, the National Labour spokesman. Mr. Law, taking up an incidental allusion to Conservatism in connection with Mr. Amery's speech, said that the latter was " an example of extremely bad, unsound and dangerous Conservatism," and that he could not have slept peacefully in his bed that night without having said so.

The truth is, of course, that Mr. Amery and Mr. Churchill had the backing, at that time, of only a small minority in the Conservative Party. The latter's speech on March 23rd, 1933, aroused even more

general resentment than Mr. Amery's on February 27th. Mr. Mander, incidentally, after describing Mr. Churchill as " one of the greatest dangers in the country at the present time," said that it was, however, " unnecessary to consider disarming him, because in this House and in the country he represents a very small body of opinion." Mr. Churchill himself, it will have been noted, had spoken of his " word of sympathy " for Japan as " very unfashionable," and he had not repeated it in the House of Commons.

There were " others," of course, who shared Mr. Churchill's concern about maintaining good relations with Japan in view of the menacing international situation ; just as certain sectional interests undoubtedly favoured friendship with Japan for commercial reasons. In naval quarters, too, anxiety about the strategic position in Far Eastern waters and the general limitations of British naval power exercised an influence in the same direction. Mr. Zilliacus made a reference to Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, whose views, as expressed in the House of Commons after the dispute (May 18th, 1934), may serve as an illustration. The Admiral was under no illusions about Japan. He shared the misgivings about Japanese aims. He said he had had the opportunity of " gaining a very intimate insight into the intents and the scope and the aims of that most warlike race." He was convinced that Japan would " go forward to her destiny with unswerving determination." But he added that he had always " thought it a deplorable mistake on our part to terminate that alliance with Japan," since it was of immense value to us in the East, was a guarantee of peace in Eastern waters and gave us influence over Japan's actions. He recommended the Government " to do all in their power to return to the excellent understanding with Japan which existed in those days." Sir Roger Keyes, even more clearly than Mr. Churchill, regarded the matter primarily, not from the standpoint of our obligations under the Covenant, but from that of British relations with Japan.[1]

[1] It is interesting to note that shortly afterwards (July 13th, 1934), Mr. Attlee said : " Anyone who proposes an alliance with Japan is, as a matter of fact, a comforter of the King's enemies, because under the League system the country that refuses to accept the decision of the League and has been declared the aggressor, as Japan has, is, as a matter of fact, in a position in which no citizen of this country ought to advocate having anything to do with." Mr. Attlee, when in office not many years afterwards, was to be compelled by the force of circumstances to become a " comforter of the King's enemies " in a case in which the " enemies," unlike the Japanese, had been formally declared aggressors and expelled from the League.

7. Sir Austen Chamberlain

There is no doubt that the views of the main body of Conservatives were expressed, outside the Government itself, by Sir Austen Chamberlain ; and that is what gives special interest and importance to his inclusion in Mr. Zilliacus's little list. Sir Austen, indeed, was given first place in that list, and Mr. Zilliacus, dealing with the debate of February 27th, 1933, went on to say :

> Sir Austen, while expressing some misgivings about Japan's action, expressed his approval of Sir John Simon's statement and confessed that : " When these troubles began in Manchuria the facts were obscure, and, having regard to the long continued and severe provocation which the Japanese had suffered at the hands of China, my sympathies were wholly with Japan, and I found it difficult to keep a balanced judgment, which it was right and proper we should maintain, until the facts were more clearly known."

That " confession " was the only piece of evidence Mr. Zilliacus produced in regard to the case of Sir Austen Chamberlain. Much propaganda was based upon that oft-quoted statement. But neither in Mr. Zilliacus's efforts nor in the rest of the propaganda was any attention given to what Sir Austen went on to say. The Official Report of the speech continued :

> Gradually, as the situation has developed, my sympathy with Japan and Japanese policy has diminished, and we have reached a stage at which, in the light of the report of the Lytton Commission and the discussions at Geneva, it seems to me that it is impossible to contend that the action of Japan in Manchuria is compatible with the obligations she undertook when she signed the Covenant, is reconcilable with the terms of the Pact of Paris, to which her signature is also attached, or does not directly contradict and disavow the obligations of the Nine Power Treaty. I think that Japan has been hurried, rashly and unwisely, into an adventure, the end of which may be far distant and the expenditure of which in blood and treasure may be far greater than her people can foresee.

Mr. Zilliacus called this " expressing some misgivings about Japan's action " ! He said that Sir Austen had approved of the Foreign Secretary's statement ; but he did not say that Sir Austen had done so reluctantly, and had pressed strongly for an arms embargo directed, on an international basis, against Japan alone. Had not the *Guardian's* Parliamentary Correspondent said that Sir Austen Chamberlain's speech " was notable for its determined condemnation of Japan and for its record of a change of attitude

towards her" ? Had not the *New Statesman*, on March 4th, written that "Sir Austen Chamberlain, unlike Sir John Simon, honestly accepted the obligations and implications of our membership of the League," adding, "Sir Austen may not be a very whole-hogging internationalist, but he is a sincere man who does not play with England's word or pretend that black and white are really the same thing" ? Had not the *Economist* written similarly of Sir Austen's "sincerity and right feeling," which it said showed up "the hollowness of Sir John's assumption of virtue" ?

When, on November 13th, 1933, Morgan Jones named Sir Austen Chamberlain as one of the Tory M.P.s who had "deliberately encouraged Japan in the course upon which she had embarked," and was called upon to justify his allegation, he said that Sir Austen had "devoted a very considerable proportion of that speech to justifying Japan in large measure, on the ground of the difficulties created for Japan by the disturbances in China." That was weak enough. By "that speech," it appeared much later in the debate, Morgan Jones meant Sir Austen's speech on March 22nd, 1932. Sir Austen immediately replied to Morgan Jones :

> If to be enabled to see two sides of a question is to be a partisan of one side, then there is perhaps some foundation for the hon. Gentleman's charge. I endeavoured to show, before condemning the action of Japan, that at least I understood what had led to it, and my condemnation was outspoken.

After refusing to withdraw, and confronted by Sir Austen's flat assertion that there was not the slightest foundation for his argument, Morgan Jones, persisting in his refusal, said that the inference of Sir Austen's speech (the date of which he had not at that time provided) "in the main was in the direction which I have indicated." Sir Austen promptly denied that that was so.

Let us look at the speech of March 22nd, 1932. On that occasion Sir Austen Chamberlain discussed the relations of this country with Japan and China in turn. In regard to Japan, he said :

> although we may, as one of the members of the League of Nations, take our part in judging this case and in bringing the moral influence of the world to bear upon Japan, I hope that in all our actions we shall do nothing to prevent the restoration to the full of the old Anglo-Japanese friendship.

Turning to China, Sir Austen said that in recent times our relations with that country had been far more difficult :

We have been in quite recent years the victim of actions by the Chinese Government which are not justifiable on any reading of international law. We showed a great patience and, I think I may say, an amazing moderation. When one of our settlements was invaded, we retired from it rather than fire upon the Chinese, who we thought were being incited by others into a quarrel with us, so that no more bloodshed should ensue. We were the first of the Powers . . . in spite of all the trouble, in spite of the fact that at that time China was the prey of civil war and there was no Government that could pretend to exercise any authority over the whole country—to lay down the liberal policy which we ourselves intended to pursue towards the new China, and which we invited other Powers also to make their own. Without waiting for the restoration of order we proceeded, in so far as the circumstances admitted, to translate our words into deeds and to give up some of the privileges which we enjoyed.

Sir Austen said that this country wanted to see China "united, strong and prosperous."

Let us do nothing to destroy the good feeling that has come back between the Chinese and ourselves, let us be ready . . . to abandon the privileged position when our citizens can be secured in the ordinary rights of peaceful traders in a foreign country, and to give China whatever help she requires and asks for in the organisation of her affairs.

Insisting that any action taken must be taken with and through the League, Sir Austen urged that "the difficulties presented to everyone by the disorganisation which reigned in China" must not be underrated, and said :

if there is any excuse, and I think there was some excuse to be made for the course of action taken by the Japanese, it was to be found partly in the disorganisation of the Government of China and its inability to give protection and satisfaction and partly in the provocation which China had given and was giving at that moment.

Sir Austen, however, contrasted the line taken by Japan with that pursued by this country under similar provocation :

The Japanese Government failed to perceive what was clear to us . . . that the bayonet is not a good answer to the boycott ;

But, he added,

do not on that account underrate the provocation of the boycott of the goods of a particular nation by another, widespread, persistent, uninterrupted by the Government of that country, nay more, encouraged by the Government of that country. . . .

Sir Austen said that there were always two sides to a question,

" quite apart from the wrong side " ; and he thought that the Far Eastern situation was rather one " where two irreconcilable but equally justifiable rights come into conflict." Other nations of the world, he proceeded, had come together to express the moral judgment of the world upon the quarrel.

The reader will doubtless agree that, however difficult it may have been for Sir Austen Chamberlain " to keep a balanced judgment," he in fact succeeded remarkably well. It will be noted that in this speech of March 22nd, 1932, he carefully refrained from expressing any final judgment. Throughout the dispute, indeed, he endorsed Sir John Simon's contention that it would be improper to anticipate the judgment of the League itself.

Sir Austen Chamberlain was fully in agreement with the Government's policy of conciliation, although he viewed critically the League's handling of the matter in the initial stages. He was opposed to the application of the sanctions of Article XVI in this particular instance, and that attitude was in line with his general view that the League should rely upon its moral authority. The following quotations will sufficiently explain his standpoint in regard to coercive measures against Japan :

1. *March 22nd, 1932.* I am no believer in the development of the League of Nations by force. The less we hear of the sanctions of the League the stronger its moral authority will be, and unless its moral authority be strong, whatever the sanctions are they will not prevent war, but will only come into force as acts of war after war has broken out. If you want to keep the peace you have to rely on the conciliatory procedure provided in the Covenant. . . . Patience, consideration, conciliation, time, those are the weapons of the League, and its sanction is the moral condemnation of the world which gradually finds out which is the party that is unreasonable and brings its condemnation to bear upon that party.

2. *February 27th, 1933.* Although the success of the League is very imperfect, although its first decision has been long delayed in the effort for conciliation, and even though the results of that decision may be delayed still longer, I cannot think that the verdict of the assembled world united at Geneva will count for nothing in the settlement of these issues when that settlement comes. There is no nation in the world to-day, however strong, however mighty, however powerful its arms, that can afford to neglect the judgments at Geneva. I have a shrewd suspicion that in Japan, as elsewhere, as these judgments and their meaning come to be known, they will exercise a decisive effect on the ultimate settlement of the questions in dispute.

3. *July 5th, 1933.* I am a profound adherent of the League of Nations. . . . I am not to be discouraged by passing misfortunes or defeats, because I never supposed that this or any other great institution could develop its full strength in a day. I knew that it must be a matter of slow growth in the institution and of slow and gradual education among the peoples themselves. The right hon. Gentleman [Lansbury], I think, is inclined to press dangerously those particular provisions of the Covenant which deal with sanctions against the aggressor. I am far more inclined to stress those which are directed not to the punishment but to the prevention of wrongs.

It is not a very pleasant act to criticise the League's handling of the Manchurian question. For my part, when the trouble began I had great sympathy with Japan, and I think the League showed an insufficient appreciation of the difficulties with which Japan had been confronted in the anarchical condition of China and the failure of China to observe the ordinary decencies of international relations in her treatment of Japanese citizens and Japanese trade, and I think that if more stress had been laid at first on the obligations of China and a little more allowance had been made for the provocation that had been offered to Japan it might have been wiser. As events developed I thought that Japan put herself increasingly in the wrong. For the operations at Shanghai I can see no shadow of excuse or palliation, and I think the League might perhaps have concentrated more particularly and allowed a little more latitude than it did in Manchuria. Perhaps thinking only of the written obligation and allowing too little weight to the practical possibilities of action, the first demand upon Japan was for something which, if they had thought, they would have known at that moment it was not possible for Japan to give, and I think if they had made a rather more moderate demand at that time they might have got more.

Sir Austen Chamberlain's viewpoint was, in fact, strikingly similar to that held by Mr. Stimson, even in his note of criticism of League policy. He relied essentially upon the long-run effects of " the moral condemnation of the world." Belief in the potency of " world opinion " was by no means confined to the Americans and the British Opposition. At the same time, Sir Austen, as a supporter of the League and a British statesman, was a more patient advocate of conciliation than the American Secretary of State.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

"COLLECTIVE ACTION" BY GREAT BRITAIN

1. The Critics

THE issues raised by the Sino-Japanese dispute, as we have shown, divided all the political parties, although the party struggle for power maintained a somewhat formal "Government versus Opposition" alignment in regard to the dispute at the time, and subsequently led the Labour Party to identify itself with a particular line of criticism, and to adopt a standpoint which it had not taken as a party while the dispute was on.

The "National" Government of the period was subjected during or after the dispute to two main types of criticism; and these were to be maintained in regard to later crises. The one which became most popular was that the British Government did not carry out its obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations. At the same time criticism came from precisely the opposite standpoint, that is to say, on the ground that both British interests and world peace were prejudiced by the Government's efforts to carry out the obligations of League membership. This criticism took several forms, and in so far as it was levelled directly against the Government was confined during the crisis and for several years afterwards to spokesmen of a small minority.

A third line of criticism was advanced, for the most part, by people trying to be wise after the event. Their argument has been that the British Government failed to pursue consistently either the course advocated by the one main group of critics or that favoured by the other; that either course would have been preferable to the one actually followed; and that, in short, the British Government had no policy worthy of the name—a contention which always appeals strongly to those who could not make up their own minds on any particular set of issues.

2. The Obligations of the Covenant

The criticism advanced by League zealots, taken up by the political Left, and popularised by both, has been based essentially upon

the fact that the States Members of the League, and Great Britain in particular, made no attempt to apply the coercive provisions of the Covenant. The League States, with Great Britain first and foremost, are charged with having failed to carry out their obligations. That raises the question of the nature of those obligations, about which a seemingly interminable controversy has proceeded.

The question was not much discussed during the course of the Manchurian affair, and a good deal of what was said about it was ill-informed, as, for example, in the *Daily Herald's* insistence for a few days that in a certain contingency the sanctions of Article XVI would come automatically into operation.

Much loose talk was indulged in about an obligation to protect Chinese territory from external aggression. And, indeed, in later years people were very frequently to speak as though Great Britain (and presumably the other League States, although the emphasis was always on Great Britain) had entered into specific and unqualified commitments to defend, by force of arms if necessary, not only the territorial integrity of China but that of Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia and so on. That was not, of course, the case.

There were even those who believed, or professed to believe, that Great Britain had entered into a commitment of that kind as a signatory of the Nine Power Treaty. On May 18th, 1934, for instance, Sir Stafford Cripps asked in the House of Commons whether this country repudiated "its obligation to respect and preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of China, including Manchuria, under the Nine Power Treaty and Article X of the Covenant." Sir John Simon pointed out on that occasion that there was no such clause in the Nine Power Treaty (which used the word "respect" alone), adding that he "should, indeed, be very much concerned if, in signing any treaty, this country has pledged itself to use its Army, Navy and Air Force for preserving the territorial integrity of another." Article X of the Covenant was a general Article, not addressed specifically to China. This Article used the phrase "to respect and preserve," and provided that in case of any external aggression or any threat or danger thereof the League Council "shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled."

The question of the obligations of Article XVI of the Covenant —the "sanctions" Article—never came to a head. As we have repeatedly noted, it became customary for critics of the Government

from this angle to say that Japan had been declared the aggressor, but that was only a loose way of speaking of the Assembly's adoption of the report prepared by its Committee of Nineteen. The point whether or not Japan could be said to have resorted to war in disregard of its covenants under Article XV was not brought before the League. Mr. Eden was to remind Mr. Attlee of these facts in the House of Commons on October 23rd, 1935 :

> He (Mr. Attlee) stated, what has often been stated, that Japan had been declared the aggressor by the League. That is not so. Japan was never declared the aggressor. The Sino-Japanese dispute did not at any stage result in a resort to war by either of the parties. It may be a strange paradox, and here is something else, perhaps, that hon. Members will appreciate. During the whole of that dispute the Chinese did not break off relations with Japan. They did not withdraw their Minister from Tokyo and they did not invoke Article XVI of the Covenant. Hence the machinery of sanctions against Japan never arose as a question for the League to decide.

The obligations of the Covenant under both Article X and Article XVI were such as to leave wide scope for adjusting action to the circumstances of the particular case. Members were left free to decide for themselves whether the *casus fœderis* had arisen, and how, if so, they were to carry out their obligations. In regard to the contingent military action envisaged by paragraph 2 of Article XVI, the League Council had the duty only to recommend what military forces members should severally contribute. The obligation of paragraph 1 of that Article to join in imposing a complete blockade of the covenant-breaking State (the so-called " economic sanctions ") was unqualified, but it had been recognised at an early stage of the League's existence, largely because the United States of America was not a member of the League, that this clause could not be applied literally.

The League Assembly in 1921 adopted, and the Council accepted, a group of resolutions concerning the application of Article XVI which, pending the ratification of the appropriate amendments to the Covenant, were to serve as " rules of guidance." The amendments were never actually ratified, but the " rules of guidance " governed League action.

The effect of these interpretative resolutions was considerably to modify the economic sanctions clause. The third resolution laid it down that the unilateral action of the defaulting State could not

create a state of war with the other member States, but merely entitled the latter to go to war. The fourth read as follows :

> It is the duty of each Member of the League to decide for itself whether a breach of the Covenant has been committed. The fulfilment of their duties under Article XVI is required from Members of the League by the express terms of the Covenant, and they cannot neglect them without breach of their Treaty obligations.

Other resolutions defined the League Council's position as advisory only in regard to the application of measures of economic pressure. In its recommendations, moreover, the Council might suggest, not only the execution of special measures by certain States, but also the complete or partial postponement of the application of economic sanctions by certain States, where that was considered desirable in order to promote common action or to reduce the losses and embarrassments of such States to a minimum. The resolutions also plainly envisaged graduated measures of economic pressure.

Similarly, an interpretative resolution of the Assembly in 1923 laid it down that it was for " each Member to decide, in reference to the obligation of preserving the independence and the integrity of the territory of Members, in what degree the Member is bound to assure the execution of this obligation by employment of its armed forces." It was also stated that the League Council, in giving advice regarding the fulfilment of this obligation of Article X, should take into account the geographical situation and special conditions of each State.

It may be noted, in passing, that the Geneva Protocol itself proposed to interpret the obligations of Article XVI in such a way that a signatory State was only committed to take such action as its geographical position and the state of its armaments allowed. Moreover, this interpretation was adopted by the other signatories to the Locarno agreements in their collective note to Germany (Annex F of the main Locarno Treaty). The German Government, in view of Germany's special position, and perhaps for other reasons —certainly on account of Russian pressure—was reluctant to accept Article XVI, and the signatories of the note stated that their interpretation of the Article was that a League Member was bound to co-operate in support of the Covenant and in resistance to aggression " to an extent which is compatible with its military situation and takes its geographical position into account."

In view of the practical difficulties and dangers, British Governments had rejected, and were to persist in rejecting, all attempts to tighten up the general obligations of the Covenant. The fact that such attempts were made is in itself sufficient evidence of the character of the obligations. The whole question had been the subject of thorough discussion in this country in relation to the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, the Geneva Protocol and the Locarno Treaties; and during and after the Sino-Japanese dispute opinion in all parties was overwhelmingly opposed to any extension or stricter definition of British commitments. As Sir Austen Chamberlain put it in the House of Commons on February 6th, 1934:

> I do not think it likely that at any time, and I am certain that at no time within my experience, has this country been ready or willing to bind itself specifically to particular actions in circumstances which it is wholly unable to foresee, and anyone who looks to us for that kind of guarantee will look to us in vain, for it is something that no Government of this country can offer. . . . We shall in the last resort always reserve to ourselves the right to judge whether the *casus fœderis*, the circumstances foreseen in the engagement, has actually occurred.

The safeguard provided by Great Britain's position as a permanent member of the League Council, which gave this country a veto on League action in any case, was seen not as a means of evading obligations but as a necessary corollary of the nature of the obligations undertaken. It was not our habit, Sir John Simon said in the same debate, "to make defined engagements for undefined circumstances." The right to judge the circumstances had to be reserved. Sir Austen Chamberlain had put the point on May 26th, 1933, a few days before the signature of the armistice at Tangku. The reservation was necessary, he said, "because it is only if the facts are such as to bring conviction home to the Government and so enable them to bring it home to their people that the action can be taken effectively which it is their desire to do."

There was another side to the matter. The circumstances might be such as to make League action highly dangerous, if not impracticable. On the other hand, when an occasion for action arose, the circumstances might permit the full powers of the League to be employed. Hence it was desirable to retain, and, indeed, to emphasise the importance of, the general obligations of the Covenant. Because they could not be, or might not be, fully carried out in all conceivable cases, that was no reason for abandoning them altogether. If the

circumstances of any particular case were such that the League Governments could not safely attempt to apply the more extreme forms of action contemplated in the Covenant, they would be able to take whatever steps might be considered practicable in fulfilment of their obligations without throwing over or diminishing the force of those obligations.

3. Critics' Interpretations

The group of critics we are now considering apparently took the view that an occasion had arisen which called for the application of sanctions against Japan. They ignored the juridical issues involved, or dismissed them as unreal. But, in such an event as they assumed had happened, were they really prepared to contend that the League States ought to have applied the coercive provisions of Article XVI or to have carried out the obligation of Article X without regard to the attendant circumstances and the likely consequences? Did they really believe it to be the duty of the League States to take coercive action even if there was no prospect of such action proving successful—even, perhaps, if they were in a position of clear military inferiority to the aggressor or, possibly, the aggressors? The answers, of course, are in the negative, despite the impression conveyed by their methods of controversy. They might contend that the League States were never in such a situation; but that is an appeal to the circumstances; the ground of "principle" is abandoned, and cannot be recovered even in circumstances less disadvantageous to the League States than those envisaged.

The first duty of these critics, if they desired the League States to be in a position to apply the coercive provisions of the Covenant effectively in all cases of aggression, was, it would seem, to demand that the League States should be equipped with the requisite armed power. Certainly, the task would have been highly complex and difficult. To place "the League States" in opposition to "the aggressor"—itself in all probability one of their own number—is to conceal extremely awkward problems. "Collective security," if workable at all, may be workable only if the "collectivity" is not all-inclusive and is organised against a State or States known in advance. But, since that was not the view of this group of critics; since it was only under pressure that they admitted that application of the economic sanctions of the Covenant might involve military

operations ; since they invariably argued that resort to arms would not be necessary because even the most powerful aggressor would not dare to challenge the power of the other combined League States ; it follows that they ought to have insisted upon " the League States " (i.e. those of them who could be relied upon not to be " aggressors " themselves) having an ample margin of armed power, one sufficient to enable them to meet all possible contingencies. They did nothing of the sort ; indeed, they did precisely the opposite.

The further question arises whether or not a Member State of the League was bound to apply coercive measures against any aggressor regardless of what the other Member States might do. Discussing Article XVI of the Covenant in his book *The Great Experiment,* Lord Cecil wrote that to him " it is clear that each member of the League is separately bound to take action, independently of any decision of the Council," and equally clear to him that, " though the obligation rests separately on each member of the League, it is an obligation to take joint and not separate action." That, he contended, " is the meaning and purpose of the whole Covenant... It is an attempt to combine the members of the League in an effort to achieve peace and security by means of international co-operation." Therefore, Lord Cecil continued, the wording must be interpreted by reference to the general purpose of the document. It would be absurd, on the one hand, if " even the weakest members of the League " were required " to take action against the strongest, though no other member of the League was prepared to do anything," and it would be equally absurd, on the other hand, if " no member of the League is bound to do anything unless all the members of the League . . . are ready to act " (pp. 75-6). Lord Cecil stated the main problem again in these terms :

> Is this a joint obligation, only binding if all the States other than the aggressor are prepared to act ; or is it binding immediately the aggression takes place, on each member of the League separately ? If the first interpretation is adopted the refusal to act of a single minor country releases all others from their obligation. On the other hand, if each country is bound to take action against an aggressor whatever the other States decide to do, it may put an unbearable burden on a loyal member of the League (p. 125).

What was Lord Cecil's solution of the problem ? The answer, he wrote, is to be sought by considering the purpose of the Covenant.

> The object was simply to stop war, and, consequently, the duty of the

members of the League under this Article is to do everything *within their power* which they think will effect that result [1] (p. 76).

Lord Cecil referred to the consideration of the problem by the Second Assembly of the League, and to the resolutions then passed —the "rules of guidance" referred to above—which, incidentally, were often overlooked in public discussion in this country. The solution adopted, wrote Lord Cecil,

was, in effect, that the obligation to go to the assistance of a victim of aggression did indeed rest on each member of the League individually. But since the object and the only object was to stop aggression, a member of the League was *only bound to take such action as would secure that result* (p. 125).

The "rules of guidance," in Lord Cecil's view, left the position reasonably clear:

Every member of the League is bound to take *whatever effective action is open to it* in order to stop aggression. *What will be effective depends largely on how great is the strength which the peace-loving Powers can command* (p. 126).

Finally, in his conclusions about the future, Lord Cecil wrote:

As regards Article XVI the point that should be made clear is that, though the obligation to take action against an aggressor rests on each member of the League individually, yet the action contemplated is joint action. In other words, it is an individual duty to take common action. Further, the action is to be preventive rather than penal, and is *only obligatory if it is reasonably likely to be successful* (p. 351).

There is no doubt that Lord Cecil held the same views at the time of the Sino-Japanese dispute.[2]

Whatever may be the correct interpretation of Article XVI, no Government considered that it was pledged to take isolated action; and this view was shared by Lord Cecil and his associates. Their emphasis was always on "collective" action. Although language was often used that seemed to suggest otherwise, they were, perhaps, more resolutely opposed than any other group in the community to isolated British action; and Lord Cecil himself, as we have seen, invariably made any action conditional upon the co-operation, not only of the other League States, but also of the United States of America. In view of their attitude towards British armaments, they had particularly strong if unavowed reasons.

Later on, it is true, those reasons were revealed in striking fashion

[1] Author's italics throughout these passages.
[2] See pp. 166-8 above.

by Mr. Attlee. On July 30th, 1934, he made the first speech in support of a Vote of Censure upon the Government for entering upon "a policy of rearmament." The occasion was the Government's air force programme. Mr. Attlee particularly objected to the Government's contention that the programme was necessary if this country was to be in a position to fulfil its commitments under the Covenant and the Treaty of Locarno. The Government's reasons, he said, were "very curious."

What are our obligations? The League of Nations Covenant does not say that you must keep a force of this or that size. The League of Nations was founded on the idea of the reduction of armaments, and not the increase of armaments.

Mr. Attlee then quoted paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article XVI, commenting:

It is not a matter of our having to provide a certain force of a certain size; it is a recommendation; and I think it is a little cynical of a Government that left China in the lurch to talk in this way.

He then referred to the definition of the obligations of the Covenant given at the time of the Locarno Treaty. "It was then stated that each State member of the League was bound to co-operate loyally and effectively in support of the Covenant." On that Mr. Attlee said: "We understand that we are to act loyally. It is no use shouting out 'War.' This is the obligation that the country has undertaken—." Coming to the next part of the definition, he proceeded: "The signatories at Locarno said that members of the League were bound to act, in the event of any act of aggression, to an extent compatible with their military situation, and taking their geographical position into account." Mr. Attlee said he did not think that interpretation would be denied, and went on:

We are bound to take action compatible with our military situation, *but we are not bound to put our military situation into such a condition that we can be called upon to act in all circumstances.* The whole object of the League was to reduce, and not to increase, armaments. Therefore, it is a ridiculous suggestion to make that we are bound to increase our forces under the Covenant of the League.

There is a further point. The League of Nations is not a unilateral undertaking; the Covenant is not unilateral. We are bound no more and no less than any other State.[1]

There was, in truth, no demand in this country for isolated action

[1] Author's italics.

by Great Britain in support of the Covenant, either in regard to the Manchurian dispute or in regard to any subsequent crisis. Mr. Attlee, presumably, considered that our military situation a year or so previously was such that we could have been called upon to act against Japan. But had there been any call upon us? Since Mr. Attlee thought the British Government to be "a Government that left China in the lurch," he apparently held that it ought to have pressed for such a call and been prepared to respond.

4. Why Britain?

Two questions demand our attention: (1) Was it "within the power" of the League to take coercive action against Japan with reasonable prospects of success? and (2) Why was the British Government so widely held responsible for the fact that no such action was attempted? These questions are closely connected, and we will begin with the second.

It was generally agreed that Great Britain was under no obligation to act alone. The group of critics we are discussing were themselves unqualifiedly hostile to isolated action by this country. On the other hand, they were indignant at any suggestion that Great Britain's decision against coercive measures was due in any degree to the attitude of the other League Powers; a suggestion which does not appear ever to have been put forward by or on behalf of the British Government. In this Manchurian case, as in later cases, the critics made the perfectly valid point that Great Britain was bound to be an essential and extremely important influence in the determination of League action or inaction. League decisions were not taken by the Members other than Great Britain, but by the Members including Great Britain. The critics have contended, therefore, that the British Government ought to have given a strong lead in favour of the application of coercive measures against Japan; and, since it did not do so, must share the responsibility.

But they did not stop there. They assigned the chief, almost the sole, responsibility to the British Government. In regard to the Manchurian crisis, as in regard to later crises, it became habitual with them to argue that if only the British Government had given a strong lead then the other League States would have responded favourably. This argument has no mean claim to be considered the most popular of all arguments in British controversies about

foreign policy between the wars. Evidence in support of it is meagre in the extreme; yet it persisted in spite of rapidly accumulating evidence to the contrary. Even the revealing incident of the arms embargo failed to check its development; the critics we are discussing proceeded either to ignore it or, as we have noted, to question its relevance. For the most part, they assumed that the majority of the other League States were ready and anxious to follow a British lead, and that even the other Great Powers in the League could be induced to do so. That Britain was "strong," was regarded as "strong," and was able to give a "strong lead"—even in the Far East—was seldom questioned.

Yet there were other Powers in the League from whom a "lead" would not have been considered presumptuous. No doubt it was natural—and, indeed, from a certain standpoint proper—that in this country attention should have been concentrated primarily upon the British Government. But, in the extensive literature on the subject of the Sino-Japanese dispute, we find scanty reference to the other Great Powers in the League or to lesser Powers with special interests in the Far East. There are, it is true, many allusions to the eagerness of certain lesser European Powers—usually described as "the small States"—to defend the Covenant in China, or, to be more accurate, to have the Covenant defended for them in China. And the same things are true of the comments in the British Press during the course of the dispute.

So far as other countries were concerned, attention was directed chiefly and inevitably to the United States, and at certain phases of the crisis, for quite different reasons, to Soviet Russia. The only League State whose attitude received any considerable notice—and then only in a very limited section of the Press, and spasmodically at that—was France. Some comment was made on the speeches of the French, German and Italian delegates at the meeting of the League Assembly in December 1932. Otherwise there was little or nothing about Germany and Italy, although we have noted several allusions to the former country.

In his contemporary *Survey*, Mr. A. J. Toynbee wrote that "Germany showed an inclination to give Japan support and countenance in her defiance of the world—or at any rate to abstain from joining hands with other Powers in seeking to bring Japan to reason," and that "the attitude of Germany . . . was closely reproduced in the attitude of France." Indeed, said Mr. Toynbee, ". . . there is

no doubt that, at the turn of the years 1931 and 1932, Japan was receiving tacit support from the French Government and overt support from the French Press" (p. 520). During the period to which Mr. Toynbee referred there were widespread rumours of a secret understanding between France and Japan. These rumours appear to have been given some credence in the American State Department,[1] and M. Claudel, the French Ambassador in Washington, visited Mr. Stimson and made forceful public denials. We need not attach any importance to these rumours and allegations, part of a much larger crop, and probably emanating from the same kind of sources. The points that matter are, first, that France displayed little interest in the Manchurian affair—as Lord Samuel has said—and, secondly, that no "lead," strong or otherwise, was forthcoming from any of the Continental Great Powers.

It may be urged, of course, that neither Germany nor Italy had special interests of importance in the Far East. It is also true that, had coercive action been taken against Japan, neither country would have been involved in any serious responsibilities or risks; and, indeed, might have been presented with unexpected opportunities. That League action was dependent upon the concurrence of Germany and Italy is a fact which brings out the weakness of the League. The burden of League action, anyhow, would have rested mainly, almost exclusively, upon Great Britain, the British Dominions and France. It was perfectly sound, therefore, to argue that the decisive influence in the formulation of League policy in the Far Eastern crisis rested with Great Britain and France, and primarily, for obvious reasons, with Great Britain.

The critics of the school we are now concerned with appeared, however, to overlook the corollary—that when the phrase "the League States" was translated into terms of power, the "might" of the League meant, essentially, the power of Great Britain and France. That was true not only in regard to the Far Eastern crisis but also, and to almost the same degree, in regard to subsequent crises. If it be granted that the chief responsibility rested upon Great Britain, it must also be conceded that the League's ability to take coercive action depended primarily upon the power of Britain. To that extent, the discussion about isolated or collective action was unreal.

[1] See *Times* reports from its Washington Correspondent, January 29th, February 2nd, 3rd and 26th, 1932.

Two other Great Powers, of course, were directly interested in the Manchurian crisis; the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Both of them were outside the League, and both of them, in different senses and degrees, were hostile towards it. It has been sufficiently demonstrated that there was not the slightest evidence of any willingness on the part of the United States to join in any coercive action against Japan.[1] As Mr. Sumner Welles, the former Under-Secretary of State in the Roosevelt Administration, has put it:

the whole course of American policy from 1920 until 1932 had made it more and more evident that the American people were determined to evade any responsibility for the use of force in maintaining peace in the rest of the world. The fact that the action taken by Secretary Stimson was bitterly criticised throughout the country and was assailed in many quarters as being "warmongering" pure and simple is a case in point. The Japanese Government itself was fully aware of the position.[2]

5. The Soviet Union

We have noted at least one strangely complimentary reference by a Left critic of the British Government to the policy pursued by the Soviet Union in relation to the Manchurian crisis. The habit of applying to Soviet Russia quite different standards from those applied to other countries was already well developed on the Left in the

[1] That many people in this country wished to believe otherwise during the course of the dispute has also been shown. At the same time, those who looked hopefully to the United States did not, as a rule, envisage the use of force. Sir Charles Webster, in a book written in collaboration with Mr. Sydney Herbert, *The League of Nations in Theory and Practice*, apparently in the autumn of 1932, gave, as would be expected, a balanced account of the dispute down to the time of writing. In the course of his remarks Sir Charles said: "It was clear that not only Britain, but even more France, the champion of sanctions, was not prepared to take any risk on behalf of China. The usual excuse of the uncertainty as to the United States could not be pleaded in this case. The interests of Britain and America were indeed identical." (p. 170.) And, a little later (pp. 171-2): "Public opinion was throughout confused. Many of those who wished the League's authority to be established shrank from using force. There seemed to be little recognition of the fact that there were many stages between using force against Japan and simply allowing her to have her own way. It was the United States which sought most consistently for this middle way, and she tried to get world public opinion to assist her by means of the League." Undoubtedly, Sir Charles Webster had in mind Mr. Stimson's policy of non-recognition and moral condemnation. But he was much impressed also by Mr. Stimson's address of August 8th, 1932. He considered that this declaration of the Secretary of State's views about consultation in the event of a violation of the Kellogg Pact, combined with "the new attitude of the United States towards co-operation with the League," had transformed the whole question of united action against an aggressor. (p. 179.) "The United States," he wrote, "was, under the Kellogg Pact, tending to take obligations as onerous as those of the Covenant."

[2] *The Time for Decision*, p. 217

early 'thirties. The Soviet Union was, of course, the Power most directly affected, China apart, by Japanese actions in Manchuria. We may be certain that if the Soviet Government had shown the slightest sign of a readiness to participate in coercive measures against Japan, or if any of its actions had been capable of being construed in that way, then both "Left" and "League" critics of the British Government would have made the most of the opportunity. Their silence on the subject is conclusive.

Even Mr. Zilliacus could produce nothing. In his *Inquest on Peace* he had to fall back, not for the first nor the last time, upon the suggestion that British policy was directed in reality against the Soviet Union. Between the wars that was a constantly recurring theme on the Left. "Evidence" in support of the accusation was always of the flimsiest conceivable nature. The suggestion was, indeed, only a reflection (or a partisan utilisation) of the Kremlin's real or feigned fears. The British Government's aim, Mr. Zilliacus and others hinted, was to promote a war between Japan and Russia :

> The Conservative Party and Press and the Government they support adopted a thoroughly bellicose and aggressive attitude to the Soviet Union at the time of the trial of the British engineers in Moscow.[1] The Government papers have made it perfectly clear that if Japan were to attack the Soviet Union the National Government would not raise a finger to stop her. In 1933 and 1934 it was not difficult to find people in the Conservative Party and in the City who frankly said they desired a Russo-Japanese war because they believed it would be good for business and help to put down Communism. (p. 26.)

As we have seen, certain newspapers in this country, notably the *Daily Mail*, urged that it was preferable to have the Japanese in control of Manchuria than to allow that area to relapse into chaos and then fall a prey to Russia. They held that, however weak the Soviet Union might be for the time being in relation to Japan, the Kremlin had certainly not abandoned Russia's long-standing aims in regard to Manchuria—a perfectly sound view, as subsequent events have proved. They were certainly not prepared to go to war with Japan in defence of the Soviet Union, but, despite occasional alarums, and increasingly as the Far Eastern crisis developed, they took the view that Russia would give way to Japan sufficiently to avert a conflict. The whole policy of these particular newspapers

[1] This trial, it will be remembered, was in April 1933.

was one of opposition to any British intervention in the Manchurian affair, whether or not Russia became involved.

Mr. Zilliacus, presumably, was trying to justify the Soviet Government's extremely cautious policy throughout the dispute. The task of trying to show that the Soviet Union was willing to co-operate in coercive measures against Japan was certainly a hopeless one. Even in 1939 Mr. Zilliacus could only get so far as the assertion that the British Government

> considered it a lesser evil to do a deal with Japan on the basis of condoning her aggression than to co-operate with the U.S.A., the League *and the U.S.S.R.* to stop Japanese aggression.[1]

When he came to write his usual General Election piece in 1945, he still had to content himself with the variant that " the U.S.S.R. was kept at arm's length by British Conservative hostility." [2] That was a slow rate of progress for Mr. Zilliacus, but the explanation is simple. The policy of the Soviet Union in the Manchurian dispute was, from beginning to end, and was repeatedly declared to be, a policy of " strict neutrality." On that basis the Soviet Government refused to participate in the Lytton Commission or to assist its work, and refused to co-operate with the League's Advisory Committee.

Mr. A. J. Toynbee wrote in his *Survey* for 1932 :

> The policy of the Soviet Government towards the Japanese military adventure in Manchuria can be summed up in a few words. It was a policy of invincible restraint and impenetrable reserve. . . . so far as concerned their rights and interests and assets on Manchurian soil, they steadfastly responded to Japanese encroachments by turning the other cheek ; and their settled policy *vis-à-vis* Japanese aggression was evidently a policy of peace at any price short of an actual Japanese invasion of Russian soil. (p. 533).

Doubtless it was the pacifist element in Richard Wallhead's make-up which accounted for his view that Soviet policy had been " exemplary." As Mr. Taracouzio put it, " the U.S.S.R. must be given full credit for being extraordinarily desirous of peace."[3] Exemplary from the standpoint of resistance to aggression Soviet policy certainly was not. Wise it undoubtedly was, although to Trotzky it was " weak." Sir John Pratt has said that " Russia

[1] *Between Two Wars ?* (Penguin Special), p. 134. (Author's italics.)
[2] *Can the Tories win the Peace ?* p. 32.
[3] *War and Peace in Soviet Diplomacy* (1940), p. 216.

remained absolutely quiescent while Japan rode roughshod over all her rights and interests in North Manchuria." That was much too strong a way of putting it. The Soviet Government certainly did not neglect military precautions for the defence of Soviet territory. On the contrary, intensive efforts were made to strengthen Russian defences. Nor were diplomatic efforts lacking with the same object in view.

At an early stage in the dispute, December 1931, the Soviet Government proposed to Japan a non-aggression pact between the two countries. This proposal was made twice again before the end of 1932, when Japan (December 13th) rejected it. It was to be renewed repeatedly in the following years, and was finally to be accepted by Japan in April of 1941. The fact that these efforts were unavailing while the Manchurian dispute was on adds emphasis to the Soviet Government's policy of " invincible restraint."

Inevitably, there were many occasions of friction between the two countries. Relations between them were now worse, now better. There were mutual protests and accusations and assurances. Particularly difficult were the problems arising from the Russian-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway. But, as it has been said,[1] " the most scrupulous care was taken by the Russian military authorities to avoid any clash with Japan, and throughout the whole Manchurian campaign as such not a single incident as between Russian and Japanese troops was reported."

With the Japanese in control of the whole of northern Manchuria, fresh difficulties arose. There were many border incidents, which were to continue in the following years. The Japanese aim to eliminate all Russian influence from Manchuria itself became obvious. Various kinds of pressure were brought to bear. On April 8th, 1933, all traffic between Manchuria and Siberia was stopped. In these circumstances the Soviet Government decided to sell its interests in the Chinese Eastern Railway. Litvinov made the offer on May 2nd, 1933. There followed a very long process of Oriental bargaining, in which, moreover, the question of recognition of Manchukuo was involved. Negotiations were begun in June 1933 ; they were interrupted for long periods ; and were not finally completed until March 23rd, 1935, when the railway was sold to Manchukuo for 140 million yen.

The Chinese Government had protested at the outset of the

[1] *The Problem of the Far East* (1935), S. Mogi and H. V. Redman.

negotiations that its approval was necessary. The original Russian interest had been based on an eighty years' lease. In 1924 the railway had been reorganised as a joint Soviet-Chinese concern. Chinese protests were brushed aside. The Soviet Government took the view that Manchukuo was *de facto* the successor to the rights of China. It was, indeed, the Soviet Union which, however sensibly, did " a deal with Japan on the basis of condoning her aggression." Its interest in the Chinese Eastern Railway, doubly forfeited, as was to be pointed out, by this sale and by sale without China's consent, was one of " the former rights of Russia " to be " restored " by the secret agreement at Yalta, again without China's consent. Unlike the League States and the United States of America, the Soviet Government did not adopt the Stimson policy of non-recognition of Manchukuo. Indeed, such a policy was impracticable for Russia. *De facto* recognition was accorded. Formal recognition of the new State eventually came in 1941, when the Soviet Union signed its Pact of Friendship and Neutrality with Japan in the course of what so many used to call " the war against aggression."

6. Lord Cecil

Those who criticised the British Government on the ground that it failed to do its duty as a member of the League were reluctant to admit the reality of Britain's dilemma. More or less perfunctory references were sometimes made by them to the difficulties and dangers. Some of the main facts were conceded, but, apparently, without full appreciation of their significance ; and critics of this type refused to admit, anyhow, that British policy was decisively conditioned by them. With the real reasons staring them in the face, critics of British foreign policy between the wars have all too frequently devised far-fetched but palatable explanations.

Although the wiser and more experienced critics, like Lord Cecil, were prepared to grant, theoretically, that action under the " sanctions " articles of the Covenant was " only obligatory " if it was " reasonably likely to be successful," they were somewhat impatient with any discussion of the chances of success. The test which in practice they applied was simply whether or not the coercive provisions of the Covenant were put into operation. No actual situation was admitted to be one in which there was any possibility of failure. They appeared unable to believe that there could be such

a situation. If coercive measures were not applied, therefore, it must have been because the Governments concerned, or at any rate the British Government, had no desire to apply them ; because that Government was unwilling to take any risk for the sake of the Covenant ; because it did not really accept the " principles of the League " as they interpreted those principles.

Special interest attaches to Lord Cecil's own argument, as presented in *The Great Experiment*. It was based, of course, on the questionable view that Japan was liable to the sanctions of the Covenant ; and it combined what we have called the first main line of criticism with the " neither one thing nor the other " type and with his own special line of criticism based upon his interpretation of the Shanghai episode which has already been examined.

Dealing with the position in January 1932 in connection with Mr. Stimson's non-recognition Note and the British " reply " (i.e. the Foreign Office communiqué), Lord Cecil said " it is difficult to believe that we had been anxious to prevent Japanese aggression and were only prevented from taking action in that sense because we felt sure that America would not help us ! "

> The truth is that the British Government recognised no duty to take action beyond remonstrance for the maintenance of peace under the Covenant of the League, nor did they believe that our Treaty obligations to China required us to take any active steps to preserve her integrity.

The only " active steps " taken by the American Government, be it remembered, were those of " remonstrance " and what Lord Cecil himself had called a " warning " of non-recognition.

Lord Cecil proceeded :

> No doubt the position was difficult. Of the three Western Powers chiefly interested in the Far East, two—the United States and Russia—were not members of the League and therefore not bound by the Covenant ; and the third—the British Empire—had possessions in the Far East, such as Hong Kong, which we could not unaided defend against Japanese reprisals. It might certainly be argued that without the assistance of the American fleet, coercive action against Japan was impracticable or at best hazardous. (p. 229.)

But, said Lord Cecil, our position should have been clarified. We could have taken either of two courses :

> We could have said that we accepted the Japanese point of view and did not propose to take any coercive action to stop her invasion of China.

That would have been difficult to defend in view of the constantly reiterated statements of British Governments that they supported the League. But it would have been clear and straightforward.

This way of putting the first alternative raises questions. Why should Lord Cecil have implied that the announcement of a decision not to take coercive action against Japan would have meant acceptance of the Japanese viewpoint? It would have meant simply that the British Government were not prepared to take coercive measures —nothing more. The British Government did not take coercive action, but were very far from accepting the Japanese point of view. Why, further, should Lord Cecil have said that the announcement of such a decision would have been difficult to defend in view of Government statements about supporting the League? Only, it would seem, because Lord Cecil and his friends made a shibboleth of the words " support of the League " ; and because, with all the resources of their great propaganda machine, they would have denounced the Government—as in fact they did—for failing to " support the League," or, better still, for not " believing in the League." Lord Cecil forgot his own admission that in certain circumstances there was no obligation to put the coercive machinery of the League into operation. He always tended to forget it when dealing with any particular case.

The second course open to the British Government at the beginning of 1932 was, according to Lord Cecil, to have said

> that we were anxious to do all we could to prevent the continuance of Japanese aggression, that we would, therefore, join in the proposed *démarche* at Tokyo, but that we doubted whether it would be effectual and should, therefore, like to know what attitude the American Government would adopt if that should turn out to be the case. (pp. 229-30.)

" Unhappily," Lord Cecil said, " we took neither of these courses." That is true only in a literal sense. In regard to the first course, the British Government made it perfectly plain that its policy was one of conciliation, and when that policy had failed also made it clear that they were not prepared to take any coercive action. As we have seen, Sir John Simon was afterwards severely criticised for his plain statements to that effect on February 27th, 1933—and, indeed, for the timing of those statements.

In regard to the second course, we need not discuss the point about joining in the proposed *démarche*, which Lord Cecil seems to have confused with Mr. Stimson's Note of January 7th, 1932, except

to say that the British Government did not refuse to join in the proposed *démarche* in February, and that it adopted the non-recognition doctrine along with the other League Governments. But was Lord Cecil sure that the British Government made no enquiries of the United States Government on the lines suggested? Was he confident that the British Government asked for no assurances from the United States? If such enquiries were made, and no satisfactory assurances were forthcoming from the United States Government, Lord Cecil, presumably, would have approved of the British Government taking the first of his two suggested courses!

We do know from Mr. Stimson that "friendly Governments attempted to sound out the American position."[1] We know what Ambassador Dawes replied to Briand about his Government's attitude.[2] We know also that Mr. Stimson himself had talks "of the most frank and informal nature" with the representatives of the Great Powers when at Geneva in the second half of April 1932, and a special conference with the British representatives.[3] It is possible that, as Major-General Temperley suggested, the British Government only decided finally against coercive action when it became clear that active naval support from the United States could not be relied upon. It may have been so; but whether it was so or not is really unimportant. The plain fact is that the American Government was not able or willing to take military action against Japan, either then or for many years afterwards. It was unable and unwilling to give any assurances of armed support, or of co-operation in any coercive measures. That being so, the question whether or not the British Government was willing to employ coercion against Japan *with American co-operation* is surely irrelevant. It is almost unbelievable that Lord Cecil, in 1940, should still have been suggesting that the American Government might have given assurances about active naval support in the early months of 1932. As we have seen, Mr. Stimson had made it clear in his 1936 book that he was unable to give any such assurances. But are we to believe that Lord Cecil, then still a British representative at the meetings of the League Council, was unaware of the position in January and February of 1932?

In his book, Lord Cecil went on:

Instead, we continued to call upon Japan to comply with the provisions

[1] See p. 146 above. [2] See footnote, p. 137 above. [3] See p. 234 above.

of the Covenant and the Resolutions of the Council of the League—in most of which Japan had concurred—and when she ignored these appeals we did nothing. If the object had been to bring the League into contempt and encourage other aggressive Governments to attack their neighbours, we could not have done anything more effective.

We may pass the phrase " we did nothing." True, it provides an illuminating comment on the outcry made by Lord Cecil's associates and followers about the Stimson doctrine of non-recognition, and also on the importance they attached to the League's " moral condemnation " of Japan's actions. But by " nothing " Lord Cecil undoubtedly meant " nothing coercive." He had just previously argued, however, that it would have been clear and straightforward to have announced, in January 1932, that we did not propose to take any coercive action ; and he had clearly implied that in certain circumstances—which in fact existed—such a course would have been not only clear and straightforward but also justified.

It would seem that we are also meant to conclude that, in those circumstances, the British Government ought not to have called upon Japan to comply with the Covenant and the League Council's resolutions. In other words, the British Government ought to have abandoned the procedure of the Covenant, because, since the coercive provisions were not to be applied, the application of the provisions for conciliation was the most effective way of bringing the League into contempt and encouraging other aggressive Governments ! Lord Cecil seemed thus to arrive, though by a different process of reasoning, at the same practical conclusions as Mr. Amery ; which would have been an interesting example of extremes meeting, as they so often do. His actual conclusions, however, were very different, as we have seen. True, in order to arrive at them, he had to extend his criticism of the British Government, by implication, to the United States Government, and, indeed, to " the Peace Powers " generally ; although he continued to concentrate his censure upon the Government of this country. He did not, in fact, agree that the circumstances made the coercion of Japan impracticable or hazardous. He maintained, on the contrary, that Japan would have given way in regard to Manchuria if " the Peace Powers " had been " prepared to take serious action, as at Shanghai" —a contention we have already dealt with.[1]

In a later part of his 1940 book Lord Cecil said that " force

[1]See Chapter X, pp. 197-202 above.

alone would have turned her (Japan) from her purpose" (p. 332). By "force" he apparently meant economic sanctions supported, if necessary, by military action; since he wrote that "force was ruled out" in both the Manchurian and the Abyssinian questions, and defined "force" as "such force, on behalf of the maintenance of the new international law, as might lead to war." If Lord Cecil, in the years 1932 and 1933, recognised that Japan could only be restrained by "force," he certainly failed to impress the fact upon his associates and followers, and, so far as we are aware, he made no effort to do so. In 1940 also, he appears to have held the view that, *without the assistance of the American Fleet*, coercion of Japan would have been impracticable or hazardous. It is most unlikely that he was of a different opinion in 1932 and 1933.

Speaking in the House of Lords on March 13th, 1935, Lord Cecil explained his attitude in regard to economic and military sanctions at the time of the Manchurian dispute. He made it plain also that his views on the subject of sanctions had not subsequently changed. The pronouncement was as follows:

I do not regard military measures as the best weapon for the collective system. I regard it as the very last resort, the final thing when everything else has failed. Then, it may be, you are driven to it, and that is what the Covenant says. But I regard as far the most generally effective means the political and economic steps taken by a great mass of the nations. There is always being brought up this question of what we ought to have done with regard to Japan. *I know of nobody who was in favour of going to war with Japan.* What we did say, many of us, what I should have said and many of us would have said, was: "We have great possibilities of economic pressure upon Japan, *on one condition*"—*and that condition was always made*—"*that the United States will co-operate with us in the matter.*" If you had had action by the League of Nations, coincided in by the United States, the pressure would have been so tremendous on Japan that I am perfectly convinced that a very different policy would have been pursued by that Power. The only conceivable possibility—*a possibility which always seemed to me so remote as scarcely to be worth taking into consideration*—was that in that case Japan would go to *war with the whole world*, and, possibly selecting us as the nearest and most vulnerable person, would have attacked our territories. *I do not believe a word of it; I believe it is fantastic nonsense.* If there were a danger of that kind it might well have been desirable, before entering on your policy, to have had a special agreement among those engaged in it that they would co-operate to protect one another if such an attack were made.

I do not want to go back to all that, but I do want to say that in my judgment it is *a great mistake and a grave danger always to talk about collective action as if collective action means collective military action.* If the system works properly and works as it ought to work, and works easily, as it would work, that would only occur in *a very remote contingency*, and the ordinary operation of the system would be by political and economic action.[1]

That expresses accurately the attitude of the British "sanctionists" during the years following the Manchurian dispute. During the dispute, many of the later critics of the group under consideration were coming to adopt that attitude, some more quickly, others more slowly. They arrived at the belief that military action would not be necessary, *provided always* that the aggressor nation was confronted by the whole of the rest of the world. They believed that Japan could have been effectively coerced "short of war," *provided always* that the United States had co-operated with "the League of Nations," or, as they gradually came to qualify it, "the Peace Powers."

It is clear that the validity of the popular criticism levelled at the British Government in after years, as of Lord Cecil's own criticism, turns primarily on the question of the American attitude. And it is not pure coincidence that a prominent feature of the case against the Government as popularised was the contention, persisted in against all the evidence to the contrary, that the United States would have been prepared to participate in coercive measures against Japan.

But the United States, not being a member of the League, was not open to the charge of having failed to carry out the obligations of the Covenant. Had the League States an obligation to take coercive action—on the assumption that the case called for such action?

[1] Author's italics.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

"WITHIN THEIR POWER"

1. "CIRCUMSTANCES MUST ENTER IN"

LEAVING the juridical position aside, the League States were under no obligation to take coercive measures against Japan unless it lay within their power to do so effectively. The facts of the power situation must, therefore, be taken into account.

The relevant circumstances confronting the British Government and the Governments of the other League States during the Manchurian dispute may be briefly summarised as follows :

1. Coercive measures against Japan were dependent, in the main, upon the available armed strength of Great Britain and the British Dominions.

2. There was no certainty, indeed, no probability, of active co-operation on the part of the United States of America.

3. Even in the unlikely contingency of such co-operation, the League would have no marked superiority in military power for an indefinite but long period.

4. Japan, therefore, was most unlikely to be deterred by any possibility of military action on the part of the League States ; and was almost certain to retaliate against coercive measures of any kind, and to resort to arms if any such measures were likely to prove a serious embarrassment to her.

5. Application of the coercive provisions of the Covenant consequently involved a real danger of war.

6. A war with Japan would have been a hazardous undertaking. So far from the League States being in a position to employ superior forces against Japan, that country had important strategical advantages and effective superiority in the Far East. Japan was in a position to take offensive action against the possessions and interests of the League States in the Far East. War could have no rapidly successful outcome. It was bound to be long. The League States might even suffer serious reverses. In the meantime, grave complications might arise in other parts of the world. The League States might be confronted by still more dangerous aggression nearer

home. And, even if they were ultimately successful against Japan, their power to resist aggression from other quarters might be seriously impaired by a prolonged struggle.

It has also to be remembered that the world was involved in or only slowly emerging from the great economic and financial crisis ; and that the political tension in Europe was increasing at an ever more rapid pace throughout the period of the dispute. The British Government itself had to consider, not only the extreme unlikelihood of any effective assistance being forthcoming from other European States, particularly France, and the state of public opinion in this country, but also the limitations of its own armed forces. Was Britain's military situation such that she was bound to act, in the circumstances, if " called upon " ?

Lord Samuel, in his *Memoirs*, was to justify in the following terms his statement of the " blunt truth " that the means of action were lacking :

> The writ of the League of Nations did not run in the Far East. Of the Powers concerned, Russia was not then a member of the League and kept aloof. France showed little interest, and in any case could be of small practical assistance. China was in a state of political confusion and military weakness. The United States was also not a member of the League, and there could be no assurance that, if the test came, she would see the matter through to the end. Her Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, favoured a firm policy ; but what certainty was there—or even probability—that the Senate and House of Representatives, with whom the decision rested, would in the last resort sanction war ? The return of the United States to isolationism in 1919 was fresh in all men's minds.
>
> There remained only Great Britain. If war came—and our information was that Japan would be more likely to fight than to yield—we could hardly risk transferring our main fleets for an indefinite time to the Far East ; the European situation was too precarious. Besides, our isolated bases there might be lost at the outset, and effective naval action thereby made impossible. For any forward policy in the Pacific the concurrence of Australia and New Zealand would be essential, and it was more than doubtful if it would be given, for the very lives of those Dominions would be put to the hazard. As an old English writer has said : " Let not thy Will roar when thy Power can but whisper." [1]

[1] Pp. 271-2. Cf., for example, Mr. G. F. Hudson, *The Far East in World Politics* (1937), pp. 253-4 : " The American fleet in 1932 would have been by itself quite incapable of coping with the Japanese in the Western Pacific. With the addition of the whole, or the greater part, of the British Navy, the balance might have been turned against Japan—though even then remoteness of the theatre of war from the English and American homelands would have left the issue of a naval campaign in doubt. But with the storm clouds

That, undoubtedly, was the view of the Government of which Lord Samuel had been a member until September of 1932. It was the view of the Government's advisers. But no expert advice was needed. It was the view of all who gave any thought to the situation. Major-General Temperley, when he came to write his book in 1938, said :

there was strong reason to believe that, if economic sanctions were imposed, Japan's immediate reply would be to attack our naval bases at Hong Kong and even Singapore, and engage the China squadron wherever it might be found. At the height of the crisis the greater part of it, including the flagship, was in fact in the Whangpoo River with the Japanese in occupation of the lower reaches. We should then have been faced with a war of the first magnitude, which would have had little popular enthusiasm behind it, with few allies, and fighting some eleven thousand miles from the home country and many thousands also from the nearest well-equipped naval base. It would have been necessary to dispatch the Grand Fleet from home waters at a time when political tension in Europe was severe and, after a series of naval engagements against the third strongest navy in the world in its home waters, we might then have had to retake Hong Kong. These were the stark facts of the situation, and, even if Japanese attack was not a certainty, the risk was no light one. I have discussed the situation since these events with responsible members of the Opposition who are zealous supporters of the League. I put to them the military possibilities of the case, which were, indeed, no secret to any student of the situation at the time. I was surprised at the levity with which they would have been prepared to accept the responsibility of a long war entailing the expenditure of much blood and treasure. Assuming that this reaction by the Japanese was probable—and everything pointed to this—I cannot think that the Government were wrong in refusing to lay such a burden on our people, unless they had firm guarantees from other

again gathering in Europe the British Admiralty had no intention of jeopardising naval supremacy in European waters by the dispatch of its main fighting force to the Pacific. The navies of France, Italy and Germany were even more immobilised by European preoccupations, and could not be expected to take part in a Pacific war. There was, therefore, as cover for the Manchurian venture, a definite Japanese naval superiority in Asiatic waters from Kamchatka to Luzon. . . . League sanctions would have put Japan in a state of siege, and she would certainly not have either surrendered at the outset or passively awaited defeat by slow economic attrition. She would have replied to sanctions both by reprisals against the sanctionist nations and by requisition of all resources within reach of her power. Her command of the Yellow and East China seas would have enabled her to intercept all the China trade of the sanctionist nations and to occupy and exploit the littoral provinces of China from Hopei to Fukien ; China would thus have been subjected to a much more far-reaching and predatory invasion than she actually endured, and her would-be protectors would not have been able to give her much immediate or direct assistance."

important naval Powers that they would bear their full share in accordance with their pledges under Article 16. Of this there was no sign.[1]

But, as we have seen, it was only *after* these events that Oppositionists and League zealots took up the position that they would have been prepared to accept the responsibility of war with Japan. They would certainly not have accepted the responsibility at the time. Even so, the word " levity " would seem to be not unjustifiably applied to their whole attitude towards " military possibilities." The latter, Temperley wrote, were no secret at the time to any " student of the situation." The Government's critics of the type under discussion were, for the most part, loth frankly to recognise the nature of the circumstances confronting Great Britain and the League States—and the United States of America as well. Even those who did recognise them seemed reluctant to take them into account.

Mr. A. J. Toynbee wrote that the responsible representatives of " the fighting Services," especially the representatives of the Navy,

were naturally alive to the fact that the total effect of the Washington Treaties of 1921-22 had been to leave Japan physically supreme in the Far East on land and sea and in the air. The strategic position was such that the Japanese Empire with its insular and continental dependencies, including the newly-occupied territory in Manchuria, was virtually immune from any serious attack on the part of any foreign Power, whereas a number of important foreign holdings in the Far East were potential hostages in the hands of Japan.

But, in his contemporary criticisms of the British Government, Mr. Toynbee does not appear at any point to have taken such tremendously important facts into consideration.

So it was with Mr. Seymour Cocks, perhaps the foremost critic of Sir John Simon in the House of Commons. On February 27th, 1933, insisting that both the United States and ourselves had a very great grievance against Japan in regard to the Nine Power Treaty, he said :

Because we trusted the Japanese word to keep the Treaty we agreed that we would not fortify any position East of Singapore and that the United States would not fortify any position West of Honolulu. Because we trusted the Japanese word we have left Hong Kong undefended and the Americans have left the Philippines undefended and also the

[1] *The Whispering Gallery of Europe*, p. 321.

island of Guam, where she was going to build a naval station in the Pacific. . . . We have left our long coastline of Australia absolutely unprotected and *we have handed over absolute naval and military supremacy to Japan.* . . . Japan has taken advantage of that for ten years to build up her military power, to accumulate oil and munitions and to prepare for the conflict which the militarist party were determined to undertake.

Mr. Cocks, however, did not urge that so vital a fact as Japan's absolute naval and military supremacy in the Far East was a bar to League action, although it will be remembered that in the course of the same speech he showed, in regard to the arms embargo, that he appreciated the difficulties and the risk of war involved in any discriminatory action against Japan. It is true also that, a fortnight or so later (March 16th, 1933), he said that, if Japan continued to flout the public law of the world, " it will be necessary either to increase our naval forces and have a bigger Fleet in the Pacific, or to enter into consultation with the American Government with a view to co-operating in some scheme of mutual defence of our possessions in that great ocean." Mr. Cocks was speaking then on the Naval Estimates, and, in creditable isolation so far as the Labour benches were concerned, he refused to criticise them because they were slightly higher (although he was " a pacifist " and " a believer in disarmament "), " considering the dangerous state of the world to-day and the absolute failure of the Foreign Secretary." Presumably, Mr. Cocks did not consider that increased naval forces had been required, but only that they might be. And he never qualified his criticisms of Sir John Simon : indeed, they became increasingly severe.

2. The Singapore Base

It is relevant to recall that during and after the Manchurian dispute the Labour Party and " the peace movement " generally maintained their opposition to the resumption of work on the construction of the naval base at Singapore. In regard to the Labour Opposition, Mr. Mander's readers may be reminded that this was not a case of voting against the Estimates merely because of general dissatisfaction with Government policy, for the official spokesmen of the Opposition specifically urged the cessation or slowing down of the work at Singapore. It may be noted also that Mr. Cocks did not dissociate himself from his party's attitude on this matter. On March 14th,

1934, Robert Bernays was provoked to retort[1] that the Opposition "talk about Japan, and they were anxious for the Government to intervene with all its might in Japan, but on Monday night they voted against the Singapore Base, which alone would make that effective." J. A. Spender's remarks on the subject were :

> If any military operation might be considered physically impossible, it was that of going to war with Japan without such bases, however great on paper might be the preponderance of the attacking force or forces. It was at all events an undertaking of immense hazard on which no Power could be expected to embark its fleet except on the direst compulsion.

3. The 1932 Estimates

The attitude towards the construction of the Singapore Base was, of course, only one particular feature of the general policy pursued by the "Left" and "League" critics in regard to British armaments.[2] We have referred at an earlier stage to the discussion on the Naval Estimates in March 1932 ; to the warnings then given by the First Lord of the Admiralty and Sir Austen Chamberlain ; and to the severe criticism of the two speeches in the so-called "sanctionist" Press. Mr. David Grenfell, who wound up for the Labour

[1] The provocation was Mr. Attlee's "taunt," in regard to "enforcing peace" (February 6th, 1934), that it was no use the Foreign Secretary "rattling the sheath, because they knew that he will never draw the sword for anything at all, not even for collective security."

Bernays replied : "Did the Labour Party say that in East Fulham ? Did they say that in no circumstances would the Foreign Secretary draw the sword, that they knew he would 'never draw the sword for anything at all,' not even for collective security ? We have a right to ask and the country has a right to ask the official Opposition whether they are prepared to draw the sword for guaranteeing security. Will they say it to-night, and, what is much more important, will they admit that they have said it in the forthcoming by-election in North Hammersmith ? The official Opposition have complained that the Government have no policy on disarmament. I find it very difficult to discover the official Opposition's policy. They profess a belief in guaranteed securities and then they proceed to vote against the Navy and Air Force Votes, which alone can make that guarantee effective."

[2] Opposing the increased Army Estimates on March 18th, 1935, Mr. Aneurin Bevan said : "There is an increased expenditure of £775,000 at Singapore. I thought there was no need to spend all that money there. Over and over again it has been decided that we were not going to proceed with the defences at Singapore. I admit that the present Government have reversed the policy of the previous Government, but I thought that the Foreign Secretary had established such friendly terms with Japan *when he became their advocate at Geneva* that it was not necessary to spend so much in the Pacific." (Author's italics.)

Mr. Bevan had previously remarked : "What actually has happened is that the Government are engaged in the most objectionable sort of scare-mongering. Everybody who speaks with authority upon these matters knows that the British Army is a highly efficient mechanised Army."

Opposition on that occasion, said that he did not believe what the First Lord and Sir Austen had told them; he urged a further reduction in the Estimates, asking the question: "Who is it we are preparing to fight?"

In the debate on the Army Estimates on the following day (March 8th, 1932), there were one or two references to the Far East—it was, of course, the period of the Shanghai crisis. The Estimates were down by about £3½ million. The Army was "little more than an armed police force," and the reductions, effected in view of the financial stringency, meant a drastic suspension or retardation of many essential services. Among other things, no Territorial Army camps were to be held during the year. Conservative speakers expressed grave concern. Brigadier-General Nation was alarmed, and amazed that this country could reduce the Estimates to such an extent in view of past experience, the actions of other nations, and "with the situation in the Far East as a warning." Mr. Amery declared:

> The harsh facts of the situation in the Far East to-day are speaking far more eloquently than any evasive formulas or pleasing fictions that can be concocted at Geneva. We have got to face the facts that our own peace, that our power to contribute to the peace of the world, is going to depend in the future, as in the past, upon our armed strength, and that any undue weakening of our forces, any incapacity on our part, any drifting towards the position of a China, is going to bring the calamity of war nearer to ourselves and, possibly, to other nations.

The eloquence of harsh facts did not impress the Labour speaker who followed, Mr. J. J. Lawson (now Lord Lawson), a later Secretary of State for War. Referring to Mr. Amery, he said:

> I tell him that if his is to be the attitude of mind which is to rule during the next year or two, it will breed in the country a spirit with which, in the long run, it may be very difficult for Parliament or any other organisation to deal.

No one on the Opposition side of the House was concerned on this occasion about military possibilities in relation to the Far East or anywhere else. The Disarmament Conference had only just concluded its first month. Mr. Attlee expressed dissatisfaction with the magnitude of the Estimates; another Labour speaker demanded further and progressive reductions in order to give a lead and to show that we did not want war; two others maintained that we had made a bigger contribution than any other country to the cause

of disarmament, but urged that we should make further sacrifices, and so " make a gesture and give a lead." Even Mr. Seymour Cocks, who on the previous day had declared that he would advocate nothing to reduce the efficiency of the Fleet, complained that there was very little " passionate desire and concentrated determination " for disarmament in the House.

The Air Estimates were reduced by £700,000. No new units were to be formed. Ten regular squadrons still remained to be formed for the completion of the programme embarked on in 1923. This country ranked fifth or sixth among the air powers of the world, and grave risks, the Government spokesman said, were being taken. In the debate on the Estimates on March 10th, 1932, once again, concern on the Conservative benches was matched by concern about disarmament on the Labour side.

4. The 1933 Estimates

Just as the 1932 Estimates had coincided with the Shanghai crisis, so the Estimates in 1933 coincided with the period immediately following the League Assembly's " verdict " on the Manchurian dispute. By that time, as we have noted, Mr. Churchill had begun his campaign for rearmament, supported by Mr. Amery and others, and by the " popular " Conservative Press. Hitler was Chancellor. The Service Estimates all showed increases, but very small ones. The Army Estimates were still £2 million below those of 1931 ; the Air Estimates were up only £26,000, no new units were provided for, and the 1923 scheme was to be held in suspense for another year ; while the Naval increase of £3 million was almost entirely automatic.

The advocates, then or later, of action against Japan were not, with the single exception of Mr. Seymour Cocks, perturbed about our defences in the Far East, much less about our capacity to enforce sanctions against Japan. They were not perturbed even about our defences in Europe, to say nothing of our power to contribute effectively to support of the " collective peace system " Mr. Attlee protested against the size of the Army Estimates and the increase they showed, and expressed opposition to continuance of work on the Singapore Base. Mr. Philips Price opposed a Conservative motion urging encouragement of recruiting for the Territorial Army. " What," he asked, " is in the minds of these hon. Members

when they speak of home defence? Defence against whom? Who is expected to be the invader? Why this fear?" Morgan Jones also thought that the provision for the Army was too much; and he was a little ironical: "I am really wondering where I am." The mover of the Territorial Army motion, he said, "almost scared me to death. . . . I had visions of some imminent invasion of this country. It almost appeared that we were in deadly danger."

In the discussion on the Air Estimates on March 14th, 1933, the Labour spokesman, Mr. Neil Maclean, concentrated upon the contention that air armaments were no defence against attack from the air. This debate was important chiefly for the speeches of Mr. Churchill and Mr. Amery. The former's effort was described by a Labour Member as "one of the most Jingo speeches" he had ever heard in the House. The Labour Party voted against the Air Estimates, as against the others, in accordance with their practice, but, in the case of the Air, a motion by Mr. McGovern (then of the I.L.P.) to reduce the Air Force from 31,000 to 1,000—which, he said, "is tantamount to the wiping out of the entire force"—was supported by twenty-three Labour Members, including the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr. Grenfell, Mr. Morgan Jones and Mr. T. Williams. The Navy Estimates were opposed in a more formal way, Mr. George Hall asking for reductions as a further gesture to the Disarmament Conference, and Mr. Charles Brown urging the ground of economy; while Mr. Seymour Cocks, though voting with his party, declined to criticise the size of the Estimates.

In the spring and summer of 1933 the attack upon the Government by Labour and "League" critics was not directed upon the Government's policy in regard to the Sino-Japanese dispute but upon its policy in regard to disarmament, although the former gradually began to be used, and became increasingly prominent, as a count in the indictment of the latter. It was the deadlock at the Disarmament Conference which alarmed and preoccupied them, not any failure to take coercive action against Japan. At the time of the signing of the Tangku truce they were beginning that attack upon the Government's reservation of the right to conduct bombing operations for police purposes in outlying regions which, misrepresented as the great obstacle in the way of total abolition of military aviation, was to be one of the most prominent and long-sustained features of their propaganda. "Bombing the Conference,"

the *News Chronicle's* editorial was headed on June 1st, 1933. At the same time, the Left " war resistance " movement, with pacifist backing, was submerging the " Covenanters." We have noted its effects at the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party Conference in the following autumn; and, with the development of Conservative pressure for rearmament, exemplified in the adoption of a resolution calling for stronger defence forces at the Birmingham Conference of the Conservative Party on October 6th, Germany's withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and the League on October 14th, and the East Fulham by-election on October 25th, the whole body of " League," Labour and " Left " critics of the Government went all out against any degree of British rearmament in a desperate hope that the Disarmament Conference might yet be saved.

5. The Folly of Coercive Action

Some critics of our first type, notably Mr. Seymour Cocks, emphasised at the time of the dispute the facts of Japanese militarism, the ascendancy of the military party, and their far-reaching Imperialist aims. But, far from drawing the conclusion that Japan would not passively endure the imposition of economic sanctions in any form, they sought on the contrary to create the impression that the risks of war were slight. The illogicality of this attitude was pointed out in the House of Commons by Captain McEwen on February 27th, 1933. Mr. William Mabane, fully sharing Mr. Cocks's views about Japan's vast imperial ambitions, also insisted, from his personal knowledge of the Japanese mentality and from previous Japanese reactions, that application of the sanctions of Article XVI of the Covenant would have been the signal for war.

Mr. Stimson, as we have seen, said in his book that during the winter of 1931-32 information was coming in of the real possibility of a sudden Japanese attack upon the possessions of the Western Governments in the Far East. Mr. Joseph C. Grew, United States Ambassador to Tokyo from February 1932 onwards, was telling Mr. Stimson that :

> Any hint of force, either military or economic . . . would result in the uniting of the nation behind the military and would completely overwhelm the more moderate influences . . . the threat of material pressure would almost certainly have the opposite effect from that desired.

And again, nearly three months later, on February 23rd, 1933 :

> There will be no surrender to moral or other pressure from the West. The military clique and, as a result of military propaganda, the public, are fully prepared to fight rather than give in. At present the moral obloquy of the world is a negligible force in Japan.

The British Government could not brush all these circumstances on one side, as some of its critics appeared to do at the time and certainly did later. They made any kind of coercive action by the League of Nations against Japan virtually impossible. "The League," for the purposes of the Far Eastern dispute, was essentially Great Britain. If coercive action were taken, the brunt of the burden would fall upon this country and the British Dominions. The first duty of the British Government was to its own people and the peoples of the Commonwealth ; but the main point was that the armed forces effectively at the disposal of the League were inadequate for the application of the coercive provisions of the Covenant should it be desired to invoke them. An attempt to put those provisions into operation could have been made only at serious risk of a dangerous and dubious conflict. The British Government had no duty to urge the League States to embark upon so perilous a venture. Membership of the League, loyalty to the Covenant, did not necessitate the casting aside of all considerations of prudence. It was no betrayal of the Covenant to recognise that in the given circumstances the means of coercion envisaged in it could not be fully or effectively applied, and to act accordingly ; just as it would not, except in special circumstances, be any failure of duty—not to speak of "surrender" or "treachery"—to retreat in face of superior forces or to refuse battle under disadvantageous conditions. That is not a mere analogy. It is precisely the *enforcement* of the Covenant which was at issue. The position was one of potential war. Actual war brought a much wider appreciation of such problems. Former critics of the type under discussion who became members of Mr. Churchill's Government were certainly not "betraying China" when they approved of the decision in July 1940 to close the Burma Road in order to avoid war with Japan if possible and at least to postpone it.

It may well be argued, indeed, that the British Government, as the Government of the country which would have had to play the chief part, had a special duty to dissuade the League of Nations from attempting to apply the coercive provisions of the Covenant, in

the event of the issue arising. Clearly, however, there was no need for that. No Member State showed any willingness to act in that way itself; and it is plain that if the British Government had given a lead in that direction there would have been no favourable response from the other Great Powers in the League, nor from the other States, such as Holland, Canada and Australia, closely interested in the Far Eastern situation. A " strong " lead by the British Government does not necessarily impress other Governments and peoples. Between the wars, certainly—unlike Anglo-Saxon critics and most people in Great Britain and the United States—other Governments and peoples gave primary consideration to the *armed* strength of Great Britain.

British Government policy, moreover, could not be determined without reference to the British Dominions and to the state of public opinion in Great Britain itself. To say that is not to suggest any wide gap or marked divergence between Government and people. Such a position never occurs in this country. Even an Opposition party is much closer to the Government than its exploitation of international complications might suggest to the superficial observer. The whole mood of Britain, Government and people alike, was opposed to participation in another war. It shrank from any step which might involve war. The country's military commitments, even under the Locarno Treaty, were carefully safeguarded. They were viewed, none the less, with much misgiving, in some quarters because of doubts about our ability to implement them, and in much wider circles just because they were military commitments. The great mass of opinion in this country had looked to a policy of international appeasement, to patient efforts to remove grievances that might lead to war, and, above all, to disarmament, as the ways to peace and safety. In regard to League action, the emphasis had been placed upon the " moral sanctions " of world opinion. To go beyond that, and to risk an onerous war in the process, needed a much clearer case, both on merits and from the standpoint of " defending the Covenant," than that of Manchuria. If the British Government had conceived it to be its duty in the last resort to press for coercive action against Japan, it would have encountered formidable, indeed insuperable, opposition. There would certainly not have been any prospect of obtaining the requisite measure of national unity. The opposition would have come not only from " pro-Japanese " commercial groups " in the City " ; and not only

from those who realised the magnitude of the dangers involved, the inadequacy of British and, therefore, of "League" power, and the other and greater menaces with which this country was confronted; but most powerfully of all from the general body of citizens, uninterested for the most part in the Manchurian crisis and wholly desirous of remaining at peace. In this popular reaction, the "peace movement" would have provided the leadership.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY

1. Advice

IN a speech at Chatham House on February 22nd, 1932, Sir Arthur Salter, whose devotion to the League of Nations will not be questioned, said that the right policy was to exercise persuasive influence, followed up if necessary by suitable economic pressure, to stop Japan. He was prepared to take the risks involved, but only on the condition " that you do get collective world action, including American action, and that each country is inescapably linked in and publicly engaged to stand together and take the consequences."

In regard to the suitable economic pressure, Sir Arthur Salter explained that he did not suggest an economic blockade, but simply that the United States and the Members of the League should prohibit the entry of Japanese goods into their territory for a certain time. If, however, " we cannot effectively secure world action, including the United States, I would suggest that we and other Members of the League of Nations should not gloss over the matter, but should state frankly that the particular conditions of the Far Eastern situation are such that we cannot control it at the present time, but that in any case we do not recognise as valid any settlements arrived at at the point of the sword."

Sir Arthur explained that he meant that if agreement with the United States on the use of his economic pressure was impracticable, then Great Britain should take no economic action whatever, and confine herself to the application of the doctrine of non-recognition. Clearly, Sir Arthur Salter did not think that such a policy would be a breach of our obligations under the Covenant. The actual conditions were those under which Sir Arthur proposed that this alternative policy should be pursued ; and it was this same policy which, in substance, was pursued by the British Government.

2. A Consistent Policy

It may be argued, conceivably, that the British Government did not follow the advice, not to gloss over the matter; but a study of the Foreign Secretary's pronouncements shows that there is little basis, if any, for that contention. Whatever may be thought of his policy, Sir John Simon pursued it consistently from the time he took charge of the Foreign Office in November 1931 throughout the remainder of the dispute; and he explained it clearly, using language in support of it which at times was so plain as to incur sharp criticism from those who disliked it and from those who would have preferred, presumably, that he should have tried to bluff Japan.

The basis of the Government's policy, under Sir John Simon's direction, was, from beginning to end, conciliation through the machinery of the League of Nations.

In his first speech on the dispute in the House of Commons (November 25th, 1931), Sir John laid down two propositions: (1) "That, whatever may be the merits of a particular dispute, nations should submit that dispute to peaceful settlement," and (2) that so long as there was any chance of the League Council operating usefully to promote a peaceful settlement, "we have to avoid taking up a position which might seem to prejudge or condemn." In reply to Colonel Wedgwood's question on November 30th, 1931, he said that Wedgwood

might rest assured that H.M. Government were as anxious as he himself was to avoid recourse to sanctions either in the present or in any other dispute which might be brought before the League of Nations, and for this reason they were concentrating, along with the other members of the Council, on finding a solution by conciliation. This, indeed, is the principle which underlies the Covenant, and the machinery contemplated therein rests on the basis of collective action.

At the height of the Shanghai crisis, on February 22nd, 1932, Sir John Simon stated the principles of British policy in the following terms:

1. "To direct the full influence of Britain, in conjunction with other Powers, whether they are members of the League or not, to support the moral authority of the League of Nations." "In some respects," Sir John added, it was "a very, very difficult case," but he expressed the conviction that it was only by affirming with boldness and sincerity the principles of the League that the best means of restoring peace would be

found. If they did that, then " the time may soon come, notwithstanding the wreckage of our hopes, when the moral authority of the League will be seen to exercise its influence on the side of peace."

2. In regard to Shanghai : Great Britain had shown from the beginning that she was ready " to lend her good offices " in any practical way to put an end to the conflict between two nations " with both of whom Great Britain remains in friendly relations."

3. The British Government was in a very special degree charged with the protection and defence of British interests, which could be summed up in the words " Peace and Trade," but that was very far from being the full extent of its duties, and it had the duty, above all, of using its influence in the best way possible to get the fighting stopped.

4. In regard to the dispute as a whole, the duty of the League was to collect all the information and to hear both sides. It would be quite improper for anyone to attempt to pronounce a partial or interim judgment.

In the debate on March 22nd, 1932, the Foreign Secretary again defined British policy. There was no advantage at all to be gained, he said, by taking up " a sort of position of priority or special virtue." The duty of a member of the League was to be available and ready to help to carry out its policy and purposes. Sir John Simon stated that from the first his own view had been

that this Far Eastern case was a case where the League of Nations was most likely to be useful as a mediating force. Constant reference to the stick that the League is supposed to have in the cupboard is not the very best way to secure compliance with advice, or to exert influence as a great world organisation.

It was a mistake, in his opinion,

to assume that the League of Nations necessarily gains in effective strength in a case like this by constant references to the fact that in its armoury there is the weapon of sanctions. The authority which the League really exercises is founded upon its position as the authorised exponent and interpreter of world opinion, and that is one of the most terrific forces in nature.

After developing this point, Sir John Simon went on to say :

The truth is that when public opinion, world opinion, is sufficiently strong and unanimous to pronounce a firm moral condemnation, sanctions are not needed. Yet that is the class of case in which sanctions would be most likely to be applied and while, therefore, Britain will stand most firmly by its obligations under every Article of the Covenant—and nothing that I have said in the least degree suggests the opposite—I suggest to all who study this subject that *it is best to keep the coercive and the*

mediatory functions of the League distinct, and that *this has been proved to be a case in which the effective action of the League is best applied by mediatory and conciliatory action.*[1]

It will be noted that Sir John Simon did *not* rule out the use of the League's coercive functions. He argued that the League could act most effectively by mediation and conciliation, and that such methods should not be mixed up with coercive action, or talk of coercive action, which would not help but hinder.

In this speech, Sir John declared that there had been four very considerable topics of anxiety and difficulty, each of them difficult, but still more difficult to reconcile with one another, viz :

1. The duty to support the principles of the League ;

2. The duty of every Foreign Secretary " of so conducting his part of the matter as not to involve his own country in a situation which could only extend the difficulty " ;

3. The difficulty of the possibility of a fissure arising between the small States and the great States which have special responsibilities or opportunities ; and

4. " The tremendous question of whether the policy which Britain pursues at Geneva can be so conducted as to earn and to secure the sympathy of the United States of America." It was no easy thing, the Foreign Secretary said in elaborating these points, " to find a course which can be steered between your duty as a member of the League of Nations and the interest of preserving the full sympathy and respect of the Americans across the sea, who have declined to sign the Covenant."

Winding up the debate for the Government on that occasion, Mr. Eden questioned whether Mr. Seymour Cocks and others who shared his view had sufficiently considered

the basic ambition which the Government have felt throughout this difficult time—the determination, in seeking a solution of the problem, to secure the active and continuous co-operation both of the League and the United States. I think some of those who wish that we might have been a little more eager than we have been in the prosecution of what they call a forward policy may perhaps have overlooked the fact that, had we indulged in such eagerness as they would wish, we might have found ourselves acting alone, and isolated action at a time like this would not only have been unwise and ineffective, but, worse still, would have been directly harmful, for it would have broken up that collective action which we can alone hope to make effective in a situation such as this.

[1] Author's italics.

After the Lytton Commission had presented its Report, Sir John Simon pursued the task of conciliation, in accordance with the procedure of the Covenant and in accordance with the whole nature and the specific advice of the Report. His much-criticised speech at Geneva on December 7th, 1932, was designed, as Mr. Stimson recognised, to promote an atmosphere favourable to a further effort at conciliation. In the debate of February 27th, 1933, he claimed that the course of the British Government had been "perfectly clear, perfectly consistent and perfectly straightforward from beginning to end." He expressed regret that the Leader of the Opposition had not admitted

how mistaken all those critics were who were suggesting or insinuating some months ago that the British Government was not prepared to stand by the Lytton Report. The truth is that from the very beginning, quite openly, and in speaking both to the Chinese and to the Japanese representatives privately, I have made it plain what had been throughout the position of the British Government. It is that this is a matter which by every possible means ought to be brought to an end by conciliation; but, if conciliation failed, or failed for the time being, there was no view of this contest which could possibly be put in rivalry or in contrast with the view that has been expressed by the report of the Lytton Commission. A great many people some months ago were insinuating doubt and suggesting that when the time came we should not stand by our word, or that I in the meantime was endeavouring to pursue some other course. Never. From beginning to end, without the slightest change of attitude, we have said that conciliation is the first task. It is the provision of Article XV of the Covenant that you should endeavour to conciliate. Let us do it by every manner of means. But, should conciliation unhappily fail, then the view that must be taken of this matter is the view that is unanimously taken by the League's own Commission, the Commission presided over by Lord Lytton.

It is clear, moreover, that the Assembly's report of February 24th, 1933, did not, in Sir John Simon's view, involve the termination of all efforts at conciliation. That report, comprising a moral condemnation of Japan, followed the Lytton Report closely, and included, not only recommendations for the settlement of the dispute, but also a procedure for conciliation. On February 27th, it will be remembered, Sir John agreed with the desire expressed by the Leader of the Opposition that further attempts should be made to reach a method of conciliation. He was to point out fifteen months later, on May 18th, 1934, that it was "a complete confusion of

ideas to suppose that, in abstaining from recommending or seeking to apply sanctions, anybody was departing either from the Lytton Report or from the recommendations of the League of Nations itself."

The British Government's policy did not exclude the possibility of bringing pressure to bear upon Japan in the event of the failure of conciliation. When, after prolonged efforts, conciliation had definitely broken down for the time being, the adoption of the Assembly's report involved a moral judgment against Japan and applied the doctrine of non-recognition. The question of further forms of pressure remained open, subject to the important limiting conditions which Sir John Simon laid down on February 27th, 1933. Those limitations were : (1) that Great Britain could not, by unilateral action, discriminate between one combatant and another. and (2) that in no circumstances would Great Britain become involved, by any action on its part, in a Far Eastern war. In the actual circumstances, the second condition barred any far-reaching application of economic sanctions on the lines of the Covenant, assuming that Japan had exposed herself, or might do so, to any such sanctions. This condition, it will be noted, was laid down only after long and patient efforts at conciliation had proved for the time being fruitless, and the question of bringing some kind of pressure to bear upon Japan was legitimately posed as a consequence of the League Assembly's action ; when, in short, it had become impossible to keep the " coercive functions " of the League completely distinct from its " mediatory functions."

3. The Government and Economic Sanctions

Sir John Simon's views on the subject of " economic sanctions " were to be expressed at some length on May 18th, 1934, when he drew attention to some of the more obvious of what he called " the endless considerations " involved.

The first was : " We must not assume that there is something that we may call an economic sanction . . . different from war which can lightheartedly be applied to all and sundry without the risk of war."

You have to ask yourselves : " Suppose this was done, are we sure that the State upon which this pressure is applied will take it like the schoolboy receiving the chastisement or the reproof of his master. Is it

not possible that he may say : " You may explain to me that it is not an unfriendly act, but that is not my view. My view is that it is."

The second consideration was that " we should not approve of some system which, though it can be used with great safety against little people, cannot be used with any safety against big people." What, therefore, was the nature of the pressure that could be applied by international action through the League which was really fairly applied as between the great and the small ?

Thirdly,

It is not the fact, as some people seem to suppose, that once you have managed to work out a system of economic sanctions you can keep it as if it were a formula in a drawer and have the prescription made up and the dose applied to whomsoever over the face of the earth at the moment happens to need the dose. It is not a specific which can be concocted out of a formula however carefully the formula can be applied. It is a thing which involves infinite commutations and combinations. It depends in each case upon what is the particular State against which you are proposing to put the pressure and, secondly, upon what are the other States which are really and truly going to join in putting on that pressure. Even within the boundaries of Europe the practical problem is different according to the particular State you happen to take for choice.

There was a fourth consideration, said Sir John Simon, which all had in mind. He saw no harm in stating it quite frankly. " It is absolutely no use talking about economic pressure unless you make certain that it is going to be effective. So far as the principal countries of Europe are concerned, you cannot, as a matter of fact, make a system effective unless the United States actively co-operate." Sir John Simon dealt at length with the Norman Davis statement of the previous May. Valuable though that was, he said, " it is quite absurd to pretend that that declaration . . . encourages us to believe that America would take full part in economic sanctions."

It is a very material thing to know that if such action commended itself to the United States we might be sure that the United States would do nothing whatever to encourage its own citizens or to defend them if they tried to break the ring. . . . But it is a very different thing from saying, " Here are economic sanctions waiting to be adopted if it were not for the pusillanimity of the British Government, and if only we critics in the House formed a Government we would have economic sanctions before you could say Jack Robinson."

Sir John Simon was not then dealing specifically with the Far

East, of course. Nor had he been doing so when discussing the Norman Davis declaration a year before, on May 26th, 1933, but on that occasion the news of the impending truce in the Far East had only just come along, and Sir Austen Chamberlain's reference to sanctions in that debate has, therefore, a special interest :

> I do not want to attach too much importance to the sanctions provided by the Covenant. I have never thought the League was on its strongest footing if it was brought in to punish a wrongdoer. I think its most effective work is in preventing the wrong being done, but, still, there are sanctions, and there may be cases in which those sanctions or some of them ought to be enforced. One of the great difficulties is that the particular sanctions which were less than acts of war or less than acts of physical violence were exactly those which most needed the co-operation of all nations and were most weakened by the abstention of America.

Had the Government of the United States been able and willing to participate in any kind of economic pressure upon Japan, it is conceivable that the British Government might have been prepared to urge the League of Nations to embark upon that excessively risky sort of venture. It is conceivable, but improbable in the highest degree, if only because the British Government would have urged in vain. But such speculation is idle. It was not, in reality, a case of Britain and the United States each waiting upon the other. Both were together in the same boat, and the other League States were there also. The policy of Great Britain and of the other member States was, in fact, essentially the same as that of the United States. The only difference, though it was by no means an unimportant one, was that the League States pursued the task of conciliation under the provisions of the Covenant, while the United States Government was free to abandon or suspend any efforts it might make either independently or in association with them. The American Government's policy of " moral sanctions " had, and could have, no other purpose than to promote a satisfactory ultimate settlement of the dispute by conciliation.

4. " League Mismanagement "

The other main group of the British Government's critics entirely agreed that coercive measures against Japan would have been highly dangerous if not impracticable. As we have seen, they pressed that view throughout the dispute itself, and maintained it subsequently. They entirely approved of a policy limited to the task

of conciliation. But they considered, in varying degrees, that the methods by which that policy was pursued were open to serious criticism. The actions of the League (and, therefore, of the British Government), they held, were not always appropriate to the end in view; mistakes were made, dangerous risks were by no means completely avoided, and Great Britain incurred what might prove to be long-lasting Japanese hostility.

In his speech on July 5th, 1933, Sir Austen Chamberlain himself gave moderate expression to this kind of view when he said that the League might have allowed a little more latitude than it did in Manchuria, and that the " first demand upon Japan was for something which, if they had thought, they would have known at that moment it was not possible for Japan to give." In all probability, Sir Austen had in mind the League Council's resolution of October 24th, 1931, calling upon Japan to effect the total withdrawal of her troops into the railway zone by November 16th. The American Government, as we have noted, considered the time limit an error of judgment, and did not associate itself with it. Lord Cecil, in *The Great Experiment*, made the point that if no coercive action was to be taken, if nothing was to be done to make the time limit a reality, then it would have been better not to have laid it down. According to Lord Cecil, Sir John Simon agreed with him in that view.[1] Clearly, the task of conciliation was not likely to be facilitated by the issuing of anything in the nature of an ultimatum to Japan. The demand itself was hardly a reasonable one, in view of the conditions in Manchuria as a result of, if not prior to, the initial Japanese operations.

More important still, perhaps, the League Council's resolution took up the standpoint that the total withdrawal of the Japanese troops to the railway zone must precede the proposed negotiations between the parties. This gave expression to the policy adopted at an early stage by the League Council of opposing any discussion of the substance of the dispute until the Japanese troops were so withdrawn. As we have shown, this policy of the Council incurred much criticism in the British Press of the Right shortly afterwards, and in the later stages of the dispute was held in those quarters to have seriously, if not fatally, prejudiced the chances of an agreed settlement. Sir Austen Chamberlain probably had that

[1] Lord Reading, of course, was Foreign Secretary when the October resolution was passed.

in mind also when he spoke of a demand which the League Council ought to have realised Japan could not concede. It was politically impracticable for the Japanese Government to do so, and the demand itself undoubtedly seriously weakened its position in relation to the military party.

The line taken by the League Council at this time exemplifies the doctrinaire attitude taken up by many enthusiastic supporters of the League. It also illustrates their inability to grasp the realities of the Far Eastern situation. Sir John Pratt has written[1] an illuminating passage on the time limit part of the October resolution :

> As there was no intention of following up this order by positive action of any kind the folly of thus inflaming public opinion in Japan and at the same time encouraging false hopes in China should have been apparent to everyone. I well remember, however, the rejoicings in Geneva that night : the League had at last acted with boldness and vigour ; it had asserted its authority ; it had ordered a first-class Power to " get off the mat," as one enthusiastic League official expressed it. I returned next day to London in deep dejection. In Pall Mall I met the editor of a well-known weekly paper—one of the most brilliant journalists of the day. " That was a magnificent piece of work at Geneva," he said. My jaw dropped and I stammered an inquiry. " Why ! " he said, " It's done the trick. All you have to do now is to withdraw Ambassadors and the whole thing is finished." I gasped and turned into my club without a word. One must constantly bear in mind that it is often well-informed, able and hard-headed men who hug illusions of this kind. It was men like these who, when Japan, instead of " getting off the mat," proceeded to enlarge the scope of her aggression, angrily insisted that England had failed to adopt some bold policy that would have stopped her.

It is unnecessary to discuss whether or not the policy of " no negotiations before withdrawal " was in line with the true spirit and purpose of the Covenant, a question concerning which opinions differed. Since the League Council's objective was an agreed settlement of the dispute, such a policy was bound to impede rather than assist its accomplishment. Inevitably, the Council was obliged tacitly to abandon a policy so inappropriate to the end it had in view ; and, with Sir John Simon as British Foreign Secretary, mistakes of that particular kind were not repeated.

But the line of criticism we are now discussing could be, and was, carried further. Was the task of conciliation facilitated by the adoption of the Stimson doctrine of non-recognition ? More important,

[1] *War and Politics in China*, p. 225.

was it promoted by the League Assembly's "moral condemnation of Japan"—by a vote the broad effect of which was "to declare Japan contingently a Covenant-breaker"? The argument advanced was that, in the circumstances, it was necessary to refrain from pronouncing any judgment on the conduct of the parties to the dispute. We have noted the repeated contention in these quarters that the League was acting from too narrowly juridical a standpoint.

It is clear that Sir John Simon (in common with the representatives of the majority of the League States) fully appreciated the force of the objections to passing any kind of judgment upon Japan's behaviour. But, after the failure of the efforts at conciliation which followed the December meeting of the League Assembly, it was not possible—even if it had been desirable—to avoid the next stage in the procedure laid down in Article XV; and the report under that Article, based as it was on the Lytton Report, unavoidably comprised certain judgments about Japan's actions—judgments which Sir John Simon fully endorsed.

Critics contended, in effect, "So much the worse for the procedure of the Covenant." They seemed to imply that the right course would have been to abandon that procedure, and Mr. Amery came very near to expressing that view. No doubt a weighty case could be made out against confining British policy too closely to the requirements of the Covenant's provisions. On the other hand, Great Britain was not only a Member State of the League, but the British Government, together with the great majority of the British people, were also keenly anxious that the League should function as effectively as possible—according to their different interpretations of its nature and purpose. They had no intention of withdrawing from the League. British policy, therefore, had to be determined not merely in relation to the Manchurian dispute as such but also in relation to the much wider question of British membership of the League. While, in the circumstances, the British Government considered it impracticable to urge the application of coercive measures against Japan, it was clearly practicable to attempt to apply the mediatory and conciliatory procedure of the Covenant. That course was therefore followed, and followed with consistency and great perseverance. The argument that the desired objective might have been more effectively promoted by other methods may still hold good.

Mr. Amery and the small minority of people who agreed with him were not so much concerned about the effective conduct of a policy of conciliation as they were about the relations between this country and Japan. As in the case of Mr. Churchill, their chief preoccupation was the maintenance of friendly relations between the two countries in view of grave dangers threatening elsewhere. This consideration, it can safely be assumed, was never absent from the minds of the members of the British Government ; but it was not the only consideration of the kind which had to be taken into account. The far-reaching aggressive aims of the Japanese militarists were known. Despite China's weakness, friendly relations with that country were, for that reason if for no other, of even greater importance. Sir John Pratt, speaking with great authority, has told us that :

> In fact the Government never departed from the solid ground of the fundamental identity of interest between China and Great Britain. During the Manchurian conflict the basis of British policy remained what it always had been and still is—support for China and constructive sympathy for Chinese nationalist aspirations. (p. 224.)

Support for China was one thing ; power to give effective military support was quite another. On Japan, Sir John Pratt wrote :

> Those who realised what Japanese ambitions were and what Japanese hegemony involved knew that, in the words of Lord Lothian, reliance on Japan was a " feeble and delusive policy " which would break in the hands of any man foolish enough to try it. . . . As regards Japan the only possible course was to endeavour to maintain normal friendly relations so far as this was compatible with the fundamental opposition between the policies of the two countries.

Thus, while reliance on Japan would have been foolish, the maintenance of normal friendly relations was desirable. Neither Mr. Amery nor Mr. Churchill advocated the former ; but Mr. Amery certainly, and Mr. Churchill possibly, underestimated the difficulties in the way of the latter.

The British Government also had to give due weight to the importance of the League of Nations to Great Britain and the Commonwealth, and, therefore, to the consequential obligations of membership. Even Mr. Amery, while criticising the League's proceedings, did not suggest this country's withdrawal from the League. Mr. Churchill, as we have seen, believed that the League was powerless in the Far East, but, on the whole, refrained from

criticism. He envisaged the possibility of the League playing a most important part in European affairs.

Sir John Simon, ably supported by Sir Austen Chamberlain in the House of Commons, steadfastly refused to pronounce any judgment upon Japan in advance of the Report of the League's Commission of Enquiry. In this respect his attitude was in striking contrast to that of the main body of his critics. When the Report came along, Sir John accepted it, but he did not go beyond it. His language in criticism of Japan's actions was that of the Report, temperate but adequate. He did not indulge in those easy diatribes against " the aggressor " which were then and afterwards so fashionable among the doctrinaire supporters of the League and which, unsupported by action, served only to add to the number of our enemies. Mr. Churchill might playfully criticise the Foreign Secretary's " high morality," but he did not accuse him of any irresponsible expressions of moral indignation. Sir John Simon resolutely refused to agree to any step involving discrimination between the disputants by this country alone. And he made it perfectly plain that the Government was not going to get involved, by any action on its part, in war with Japan.

Any Japanese resentment at League action was bound to be directed primarily against Great Britain, since Great Britain was the most influential member of the League in connection with the Manchurian crisis. In spite of Matsuoka's alleged " delight " at Sir John Simon's alleged " encouragement," Great Britain was to become in Japanese eyes the villain of the piece. As a later British Ambassador in Tokyo has written :

> Britain, held up by the extremists and militarists to obloquy as the arch-supporter of China and the prototype of Western obstructionism to Japan's " legitimate " designs, was regarded in Japan as Public Enemy No. 1.[1]

Sir John Simon sought to reduce to the minimum the unavoidable danger that this might happen. That is why he tried to avoid undue prominence in giving a lead at Geneva. He was fully conscious of the undesirability of taking up what he called " a sort of position of priority or special virtue." It is difficult, indeed, to dissent from the view that, in the dilemma confronting this country, no greater measure of success could have been achieved, and that seldom or never has so difficult a problem been handled with greater coolness,

[1] Sir Robert Craigie, in a Foreword to Mr. Joseph C. Grew's *Ten Years in Japan.*

clear-sightedness, resolution and indifference to considerations of personal popularity.

5. Epilogue

The outstandingly successful propagandist organisation in the later 'thirties was unquestionably the Left Book Club. It would be difficult to find a better illustration of its methods or a more glaring example of the distorted versions of the Manchurian dispute which by then had been widely popularised than the following passage from the *Left News* for April 1938. Its author, Mr. John Strachey was one of the three editors for the club.

> The thing began, as everyone knows, in 1932, when Japan invaded Manchuria. That was the first important act of aggression in the post-war world. If it had been stopped by a united League of Nations it could have had no successors. It was, as we all know, Sir John Simon, then British Foreign Secretary, who, by using to their full strength his immense forensic powers, and, more important, of course, by using the whole influence of Britain, stopped the League from taking action. . . . The entire British fleet, which at that time had no rival whatever in Europe, except the fleet of our close ally France, could safely have been moved from home waters and from the Mediterranean. Moreover, we know now that at that time the United States Government, as Mr. Stimson, then Secretary of State, has since revealed, was actually pressing the British for sanctions against Japan. The Soviet Union would, of course, then as now, have been fully willing to join in such action. . . . It is almost certain that measures far short, even, of a break of economic relations —that even a withdrawal of Ambassadors—would have been sufficient in the far off days of 1932 to stop Fascist aggression. . . .
>
> Here, I think, was an instance where the direct intervention of the armament makers played a real part.

APPENDIX

Sir John Simon's Speech at the Twelfth Plenary Meeting of the League Assembly, December 7th, 1932

LET me begin by expressing my warm agreement with those who have spoken in terms of high admiration of this remarkable Report. Its form, its spirit, the effort which is manifest on every page to pronounce an honest and impartial judgment, are a model for all such efforts in the future. Whether we agree with its conclusions or its details in this or that respect, I think we shall be entirely at one in acknowledging how fortunate the League has been to obtain the services of these five gentlemen to put before us this unanimous Report. The quite exceptional authority of the document is, of course, greatly increased by the circumstance not only that it is a unanimous Report, but that it represents the unanimous view of five men drawn from five different nations, approaching the subject-matter from special angles, and none the less reaching conclusions in which they all join.

We, the delegates at the League of Nations, are entitled to say that this Report, as M. Politis said this morning, is due to the League, is an achievement of the League, and could not have come into existence without the League. If we look back over the history of the world and think how difficult it is for us to determine with approximate accuracy the circumstances which have surrounded many historic conflicts, we see how much we gain as an international institution by having the unanimous Lytton Report.

There are two features of the Report to which I would beg leave to direct attention. I will not discuss its details, but there are two broad features, not always observed but very important, in my opinion, to which we should direct our attention before we come to make use of the Report.

The first is that one of the greatest services which the Lytton Commission has rendered is that it has brought out the really complicated character of the Manchurian problem. May I be permitted to read the following passage from page 126 of the Report?

" . . . the issues involved in this conflict are not as simple as they

are often represented to be. They are, on the contrary, exceedingly complicated, and only an intimate knowledge of all the facts, as well as of their historical background, should entitle anyone to express a definite opinion upon them. This is not a case in which one country has declared war on another country without previously exhausting the opportunities for conciliation provided in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Neither is it a simple case of the violation of the frontier of one country by the armed forces of a neighbouring country, because in Manchuria there are many features without an exact parallel in other parts of the world."

Let me be entirely plain. The complications in this question do not in the least affect our duty to act with justice and fairness to all according to the principles for which the League stands, but, before we can so act, it is essential that we should appreciate the truly complicated character of this problem ; and, as my friend M. Paul-Boncour said just now, if you were to set yourself the problem of finding some spot on the surface of the earth where you might set the League of Nations a difficult task, you would choose a place in which you had so strange and unusual a combination of claims and authorities as exists in this land of Manchuria.

My second observation about the Report is this. I would wish to point out that, contrary to the impression which exists in many quarters, this Report does not give a one-sided account, painting everything black on the one side, and presenting it in spotless raiments of white on the other. It makes a measured criticism of both the side of China and that of Japan. Japan does not accept every statement in the Report ; neither does China. For example, we have heard on behalf of China the existence of an anti-foreign feeling warmly challenged, and yet this Report draws the conclusion on that matter that such a movement undoubtedly exists.

It is useless for us to continue to have controversy about this or that item ; the broad situation is what we have to examine ; and it is the broad situation in which, as I have pointed out, we are invited to observe the complexity of the problem and in which we are presented with what I have called a measured criticism of both sides.

The account that is given in the earlier chapters of this Report of the conditions that were prevailing in Manchuria, and indeed in most of China, in recent years, makes sorry reading. The Report points out that, after the Washington Conference of 1922, when so

striking an effort was made to start China on the road of international co-operation, a deterioration has taken place. I base myself on the Report, on page 18 of which I read — after reference to the Washington Conference of 1922—

"... China might have made more substantial progress in the ten years that have since elapsed had she continued to follow that road. She has only been hampered by the virulence of the anti-foreign propaganda which has been pursued. In two particulars has this been carried so far as to contribute to the creation of the atmosphere in which the present conflict arose—namely, the use made of the economic boycott, to which reference is made in Chapter VII, and the introduction of anti-foreign propaganda into the schools."

Approaching the Report as I do with an immense respect for its authors, for their diligence, devotion and sacrifice, and recognising as I do the manifest care with which they have endeavoured to express themselves in measured and just language, I think it is right that we should bear in mind that the second feature in the Report, to which I have alluded, is really there—that is to say, the Report is not a one-sided document, but is a document which calls attention to the difficulties that arise both on one side and the other.

I take leave to say that no fair account of the contents of this Report can be given which does not include the description of the deplorable condition of Manchuria in Chapter II and the objective account of the anti-foreign boycott in Chapter VII.

For my part, and on behalf of my Government, I associate myself entirely with what was so well said yesterday by M. Beneš, when he observed that he did not desire to be the judge on either side ; because after you have read this Report and have given all fair allowance to what is said on one side or the other, a fact emerges which deeply concerns the League of Nations.

Apart from particular instances, apart from disputed paragraphs, the serious fact for us is this : That when this unhappy dispute reached its climax, the methods of the League were not employed. That is the central fact for us, and it is therefore, as I conceive it, our duty as Members of the League to defend its Covenant and to see as far as we can that League methods are employed in future cases. We, as I conceive it, are primarily concerned with the influence which the example and practice of the League can exert ; and we must use it now, as best we can, to improve the existent

situation. We must do so—we must enter on that task—with a full appreciation of the seriousness of the consequences to the future of the League if we find ourselves unable to do so.

I therefore put to myself—and I put to my colleagues, with great respect—this question: 'How can that objective best be pursued? Here again the Lytton Report gives us some guidance, though you may perhaps say that it is only negative guidance. On page 127 there is the passage already quoted in which these five Commissioners report to us:

"A mere restoration of the *status quo ante* would be no solution."

And they give us their reason. It is well worth while to consider what is the reason. They say:

"Since the present conflict arose out of the conditions prevailing before last September (they mean September 1931) to restore these conditions would merely be to invite a repetition of the trouble. It would be to treat the whole question theoretically and to leave out of account the realities of the situation."

Now I believe that, while we all firmly hold by the principles and the ideals of the League, we sincerely wish to act in this matter as practical men. We must concern ourselves with the realities. As I have said, neither side very willingly accepts the Report in its entirety. We do not blame them for that. It is very difficult indeed for one of the two parties in any controversy to recognise that there should be some qualification of its point of view. But we must do what we can, with firmness but with complete friendliness to both sides, to put this Report to good use, and to draw from its pages the inference of conciliation. For my part, I agree with what Dr. Lange said yesterday—that we cannot do other than proceed upon the broad bases of history and fact which are contained in this Report, and especially in the first eight chapters. I do not expect every individual to accept it all as holy writ. Human frailty will always make mistakes, but if we are going to act as practical people, we must have a basis, and I can see no basis except that which this Report provides. We must stand by the principles of the League, and stand by them not for the purpose of reproaching others in language of superiority, which is so easy, but in a spirit of friendliness and comradeship we must promote conciliation.

I have heard something said about direct negotiations between

the parties. Well, if direct negotiations give promise of good results, surely we should encourage them by every means in our power. But the organs of the League may be able, and I believe they will be able, to assist in the work of conciliation. I will make a very bold observation, and hope I have not produced any diplomatic inconvenience. It seems to me that the Committee, to which I suppose these matters may be referred at some stage, would be more effective for this purpose if means could be found to add to it a representative from each of two great countries vitally interested in the Far East which are not themselves members of the League of Nations—namely, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Now let us consider what prospects we have of making our conciliation useful having regard to the attitude of the parties. I recall with very great satisfaction the declaration that was made by the distinguished representative of Japan, M. Matsuoka, before the Council the other day when he said that Japan has been a good and loyal Member of the League and that Japan wishes to do all that she can to preserve that attitude and to deserve that reputation. That is very good. I believe that that is the spirit which we would wish to welcome and to make use of.

For myself, I speak on behalf of a country, and a Government, which has always been and will continue to be a loyal Member of the League. The principle by which I stand here is that my country desires to act as a loyal Member of the League. There is no difference in this connection—forgive me for saying so—between what are sometimes called the small States and the Great Powers. There is a difference, no doubt, in this way, that the Great Powers, by the very circumstances of their position, may have upon their shoulders the greatest responsibilities and the largest risks, but, so far as the desire and the determination to act as loyal Members of the League of Nations are concerned, for all of us alike the Covenant of the League of Nations is our constitutional law. It is the reason why we are here ; it is the fundamental law ; it cannot be set aside by some light or thoughtless gesture, because it is the very basis upon which international co-operation is founded. We are not at liberty to disregard it. We are bound to sustain it.

All I say in conclusion is this ; that we must seek a practical solution. The League of Nations, I believe, can do much, if it acts wisely and prudently, to promote a settlement.

When I speak of a practical solution, perhaps you will allow me to make one more quotation from this Report. On page 127, when these five Commissioners reach the end of their task and when they are considering the advice which they will tender to this Assembly, when they are discussing the prospects of settlement, they make this observation :

" Criticism alone will not accomplish this ; there must also be practical efforts at conciliation."

The suggestions at the end of the Report, to which my distinguished colleague, M. Paul-Boncour, has just alluded, are suggestions which the authors of the Report claim are put forward for securing, consistently with justice and peace, the permanent interests of China and Japan in Manchuria. I wish to say quite specifically for my Government that the United Kingdom Government will co-operate to the utmost of its power with the other Members of the League of Nations (including both China and Japan) in seeking, in the words used by the first speaker in our debate—the delegate of the Irish Free State—a solution equitable to all the interests concerned which might terminate the present conflict and remove the possibility of future antagonism.

Forgive me if, in a concluding word, I too dwell upon the gravity of the task before us. This League of Nations is the hope of the world ; it is the instrument by which the post-war world seeks to apply in practice the ideal of substituting international co-operation for national rivalry. Then the responsibility that rests upon our shoulders, if we are trying to conciliate, is tremendous. No one can conciliate who is not conciliatory. We must act and speak with the restraint in our judgment, with the respect for the feelings of others, with the recognition of the pride which mounts in every patriotic man's heart when his country's action is under criticism ; but, at the same time, we affirm attachment to the principles of the League. By that means we may hope to justify the usefulness of this great society, by promoting reconciliation between two great nations—both of them friends of ours—who ought to reach a friendly settlement with each other.

Meditating on this matter, as I sat in my place here to-day, I recalled the famous passage pronounced at a critical moment in the history of a great people, which applies most strangely to this

situation. You recall the words of Abraham Lincoln in his second inaugural address, when he declared :

" . . . . With malice towards none, with charit for all ; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in ; . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all the nations of the world."

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