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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY SINCE VERSAILLES

by

W. N. MEDLICOTT

'We have, as I read the lesson of the time, to keep what we have obtained, sometimes against our will; not to seize anything else; to reconcile, not defy; to pacify, not to conquer.' LORD CURZON—*June 1921*

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PREFACE

THE outbreak of a second 'great war' in September 1939 has brought to an end a complicated and unsatisfactory chapter in modern history. Perhaps the main conclusion to be drawn from a survey of British foreign policy between the two great wars is that the mere variety of the problems facing successive governments goes far to explain the comparative ineffectiveness of their diplomacy. It is certainly true that a more dignified and positive phase commences with the simplification of objectives forced on the Government by German policy in 1939. In this short work I have attempted to trace the development of all the main factors influencing British policy since 1919, and I have dealt at some length with the culminating phases in 1938 and 1939. The bibliography at the end of the book supplies references to more detailed studies dealing with special aspects and problems, and contains my authority for most of the statements that appear in the text.

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DAVID LLOYD GEORGE	*appointed*	7 December 1916
ANDREW BONAR LAW		23 October 1922
STANLEY BALDWIN		22 May 1923
J. RAMSAY MACDONALD		22 January 1924
STANLEY BALDWIN		4 November 1924
J. RAMSAY MACDONALD		5 June 1929
STANLEY BALDWIN		7 June 1935
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN		28 May 1937

BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARIES, 1916–39

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR	*appointed*	11 December 1916
LORD CURZON		24 October 1919
J. RAMSAY MACDONALD		23 January 1924
AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN		7 November 1924
ARTHUR HENDERSON		8 June 1929
MARQUESS OF READING		26 August 1931
SIR JOHN SIMON		9 November 1931
SIR SAMUEL HOARE		7 June 1935
R. ANTHONY EDEN		23 December 1935
VISCOUNT HALIFAX		1 March 1938

INTRODUCTION

IT is difficult to define the main principles of British foreign policy except by the use of almost meaningless generalities. It is customary to say that Britain's greatest interest is peace; that she has no territorial ambitions on the continent of Europe; that she will fight, nevertheless, to prevent any continental power from establishing hegemony over the rest of Europe; that she will also fight to defend from attack the dominions, colonies, dependencies, and communications of the British Empire; that she will—in some circumstances—fight to defend small nations from aggression; that she will not fight any power merely because she dislikes its domestic policy and methods of internal government. But one can find, in comparatively recent times, exceptions to nearly all these rules.

During the twenty years which followed the peace of Versailles British Governments had to face ever-increasing difficulties in their attempts to maintain the traditional interests of the country. Already in the generation before 1914 they had to meet challenges to the influential position in the economic and political affairs of the world achieved during the nineteenth century, and it is doubtful whether the Great War can be said to have removed any of these challenges permanently. Great Britain's nineteenth-century position had been due to three favourable circumstances. (1) The Industrial Revolution made her the workshop and bank parlour of the world; her own vast empire, and the absence of serious industrialization elsewhere, enabled her to find ample markets for the export of manufactured goods and surplus capital; (2) various conditions—mainly political—delayed the rise of

industrial competitors, or the development of strong naval and military forces, in areas which could seriously challenge her economic and territorial interests; (3) this relative absence of serious competition enabled her in turn to advocate, and practise with impunity, those doctrines of political and economic liberalism which expressed the highest contemporary conception of progress.

This favourable position could not be indefinitely maintained. The United States after 1865, and Germany after 1870, proceeded to build up powerful industries protected by high tariff barriers; this enabled them to exclude many British products from their own internal markets, and to compete with increasing success with her goods in other countries and in the Asiatic field. A 'scramble' to appropriate fresh colonial empires led after 1880 to vast territorial acquisitions by France, Germany, the United States, Italy, Japan, and even by smaller powers; Great Britain found her own overseas possessions, markets, and communications threatened by the expanding commerce and territories of her new rivals, and was forced, in imitation and in self-defence, into counter-acquisitions, and into counter-concessions whereby she purchased diplomatic support.

Nevertheless her financial and economic position remained fundamentally unshaken in 1914; her great territorial interests lay outside Europe, and the powers which could threaten these interests had causes of rivalry among themselves on the European continent which ruled out the possibility of serious military danger to the Empire or to Britain's own shores. In spite of growing Anglo-German tension after 1900 the agreements with France (in 1904) and with Russia (in 1907) did not commit her to military intervention in a continental war. The Anglo-Japanese alliance of

1902 guaranteed her position in the Far East. Nor did any class desire, or believe that it could gain economic advantage from war. The apparent paradoxes of Norman Angell's *Great Illusion* brought home to the layman beliefs strongly held by the business classes. 'The reasonable expectation of the "capitalist" in 1914 was loss of trade, high taxes, and, in his family, death; of the wage-earner, death, taxes, and unemployment', writes Dr. J. H. Clapham in his *Economic History of Modern Britain*. 'Industrialists as a class were everywhere pacific, merchants and money-lenders even more so.' Moreover, Germany was in 1913 the best foreign buyer of United Kingdom produce and manufactures.

Yet Britain fought Germany, from mixed motives of fear and exasperation in which 'ideological' factors played a conspicuous part. Bismarck's three wars (1864–70), and the heavy-handed though peaceful diplomacy followed by him after 1870, and by the young Emperor after 1890, created profound distrust of Prussian militarism among all supporters of English liberalism, and this hostility to what were regarded as typically German methods added a strong dash of moral indignation to the mixture of anger and apprehension which greeted the German attack on Belgium and France. Trade rivalry was at best a subordinate factor. England only began to be conscious of Germany as a trade rival in the 'nineties, when her distrust of Germany's political methods was already thirty years old. The United States had proved herself, with the McKinley tariff of 1890, an even more dangerous opponent in the economic field, but this had not prevented a steady pursuit of political friendship with her by British Governments after 1895.

The restless and melodramatic policy of the Kaiser before 1914 suggested that the German Government

had expansionist plans which did not, in reality, exist. Nevertheless when German diplomatists and business men got the chance during the Great War—as in the settlements with Rumania and Russia—they revealed ambitions which perhaps justify the view that if France had been overwhelmed in 1914 while Britain remained neutral, an Anglo-German struggle for colonial supremacy would sooner or later have followed. Victory in 1918 gave Great Britain security and self-confidence which lasted until 1929. The inevitable revival of Germany (after 1932) was accompanied by equally inevitable fits of self-assertion: terrorist methods applied both to internal and to foreign politics gradually convinced the world that Germany had produced, not a mere revival of national self-esteem, but, in Hermann Rauschning's phrase, a permanent 'revolution of destruction'. But England could not, as in the years after 1907, concentrate her main attention on Europe, and even on the North Sea. After 1935 she was directly threatened by the aggression of Italy in the Mediterranean, and by Japan in the Far East. Moreover, she had acquired, under the League Covenant, obligations to help victims of aggression far more definite and extensive than any commitments that she had possessed before 1914, and she was for long prevented, by the strong currents of pacifist and liberal-socialist opinion, from rearmament or from any compromises or bargains with the dissatisfied and aggressive powers. As late as the spring of 1938 the Parliamentary Opposition voted against rearmament proposals; it continued, however, to demand government action to 'build up a strong League' and to resist powerful states who were obviously deaf to any other argument than that of force.

The result was a decidedly cautious, and apparently indecisive, phase of British policy which did not,

however, imply (as the totalitarian intelligence services were happy to report) that the sleepy and fog-bound islanders were now feeble, weary of responsibility, defeatist, ready to surrender world power into more virile hands, to bow, in Mussolini's phrase, before the lash of the young master. Britain's temporizing role in foreign affairs after 1931 was due to the bewildering tactics and language of the 'dissatisfied' powers (which really seemed too silly at times to be taken literally), to the preoccupation of the political parties with the world economic crisis and its aftermath, and to the difficulty of reconciling the ideological and realistic aspects of her foreign policy. Nazi foreign policy after the summer of 1938 supplied this reconciliation; it produced in the British people one of its characteristic moods of implacable exasperation, with a conviction of moral justification enormously strengthened by the almost inhuman patience displayed by its leaders in the face of many past affronts. The clash between ideology and realism supplies perhaps the essential clue to any understanding of British foreign policy after 1919, and a word or two must be said about this problem as it affected various spheres of activity.

Britain in Europe. The main difference of opinion, as far as the Continent was concerned, arose over the question, should Great Britain undertake to maintain the peace settlement east of the Rhine? Britain's traditional sympathy for the small nation, and her new obligations under the League Covenant, created after 1919 a vague sense of responsibility in England for the maintenance of the new succession states of Central Europe; on the other hand a specific and binding guarantee of their integrity would imply a perpetuation of tension with Germany, who from the start refused to accept certain of her new eastern frontiers as final.

British Governments before 1938 declined for many reasons to accept responsibility for maintaining the *status quo* in Eastern and Central Europe. Neither in the economic nor in the political sphere was there any deep-seated tradition of hostility towards Germany. From the Middle Ages until the end of the nineteenth century France had normally been England's chief rival on the Continent, and Germany had either not interested England at all, or had supplied useful, though rather penurious, allies against French aggression. In the nineteenth century she had found Austrian support of value in checking Russian plans of expansion in the Near East. From 1907 to 1917 Russia had become an ally against the new German danger, but after 1917 the distrust of Soviet policy among the British governing classes ruled out the possibility of a continuance of this alliance; on the other hand the growing sympathy in many circles in England with what the Soviet Government was supposed to be doing in Russia made impossible a continuance of the active anti-Russian policy of 1919. British business interests were anxious to see the return of Germany to normal and prosperous conditions; the mass of Englishmen still declined to take seriously the view that aircraft had destroyed the old immunity from attack supplied by the Channel and the North Sea, and found it hard to understand the French Government's fear of a revived Germany, and its quest for allies in Eastern Europe.

All these factors produced the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the Continent east of the Rhine, which remained the dominant aim of British official policy in Europe from 1925 until the end of 1938, when a growing popular demand for resistance to the new German militarism, defence of the remaining small states of Central Europe, and active

co-operation with the Soviet Union, caused its abandonment.

Britain in the Empire. The protection of the British Empire against attack, and its development towards self-government at the pace, and under the conditions, which best suited the whole complex organization of the Empire, was perhaps the primary aim of the external policy of British Governments after 1919. No urgent problems of defence or internal development arose in connexion with the Dominions, although the problem of Japanese expansion and immigration was a matter of increasing preoccupation for Australia and New Zealand after 1931. But the problem of providing a satisfactory response to the nationalist demands of Irak, Palestine, Egypt, China, and above all of India, and the further problem of combating the intrigue and propaganda, and even the threat of war, of Russia, Japan, Italy, and Germany, made demands on the resources and statesmanship of British Governments throughout the period.

Here again the policies of successive Governments had repeatedly to be modified to meet the demands of public opinion. The Dominions demanded the abandonment of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1921; they were, however, anxious to limit the guarantee functions of the League, and showed no great enthusiasm for the imposition of sanctions against Japan in 1931. In England, the Labour party, and other sections of opinion, demanded resistance to Japan's aggression in Manchuria; there had, however, been considerable resistance to the building of an effective base of operations at Singapore during the 'twenties, and without such a base Great Britain would have been in a very dangerous position if the imposition of sanctions under the League Covenant had led to war. The old ally, Japan, was finally alienated by 1932, and showed

her hostility during succeeding years. The demands in 1935 for League sanctions against another old ally, Italy, whose aggression (in Abyssinia) had been carefully planned to avoid a clash with Great Britain, created a new and unexpected enemy on the Mediterranean route to India. The very wide measure of self-government given to India by the Government of India Act of 1935 revealed the genuinely progressive tendencies of moderate Conservative and official opinion; the attacks of the more Die-Hard Conservatives under Winston Churchill forced the Government spokesmen to adopt a somewhat apologetic and defensive tone, which considerably reduced the effectiveness of their policy. Left-wing opinion, on the other hand, continued to suggest that little substantial concession had been made.

The problem of Japanese, Italian, and German imperialism could not be solved merely by ignoring it; nor could it be solved by uncompromising hostility on the part of Great Britain to their efforts at expansion. Her not unlimited resources, and the pacifist sentiment in the country, made it impossible for her to perpetually threaten war, and there seemed no hope that any other great power would give her really effective support in a League sanctions policy. On the other hand a redistribution of colonial territories, which would mean in effect the handing over of various tropical areas to the 'dissatisfied' powers, was opposed by the Dominions, by conservative British opinion, and also by the League and Left-wing supporters who denounced Fascist racial theories and 'surrender to aggression'. There were signs that the Government was not unwilling to consider concessions to foreign powers as well as to their own colonial peoples, but it viewed with obvious alarm ill-defined programmes of intervention for more altruistic ends.

Britain in the World. But Great Britain was also a 'world power', and not merely a European state with extensive interests in other continents. This conception of world power expressed, in many sections of opinion in England, a sense of responsibility and of self-importance which the sober-minded and not very imaginative British politician of the period found it difficult to understand or to share. There can be no doubt that the traditional role of Great Britain as the 'policeman of the world' involved exertions and obligations far beyond the country's strength. The belief that Great Britain had some special mission to keep the peace in all parts of the world, had been strengthened by her support of Belgium and resistance to Germany in the Great War, and by the fact that she was undoubtedly the strongest among the great powers that had joined and remained in the League of Nations. This belief was strongly held in Great Britain, and appeared (as might be expected) among many of the smaller nations; it also appeared (more surprisingly) in the United States, where Britain was reproached from time to time for not embarking on crusades which Americans themselves had no intention of sharing. British ministers can certainly be forgiven for not accepting the Nazi conception of 'world power' as a crude instrument for material gain and national advantage. But they failed for the most part to realize how powerful the force of liberal world opinion could be, and how ready were men of goodwill in every country to respond to the courageous and intelligent leadership which Great Britain could still supply.

In the following pages we shall see that British statesmen succeeded for the most part in limiting their country's activity to the pursuit of the more precise and more prosaic objectives which constituted a 'realistic' foreign policy: their failure either to satisfy

or to repudiate the vaguer and less practical standards of contemporary altruism produced increasing difficulties after the world economic crisis of 1929–33 had shattered the hope of a permanent stabilization of the post-war world.

PART I
THE EXPLOITATION OF VICTORY
1919–29

CHAPTER I

THE PEACE SETTLEMENT IN EUROPE, 1919–22

ANGLO-FRENCH DISAGREEMENT

DURING the ten years which followed the peace treaties of 1919 Great Britain was primarily concerned in her foreign policy with what we may call 'the exploitation of victory'. She still, as late as 1929, regarded the world through the eyes of a successful, though occasionally conscience-stricken, belligerent; for five years (1919–24) she was concerned with plans for consolidating her gains, and for another five she was able to persuade herself that her new position would be peacefully and indefinitely maintained. 'We have, as I read the lesson of the time,' said Lord Curzon in June 1921, 'to keep what we have obtained, sometimes against our will; not to seize anything else; to reconcile, not defy; to pacify, not to conquer.' The attempt to conduct British policy on these lines brought the Government into constant difficulties with the French, who found their own attempts to exploit victory in Europe constantly disappointed. In the Near East, and in the Far Eastern negotiations at the Washington Conference, France in turn displayed open hostility to the British programme.

The history of the peace settlement as it concerned Germany and Austria is in fact largely a record of Anglo-French squabbles. The British ministers were able, indeed, to understand the French desire for security, their conviction that Germany might again

become a powerful and implacable enemy, and their bitter contemplation of their devastated homes, economy, and man-power. In the cabinet discussions which preceded the peace conference Curzon had described the Kaiser as the 'arch-Criminal of the world', and had supported Clemenceau's proposal that he should be treated 'as a universal outlaw so that there should be no land in which he could set his foot'. But on the British side these emotions cooled rather rapidly, and both the national temperament and national self-interest began to suggest a more lenient treatment of the defeated. The Englishman's 'sense of fair play'—or sense of humour—led to the fairly speedy abandonment of the more melodramatic modes of vindictiveness; in academic circles a reaction from war-time propaganda led to a general wave of scepticism concerning the theory of war guilt, atrocity stories, and the whole anti-German case. Economic considerations also played their part. The recovery and restoration of her important pre-war markets in Central Europe became increasingly important to Great Britain with the depression which set in in 1921 after the brief post-war boom; France, on the other hand, was still sufficiently self-supporting to be able actually to welcome the weakening of Germany's military and political strength as a result of internal economic collapse. Curzon was inclined to suspect that the chauvinism of the French Chamber of Deputies would force the Government to become mistress of Europe in respect of coal, iron, and steel, by using her military strength to place the Saar Valley and the Ruhr under her complete control; Mr. Lloyd George was greatly impressed by the unwisdom of creating any 'German Alsace-Lorraine questions'. Moreover the overstrained nerves of Cabinet and country had discovered in Russia a bogy even more horrifying than the defeated enemy.

It seemed imperative that Germany should not be forced by intolerable treatment to embrace what Winston Churchill called 'the foul baboonery of Bolshevism'.

It may be assumed that the personalities of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary helped to acerbate their relations with the French. Lloyd George continued until 1922 to take an active part in the international discussions, depressing his French colleagues by his everlasting buoyancy and incalculable sense of humour; Curzon, ruffled on many occasions by what he considered the undue interference of the Prime Minister with foreign affairs, could be alternately tough and tearful, varying his more normal mood of stately geniality with outbursts of majestic petulance. During the peace negotiations at Paris, Mr. Arthur Balfour as Foreign Secretary had supported Lloyd George, while Curzon had taken charge of the Foreign Office in London. In October, however, Curzon and Balfour exchanged the offices of Lord President and Foreign Secretary, and Balfour's amiable and tactful influence was largely removed from the diplomatic sphere. On the French side Clemenceau resigned office in January 1920, and the British ministers had to deal mainly with Millerand until September, and then with Briand until the latter was driven from office in January 1922 by the Germanophobe irreconcilables under Poincaré.

During the peace negotiations at Paris there were serious differences of opinion concerning the German territorial settlement. In January 1919 Marshal Foch demanded that the Rhine should form 'the western military frontiers of the German countries'; the demand, in spite of resolute opposition from President Wilson and Lloyd George, was vigorously pushed during February and March, and when France finally gave way she secured the permanent demilitarization

of the area west of the Rhine, an Allied occupation for fifteen years, and a tripartite agreement, signed on 28 June, whereby Great Britain and the United States guaranteed her against any unprovoked German aggression. There was a similar struggle over Germany's eastern frontiers. No one questioned the wisdom of restoring the Polish state. But when the report of the commission on the Polish frontiers was presented to the conference in March, Lloyd George pointed out that it proposed to place 2,132,000 Germans 'under the control of a people which is of a different religion and which has never proved its capacity for stable self-government throughout its history'. A meeting of the British Empire delegates on 1 June went so far as to authorize Lloyd George, in demanding concessions, 'to use the full weight of the entire British Empire even to the point of refusing the services of the British Army to advance into Germany, or the services of the British Navy to enforce the blockade of Germany'. France and the United States both supported the more extreme Polish claims, and in particular appeared determined that Upper Silesia should go to Poland. In the end, however, after hearing the strong German case on the point, the treaty was modified, on the British proposal, to allow a decision by plebiscite. Danzig also was made a Free City, instead of going outright to Poland.

Although the new frontiers supplied Germany with many grievances it must be admitted that they were generally regarded at the time in the Allied countries as a reasonable enough solution of the extremely intricate problems of land and population involved. Germany had, however, three other grievances of a more legitimate nature. These were (1) the humiliating procedure and insulting tone of the victors; (2) the loss of her colonies, justified by statements concerning

her unfitness to govern backward peoples; (3) the reparations clauses. A good deal of the harshness of the Allied delegates was due to the violence of public opinion at home; the payment of substantial indemnities, and even the cession of colonies, might have been understood by the German people as a consequence of defeat, but the attitude of moral condemnation, and the excessive size of the reparations demand, proved hard to bear. It must, however, be recognized that this attitude was not due merely to vindictiveness: many people in Allied countries were profoundly convinced that Germany had been guilty of reprehensible conduct which must be denounced at the bar of history. In England, as Lloyd George has pointed out, the majority of the House of Commons, and a powerful section of the Press, attacked the treaty on the grounds of its undue leniency to Germany.

The fatal vote of the American Senate on 19 November 1919 meant the virtual rejection of the Versailles treaty, and membership of the League, by the United States; it also made the treaty of guarantee of 28 June automatically void. After this no formal treaty relationship between France and England existed. It does not appear that the British Government refused formally to defend the French frontiers; after the end of 1919, however, the two powers were becoming increasingly conscious of the incompatibility of their views on the treatment of Germany, and negotiations for a two-power treaty of mutual defence were not commenced until the end of 1921. After the exchange of ratifications in January 1920 the ambassadors in Paris were left to supervise the execution of the treaty, but it was felt that the greater political issues must be handled by direct negotiations between the two Governments, and the result was the series of international conferences which were, no doubt, necessary,

but which probably created as much friction as they removed.

ASSESSING REPARATIONS

The Conferences of Paris (8–16 January 1920) and of London (12–23 February), which were concerned mainly with problems of the Mediterranean and Near East, revealed French and Italian suspicion of British designs in the region of the Straits; it was decided that the Sultan should stay in Constantinople, and the drafting of the Turkish treaty was completed at the San Remo Conference in April (Chapter III). But by this stage German affairs were again occupying the main attention of the powers.

The fate of the new régime in Germany appeared to be in the balance on 13 March, as a result of the Kapp *Putsch* in Berlin. 'One needs nerves of steel to stand this strain—all the more that the powers are not acting loyally together', exclaimed Curzon when he heard the news. The direction of German affairs after the revolution of 9 November 1918 had remained in the hands of the Majority Socialists, but although the new Weimar constitution was successfully proclaimed on 11 August 1919 they were fatally handicapped by the odium of having signed the armistice and peace treaty. No party could have promised an unqualified acceptance of the treaty, and already the parties of the Right were beginning to put forward the view that the conditions under which the treaty had been imposed exonerated Germans from accepting it. The Spartacists, or German Communist party, had hitherto been the only element to appeal to arms, but trouble now came from the large class of army officers who were faced with dismissal and poverty. The Kapp *Putsch* failed rather ignominiously; a general strike of Socialists in Berlin brought about its collapse. But the workers,

fearing a reaction, refused to return to work and began to form Soviets; when the Government made use of the Reichswehr, most of the movements were suppressed easily enough, but in the demilitarized zone of the Ruhr a Red army of 50,000 met with little resistance until the Government sent in troops to deal with them. As this was a technical infringement of the treaty French troops promptly occupied Frankfurt and four other German towns across the Rhine.

Curzon was thoroughly annoyed by this independent French action; he told the French ambassador that similar action might lead the British Government to withdraw altogether from the occupied area. The San Remo Conference met immediately after (19–26 April), and it became clear that the personal tension between Curzon and Millerand was merely a symptom of more fundamental differences as to the treatment of Germany. The Supreme Council on 26 April refused a German request that the Reichswehr should be doubled, and charged Germany with default in respect of disarmament and reparations. Lloyd George, who at one moment had annoyed the French by suddenly proposing that German representatives should immediately be summoned to the conference table, did succeed in getting the principle of direct discussions with the Germans accepted, and in the joint declaration of the 26th the intention of inviting the heads of the German Government to a joint conference was announced. The Ruhr incident was closed when French troops were withdrawn on 17 May, after the German troops had left.

The heads of the Allied Governments met the Germans at the Spa Conference (5–16 July 1920), after settling their programme at preliminary meetings at Hythe, Boulogne, and Brussels. The real problem was that of reparations, and the result of the personal

contact between the Allied leaders and the Germans was, on the whole, unfavourable to the more liberal tendency represented by British policy. The peace treaty had provided that Germany must give compensation, either in gold or in goods, for all damage to the civilian population of the Allies during the war; Germany was given the right to make her own proposals, which had to be presented to the Allies within four months of the signing of the treaty; if, after a further two months, agreement was not reached, a reparations commission, appointed by the Allies, was to decide the sum, and to notify Germany of its decision on 1 May 1921. The French regarded with obvious uneasiness the prospect of direct contact with the German leaders, but at Spa they were soon relieved of the fear that insinuating and persuasive German diplomats would succeed in over-persuading the impressionable Lloyd George. The British, who were predisposed to listen seriously to a convincing statement of Germany's difficulties, were stampeded to the French side by the obvious inadequacy of the German reparations scheme put forward by Dr. Simons, the Foreign Minister, and by the aggressive tone of the German coal magnate, Herr Stinnes, who gave evidence as an unofficial expert on 10 July.

The difficulties of both the French and the German Governments were obvious enough: the political existence of each in its own country made an accommodating policy almost impossible. The British Government was prepared to recognize that economic and political conditions severely limited the German ability to pay, but was forced to support the French policy of threats and sanctions as long as the Germans were so ostentatiously evasive. It still accepted the view that the use of force was justified to bring the Germans to a more reasonable frame of mind; in any

case the British Press was still too violently anti-German to allow the Government to make any genuine concessions.

Accordingly, after the Allies had rejected on 13 July the German schedule for coal deliveries, Foch, Sir Henry Wilson, and General Degoutte were summoned to Spa to discuss immediate measures of military coercion. On the 16th the Germans accepted the Allied proposals for coal deliveries, but no agreement could be reached as to Germany's total indebtedness or the method of payment. On the same day an inter-Allied agreement regulated the distribution of prospective receipts among the Allies. It was agreed that a further conference should be held at Geneva to discuss the question of Germany's total indebtedness, but the idea of meeting the Germans remained distasteful to the French, and the meeting was continually postponed. The first real gleam of sense came when Allied and German experts met at Brussels (16–22 December 1920); the German delegation gave a frank and detailed description of its country's position, and on the Allied side the problem was examined objectively from the point of view of Germany's capacity to pay.

But after this political considerations once more took control. The growing opposition in France to any settlement modifying the extreme demands of the treaty forced Briand, who had now succeeded to office as Prime Minister, to abandon the more moderate programme. The heads of the Allied Governments made their own proposals at the Paris Conference of 24–30 January 1921. Germany was to pay two series of forty-two annuities; the first series was to produce 226 milliard gold marks between 1 May 1921 and 1 May 1963, the second was to amount to 12 per cent of the annual value of German exports. In case of non-fulfilment the sanctions announced at Spa would be

applied. The proposals ignored the Reparations Commission, which in any case had not to decide the matter before 1 May. The demands caused consternation in Germany, and there were powerful demands that they should be rejected.

On 1 March, at the London Conference, Dr. Simons presented counter-proposals, which consisted of an offer of a payment of 30,000,000,000 gold marks, a sum arrived at by scaling down the Paris figure in the light of arguments of very questionable validity, politically or economically. He also denied the sole guilt of Germany for the war, and demanded Upper Silesia and full freedom and equality of opportunity for Germany in international trade. The nature of these terms, the hostile tone of the London Press, and the fact that the assembling of the Conference in London made him the spokesman of the Allies, forced Lloyd George to declare that the German proposals absolutely failed to recognize the needs of the Allies, and after further abortive negotiations, sanctions were applied on 8 March. Düsseldorf, Duisberg, and Ruhrort were occupied, customs receipts along the German frontiers within the occupied area were impounded, and a new customs cordon established between the occupied and unoccupied parts of Germany. This action was of very doubtful legality, in view of the treaty provision which postponed executive action until after 1 May.

The German President issued a proclamation denouncing the Allied action, and appeals were made without success to the League of Nations, and to the United States. Meanwhile the Reparations Commission had, on 18 April, notified Germany that her total indebtedness was 132 milliard gold marks, and had demanded that in the meantime the whole of the Reichsbank's metallic reserve should be transferred to branches of the bank in the occupied area. An Allied

ultimatum on 5 May threatened further sanctions, and on 11 May the new German Government of Dr. Wirth surrendered. Although the Allies had preserved a united front during the crisis, the British reluctance to fall in with the more extreme of the French demands remained. France's unwillingness to abandon the recently imposed sanctions until Germany had given real proof of her good intentions caused Curzon further annoyance.

THE UPPER SILESIAN QUESTION

Germany had now accepted the total amount of reparations indicated by the Reparations Commission, and a new phase in the struggle commenced. A fresh cause of tension between France and England now appeared. The plebiscite which Lloyd George's intervention had secured for Upper Silesia was held on 20 March 1921, and to the consternation of the French and Poles resulted in a majority for Germany of over six to four (707,605 votes to 479,359). After the Allied plebiscite commissioners had failed to agree on a new frontier line, the Polish plebiscite commissioner, Korfanty, at the head of an armed force of some 100,000 men, overran a large part of the district in May, defied the authority of the powers, and seemed likely to take over the whole country. After the plebiscite the British troops had been withdrawn; the French troops which had remained displayed open sympathy with the insurgents. The complete success of the Poles was prevented, however, first, by the German inhabitants, who organized themselves for resistance under the invalided General Hoeffer, and, secondly, by the British troops, which were hurriedly sent back to the province.

The German Government for its part rejected a French demand for the right to transport additional

French troops to the area—which according to the peace treaty could only be made by the Allies in conjunction—and published the refusal; this public rebuff, coupled with the fact that the British Government was believed to favour the German claims, seemed to many Frenchmen final and ample proof of a British betrayal of the Allied cause. The French Government's aim was to prevent the strengthening of Germany by the recovery of the rich coal and iron fields of Silesia; the British Government, true to the principle of preventing further 'Alsace-Lorraine' problems, and of promoting Germany's return to normal conditions, favoured the return of the industrial district to Germany. The situation was indeed complicated enough without the interruption of these international problems; all the towns in the plebiscite territory, and most of the villages, had given German majorities, whereas the country parishes were largely Polish. The impossibility of awarding the district outright to either party seemed obvious; but it seemed almost equally impossible to devise a frontier line which could make a satisfactory division between the two peoples.

The crisis culminated in a formal protest, conveyed to Curzon on behalf of the French Government by the ambassador, the Comte de St. Aulaire, who said that in the deliberate opinion of his Government the attitude of Great Britain, if adhered to, must lead to a definite rupture between the two countries. Curzon listened in astonishment and indignation; he exclaimed that it was 'deplorable' that such a message should have been presented by an ally, but 'so shaken was he by the menace which it seemed to him to convey' that he declined to give an immediate reply. The reply, which was drawn up after consultation with the Imperial Conference and the Cabinet, was presented to the French Government on 29 July, and 'lacked

nothing in firmness'. The French, however, agreed at last to another meeting of the Supreme Council, and the Conference of Paris (8–13 August 1921) found a way out of the immediate difficulties. After struggling for five days without coming to an agreement with Briand, Lloyd George had to return to London to deal with the Irish question, and the Silesian question was referred to the League of Nations. It was decided at the same time that the additional occupations of German territory in the Rhineland should continue, but that the economic sanctions should terminate on 15 September, if Germany had fulfilled her obligations by then. The League's decision, arrived at by a committee of four—a Brazilian, a Chinese, a Belgian, and a Spaniard—was adopted on 20 October. It ignored the rule, which had been laid down in the Allied discussions, that closely interdependent districts should not be divided, and Poland, who had had only 40 per cent of votes in the plebiscite, received about half the inhabitants, but only a third of the territory. She received, however, the greater part of the industrial resources—53 out of 67 coal mines, 21 of the 37 blast furnaces, all the zinc and lead foundries, and so on.

ANGLO-FRENCH ALLIANCE DISCUSSIONS

No real improvement in Anglo-French relations followed the Conference of Paris. The British Government's negotiations for an agreement with Russia were an additional source of anger to the French. On 20 October Franklin-Bouillon signed the agreement with Turkey, which meant France's open abandonment of any pretence at co-operation with Great Britain in the Near East (Chapter III); at the Washington Conference France not only refused to consider the British proposal for the total abolition of submarines

but succeeded in defeating any plans for their limitation (Chapter II). The fundamental difference between the attitudes of the British and French Governments towards Germany remained; the writings of J. M. Keynes, the alarming rise in the British unemployment figures, and the fall of the German mark in November, combined to convince the British Prime Minister that the existing policies were driving Great Britain and Europe towards economic disaster. The Wiesbaden agreement of 6 October, signed by M. Loucher and Herr Rathenau, provided for the direct reconstruction of the French devastated areas by means of German plant and materials, but on 20 October the Reparations Commission expressed the opinion that it was in some respects a departure from the Versailles treaty. Germany had succeeded in paying a first instalment of a milliard marks by the end of August; as a direct result of this heavy payment the mark slumped in November to 1,020 to the pound, and the possibility of a German default became a matter of immediate concern.

Lloyd George and Briand made a serious attempt in December to find means of removing the outstanding causes of friction. The French did not, however, show much interest in the idea of an Anglo-French treaty on the lines of the guarantee treaty of 1919. The Comte de St. Aulaire told Curzon on 5 December that the guarantee treaty of 1919 was humiliating to France because it promised France 'assistance', and useless because its provision against German aggression did not satisfactorily avoid various forms of indirect aggression. 'It would not cover us against a Polish Sadowa, which, for Germany, would be the best preparation for another Sedan.' He proposed, therefore, a reciprocal undertaking, in which the problem of 'indirect aggression' would be satisfactorily met. During the London Conference, which met (18–22

December 1921) to consider Germany's declaration of inability to meet the payments due on 15 January and 15 February 1922, Briand followed the ambassador's suggestions by proposing to Lloyd George a comprehensive alliance; Lloyd George at once objected that the British people would be ready to guarantee the soil of France but would not accept responsibility for quarrels which might arise over Poland or Danzig or Upper Silesia.

Lloyd George's willingness to make to France what appeared to be the attractive offer of a formal alliance was due in the first place to his desire to keep Briand in office, and, secondly, to the hope that the offer would produce French counter-concessions in other spheres, and particularly in the Near East. Briand was liked by the English ministers, and it was realized that whatever difficulties he created would be drastically increased if Poincaré succeeded him. In England the Coalition Government had its own internal dissensions, and was losing ground, although the settlement of the Irish question in December, and the success already achieved by Balfour at the Washington Conference (November 1921–February 1922), gave it a momentary increase of popularity. Lloyd George would have preferred a general election at this stage, but the opposition of Sir George Younger, the head of the Unionist organization, prevented this. He fell back, therefore, on an alternative plan, which he discussed with Briand at the Cannes Conference (6–13 January 1922), of a great gathering at Genoa of all the European powers, including the ex-enemy countries and Russia, to draw up comprehensive plans for the economic reconstruction of Europe. The Anglo-French agreement was to be the essential basis of this. On 4 January 1922 Lloyd George offered Briand a treaty by which Great Britain would guarantee French soil against

unprovoked German aggression, and which should be reciprocal, but he definitely rejected the wider French proposals: the British people would not contemplate 'participation in military enterprises in Central and Eastern Europe'. The Conference also discussed the reparations scheme drawn up by Lloyd George and Briand in December; the basis of this was that Germany would be granted a partial moratorium in return for increased control by the Allies of Germany's internal finances.

But Briand's days as Prime Minister were numbered. Although the reparations proposals had been accepted by the French Government they were attacked by Doumer, the Finance Minister; and although Briand had demanded the extension of the Anglo-French agreement, and in particular had proposed a military agreement, he was violently attacked by the Right parties for what amounted to subserviency towards England. He resigned on 12 January, and was replaced by Poincaré.

THE GENOA CONFERENCE

Poincaré's accession to office killed the already faint hope of an Anglo-French agreement which would settle satisfactorily the outstanding international problems. The Frenchman disliked international conferences; his precise, narrow, legalistic outlook led him to favour the meticulous exploration of the possibilities of agreement by means of notes and conversations through the normal diplomatic channels, and he was in any case predisposed to believe that French interests would be better served by independent action. The League discussions had already convinced the French that little real assistance could be expected from that quarter in the event of war; on the other hand France had met with considerable success in building up alliances with

the smaller powers. A military alliance was concluded with Belgium in September 1920; a close alliance with Poland, already almost a great power in size, was signed in February 1921; in the same two years Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania drew together to form the Little Entente, and although no political treaties were concluded with France at this stage it was already clear by the beginning of 1922 that the Little Entente would strongly support France to enforce the peace settlement. Great Britain, on the other hand, favoured conciliation with Germany to an extent which almost foreshadowed revision of the treaty, and seemed prepared to give very little in return. On 23 January Poincaré instructed the French ambassador to press, in the Anglo-French treaty, for reciprocal guarantees, the application of the treaty to 'France' (and 'Great Britain') and not merely to the 'soil of France', a military convention, a minimum duration of at least twenty years, and a provision that the two powers were 'to concert together, in case peace were to be menaced'. Curzon was only prepared to agree to the first two of these, and to a duration of fifteen years (to cover the period up to the end of the Allied occupation). On 29 January Poincaré re-stated the French case in a reasoned memorandum, and Curzon replied on 17 February. These did little to advance the negotiations, and on 18 March Curzon said that the pact would stand little chance of acceptance by Parliament unless outstanding differences between the two countries had been removed. This was, perhaps, intended as a means of securing an accommodating attitude from the French at the forthcoming Genoa Conference, but it meant the virtual end of the treaty discussions.

Meanwhile the two powers remained fundamentally opposed on the reparations issue; a French memorandum of 15 March, after an elaborate recital of

Germany's previous defaults, insisted that 'even now the German Government could, with the help of its nationals, execute in 1922 its entire obligations as laid down in the Schedule of Payments'. An open clash was avoided for the time being only because Germany accepted the severe conditions of supervision of her finances demanded by Poincaré in return for a moratorium.

The Genoa Conference (10 April–19 May 1922) was the last serious effort of the Coalition Government to restore its failing reputation at home by a striking success abroad. Its aim was the restoration of economic prosperity in Europe by a conference of all European powers, including the ex-enemy countries and Russia, and its most important objective was to restore international trade by the resumption of normal economic relations with Russia. Poincaré would not attend in person, and France was represented by Louis Barthou, the Foreign Minister, who was kept severely under Poincaré's thumb. The French reservations excluded the discussion of disarmament and reparations, the revision of the peace treaties, the political recognition of the Soviet Union, or the inclusion of Germany in any form of reconstituted Supreme Council. The Soviet Union, though anxious for the establishment of normal economic and political relations with Europe, found that the western powers had little to offer in return for the restoration of foreign-owned private property which they demanded. The only considerable result was the treaty of Rapallo of 16 April between the Soviet Union and Germany, which provided for a mutual renunciation of reparations, Germany's renunciation of compensation for losses to her nationals through Russia's socialization of private property, mutual facilitation of trade, and the resumption of consular and diplomatic relations. The Allied powers

did not conceal their annoyance and uneasiness at the treaty, and the failure of their own demands on Russia was more striking by comparison. The private property question was referred to a conference of experts at The Hague (June–July 1922), but the matter had finally to be dropped with an admission by all parties that on this question no agreement was possible. French policy made almost inevitable the failure of the Anglo-French alliance negotiations, which finally lapsed in July.

Curzon, who had been kept away from Genoa by ill health, was alarmed lest Lloyd George should, in a desperate attempt to restore the position upset by the treaty of Rapallo, make some disastrous agreement with the Soviet Government. 'To have dealings with such people is bad at all times,' he wrote to Austen Chamberlain on 13 May, 'but to do it in the conditions described and in order to scrape something out of Genoa would be the nadir of humiliation.' The Prime Minister, however, returned empty from Genoa, and his weakened position was finally destroyed by the Greek disasters in August and September. After the revolt of the Unionist party he resigned on 19 October.

The fall of the Lloyd George administration was due in large part to problems of domestic policy and economy, and to the instinctive ingratitude of all democracies in getting rid of their War Lords. Its foreign policy in Europe since the peace conference could not be described as successful, although on the points that caused the greatest doubt and opposition at the time—reparations and the desire for understanding with Russia—it had, following the Prime Minister's lead reluctantly at times, anticipated the more liberal tendencies of its successors. The open breach between the French and British Governments was, however, postponed until the coalition's successors were in office.

CHAPTER II

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

THE ANGLO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE

THE British Government was probably justified in regarding its arrangements with the United States as the most successful phase of its policy in the post-war settlement. At the Washington Conference, which assembled in November 1921 with Balfour at the head of the British delegation, Great Britain surrendered both her traditional primacy in naval armaments, and her alliance with Japan, and so removed the possibility of friction on these two questions with the United States. There were no specific counter-concessions, and both France and Japan showed some animosity towards Great Britain, but it was considered wise to secure, even at this cost, the passive friendliness of the United States.

Great Britain had inherited, from the nineteenth century, valuable markets and vast financial interests in China, based on her prosperous concessions and settlements in Tientsin, Shanghai, and other ports and interior towns. The Anglo-Japanese alliance of January 1902 had provided that if either country were involved in war with two or more powers, the other should come to its assistance. It had been of immediate value to Japan in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5, for it had made it virtually impossible for France or Germany to help Russia; later, by guaranteeing the British position in the Far East during the difficult years before the Great War, it had been of equal value to Great Britain. The collapse of Russia in 1917, and of Germany in 1918 had, however, reduced its importance, and the growth of friction between Japan

and the United States had caused the British Government increasing embarrassment. Before 1914 this friction was due to Japanese immigration into the United States, the virtual monopoly set up by Russia and Japan in Manchuria after 1905, and the growing hostility of Japan to the new Chinese Republic after 1911. During the war Japan pressed the onerous Twenty-One Demands on China and secured Shantung, and although Japanese and American troops made a joint landing at Vladivostok in August 1918 in an ill-defined policy of saving Eastern Asia from Bolshevism, mutual hostility steadily increased. At the peace conference in 1919 the Chinese delegation, which showed the ascendency of Chinese Nationalist (Kuomintang) elements, demanded the surrender of Shantung, and were supported by President Wilson, while France and Great Britain supported Japan, in accordance with their war-time pledges. Wilson only gave way after a serious deadlock, and with a Japanese assurance that Shantung would be returned later. Japan secured the German Pacific islands under a League mandate, but her self-esteem was profoundly wounded when the drafting committee for the League Covenant, under Wilson's chairmanship, rejected a Japanese proposal recognizing the principle of race equality.

It seems clear that after the war both the British and Japanese Governments desired the renewal of the alliance. Japan, in spite of her hankering after imperialist expansion, might yet be of great political service to England as a bulwark against the still incalculable forces of Bolshevism, and in conservative British circles the tradition of friendship strongly reinforced the tendency to look on the two island empires as natural allies in the control and economic exploitation of the Asiatic masses. In July 1920 and July 1921 Anglo-Japanese declarations were made to

the League stating that the alliance would not be allowed to conflict with the procedure of the Covenant. Official Japanese and British spokesmen declared on several occasions in 1921 that the United States could rest assured that the alliance was not directed against her; the Japanese military leaders were also convinced that Japan must secure the renewal of the alliance. The visit of the Crown Prince to London in March 1921 was no doubt intended to influence British opinion in the same direction.

By this stage, however, the British Government had been forced to recognize that American opinion would not view with equanimity a renewal of the alliance in its old form. The Japanese had put themselves in the worst possible light by lingering in Eastern Asia even after an independent, non-Communist Republic of the Far East had been proclaimed on 6 April 1920, and recognized by the Soviet in May. The sentimental interest of the United States in China as a struggling 'sister republic' had been deeply stirred by the cession of Shantung to Japan at the peace conference, and the Chinese retaliation by a boycott of Japanese goods only served to strengthen America's belief in the gravity of her protégé's wrongs. American hostility to the alliance also influenced the British Government through the medium of the Dominions, who to a large extent shared American fears that the alliance would encourage Japanese imperialism, and who were, as Pacific powers, convinced that they must be on the side of the United States in any future Japanese-American dispute. Arthur Meighan, the Prime Minister of Canada, and Theodore Massey, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, both expressed strong opinions in this sense. At the Imperial Conference (June–August 1921) the desirability of substituting for the alliance some new arrangement with which America

would be associated emerged as the least unsatisfactory course of action.

The Government had also become convinced of the necessity of satisfying America's naval ambitions. On 17 March 1920 the First Lord of the Admiralty had announced that Great Britain would henceforth be content with a navy equal to that of any other power: would accept, in other words, a one-power standard. When the discussions with the Dominions in 1921 had shown the difficulties facing a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance the British Government decided to propose a conference to regulate Pacific questions; the initiative was, however, left to the American President, Harding, when it was learnt that he was about to make a similar proposal. Invitations were sent in the first instance to Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, to discuss the limitation of naval armaments, but the agenda was extended, as the result of a British proposal, to include the consideration of the Far East and the Pacific, and additional invitations were sent to Holland, Belgium, Portugal, and China. Japan alone accepted with reluctance; the expansionist party was deeply suspicious, and believed that an attempt would be made to rob their country of the overlordship of Eastern Asia. Nevertheless the more moderate elements triumphed. Japan's isolation, her severe economic depression following the Chinese boycott, the collapse of the post-war boom, and her heavy military expenditure, served to discredit the militarist and bureaucratic systems; the result was to stimulate the growth of a liberal movement on bourgeois-democratic lines which was later to be led by the Minseito party, and to derive much of its strength from the heavy industrialists and textile manufacturers. This liberal and pacific tendency was strong enough to enable the Japanese Government to find and accept a basis of

compromise with the United States and the other powers, although only after a serious struggle over some of the provisions.

THE FOUR-POWER TREATY

The main results of the conference were embodied in three treaties. These were (1) the Four-Power treaty of 13 December 1921, between Great Britain, France, the U.S.A., and Japan; (2) the Nine-Power treaty of 6 February 1922 concerning China; and (3) the Five-Power treaty for the limitation of naval armaments, also of 6 February.

The first provided perhaps the most satisfactory available solution of the problem of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The opening stages of the conference were concerned with the American proposals for naval limitation, and there was no reference to the alliance on the agenda. The Japanese delegation was, however, already too well aware of the practical difficulties of renewing the alliance in its older form, and was familiar with the idea of a triple alliance (to include the U.S.A.) from discussions in the British and American Presses. At the end of November these discussions finally led two of the Japanese delegates to take the initiative by sounding Balfour, who not merely expressed his general approval of a triple or quadruple treaty, but indicated that he had already furnished the chief American delegate, Charles Evans Hughes, with draft proposals. The Japanese appear to have been decidedly taken aback at this expedition, and Balfour had to exercise all his tact to overcome their reluctance to open serious negotiations. In the end they made the best of a bad job, and the treaty provisions were worked out in essentials by the 'Big Three' of the conference, Balfour, Hughes, and Prince Tokugawa, during the first week of December. The French were,

on Hughes's suggestion, brought in 'in order to soothe their somewhat ruffled pride', and the smaller powers were excluded in order to satisfy the ruffled pride of the Japanese, who had hinted 'that the treaty would lose much of its sentimental value if it was made the common property of all the powers, great and small'. The Four-Power treaty was announced to the conference on 10 December. The announcement took the public very much by surprise, for although Press speculation on the terms of a possible alliance had been abundant it had been, for the most part, very wide of the mark.

The problem which faced the three negotiators was to devise an agreement which would be sufficiently innocuous to remove American apprehensions, and at the same time have sufficient meaning to satisfy the Japanese that they were getting anything at all. Balfour's first proposal was believed to have been a three-power agreement in which the United States, Great Britain, and Japan should guarantee their respective interests in the Far East. Such a proposal had little chance of acceptance. The United States Government had informed the other powers before the conference opened that it 'could enter into no alliance or make any commitment to the use of arms which would impose any sort of obligation as to its decisions in future contingencies'. A mutual guarantee would have involved the recognition by the United States of Japan's present and future acquisitions in China and Siberia, and might have compelled her to condone the 'imperialist aggression' which it was the primary aim of her policy to check. The final draft accordingly contained no reference to a general guarantee, but provided that the four powers should respect the rights of each in their 'insular possessions and insular dominions in the region of the Pacific Ocean'. It also provided

for joint conferences to discuss any controversy concerning such rights, and pledged the four powers to communicate 'fully and frankly' with one another concerning efficient measures to meet the aggression of outside powers.

The treaty contained therefore two specific advantages for Japan: it enabled her to bring the Anglo-Japanese alliance to an end without loss of prestige, and it pledged the United States and Great Britain not to attack the Japanese possessions in the Pacific. The American, and probably the British, delegations were prepared to interpret the term 'insular possessions' to include the homeland of Japan, an interpretation which would have given Australia and New Zealand the same claim to immunity from attack. Although Baron Shidehara was at first willing to accept this interpretation in order to rule out the possibility of any attack on Japan itself, he was compelled later to ask the conference to agree that the 'Japanese homeland' should after all be excluded. It was considered an affront to Japan's dignity to suggest that she needed outside help to protect her main islands.

THE FIVE-POWER TREATY

The guarantee against attack implicit in the Four-Power treaty was made quite explicit by Article 19 of the Five-Power treaty for the Limitation of Naval Armament, which virtually prevented the fortification of any Pacific islands within striking distance of the main islands of Japan by the two chief naval powers, Great Britain and the United States. This treaty was not signed until 6 February 1922, and the provisions concerning the non-fortification of the Pacific islands formed part of the bargaining necessary to secure Japan's adhesion to the main principles of limitation.

In 1916 the United States had laid down an

ambitious programme of naval building; in 1921 she still had seventeen capital ships, built or building, as compared with the 32 British, but by 1924 it was anticipated that the U.S.A. would have 33 capital ships, while the British programme would remain at the 1921 figure. Three years of neutrality had made the United States, relatively and actually, the strongest state financially in the world, and an attempt to keep pace with her in an unrestricted naval armaments race would certainly have imposed an excessive strain on the Japanese and British economic systems. The American Secretary of State, Hughes, opened the conference on 12 November with a dramatic proposal that 'preparations for offensive war stop now', and suggested an agreed ratio for the five chief naval powers (Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France, and Italy) of 5–5–3–1·7–1·7. This was supposed to correspond generally to the existing ratio before the conference; all building programmes for capital ships, including those under construction, were to be abandoned, there was to be a naval holiday in the construction of capital ships for ten years, and only a limited programme of replacement thereafter until 1936.

America welcomed this programme as a shattering blow to the old diplomacy, 'to all who were used to the sparring and the finesse and the secrecy which have saturated European diplomacy since the time of Talleyrand' (R. L. Buell). Balfour, however, accepted the proposals warmly and unreservedly in an effective speech at the second session, and the sparring and finesse of the old diplomacy were provided by the Japanese. Admiral Kato demanded a tonnage greater than sixty per cent of that allotted to the other two powers, and this demand had produced, by the end of November, a deadlock which had to be dealt with by

the Big Three. The crisis produced great popular excitement in Japan, and a mass meeting at Shiba Park on 27 November demanded, firstly, that the idea of ratio should be discarded, leaving to each power an equal number of warships, and, secondly, that all fortifications in the Pacific should be abolished. Japanese feeling was particularly hostile to the idea of scrapping the recently launched superdreadnought, *Mutsu*, included in the American schedule. The deadlock was ended by a compromise: Japan accepted the sixty per cent ratio, but was allowed to keep the *Mutsu* (and also another superdreadnought, the *Nagato*), and secured the provision that the Pacific islands should not be fortified.

As it happened this arrangement worked, in some respects, to Great Britain's advantage; she and the United States were allowed to complete two battleships each to offset the *Mutsu* and the *Nagato*, and whereas the two Japanese ships were completed and the two American nearly completed, work on the two British ships (of the *Hood* class) had scarcely begun. It did not follow that the British Government welcomed this extra building and expenditure, and it made no attempt to conceal its disappointment at its failure to secure reduction in other categories. Although France was not by any means the only cause of this failure, her uniformly resistant attitude made a decidedly bad impression on world opinion. Briand on 21 November declared that France could not disarm physically until Germany had disarmed morally, and Baron Kato expressed sympathy for the French position. The conference realized that it would have to drop the whole question of land armaments. There was, nevertheless, considerable sympathy for the French attitude in this matter, for most of the world still believed that Germany must be restrained by superior force, and

there could be no doubt that at this stage Great Britain and the United States would assume no responsibility for the protection of France's frontiers.

It was otherwise with the question of naval armaments, and particularly of submarines. Briand had been forced to leave Washington soon after the conference opened, and French naval policy was left in the hands of the uncompromising Admiral de Bon. He said in effect that it was quite impossible to accept the American proposals, which allotted to France a replacement tonnage of five capital ships, equivalent to 175,000; France needed, to guard her communications with her colonies, ten capital ships of 35,000 tons each. The Italians were prepared to agree to the American plan for capital ships providing that they had parity with France. In this crisis Briand, who did not wish France to bear the blame for a breakdown of the conference, informed Hughes on 18 December that he had instructed the French delegation to give way on the question of capital ships; but he added that it was quite impossible for him to accept reductions for defensive ships (light cruisers, torpedo boats, and submarines) corresponding to the proposed ratio.

This pronouncement was a great disappointment to the British delegation; Balfour and Lord Lee of Farcham had decided to make a strong bid to secure the total abolition of submarines, but they also felt that if this were not accepted they in return could not accept any restrictions on light classes of ships, nor upon the arming of the mercantile marine. On 22 December Lord Lee stated the British case. The submarine was not an effective offensive weapon save against merchant shipping; during the last war Germany had sunk 12,000,000 tons of shipping and drowned 20,000 non-combatants, but her submarines had done little damage to battleships; 15,000,000 British, and 2,000,000

American, troops had been transported to France without the loss of a single man except on hospital ships.

The French, Italian, and Japanese representatives nevertheless replied that the submarine was a legitimate and effective weapon of defence; Hughes read a report of the American naval experts in favour of retaining submarines and against limiting their size, but advocating the outlawry of unlimited submarine warfare. On the following day de Bon declared that 90,000 tons was the absolute minimum that could be laid down for any nation. Even the existing British tonnage was only 82,464; the original American proposal had been that Great Britain and the U.S.A. should have 90,000 tons each. The existing French tonnage was estimated at 42,850. On the 24th Balfour said bluntly that a great submarine fleet would be useless to France in case of an attack by Germany, and any one who looked at the matter from a strictly strategical and tactical standpoint would be forced to say that the French fleet was built mainly against Great Britain. The debate continued on these acrimonious lines for some days, and the final result was that no limitation on the size or number of submarines was found possible. France stuck to her demands for a minimum of 90,000 tons, even when the American delegation proposed a new ratio limiting the British and American maximum to 60,000. This failure also made impossible any limitation of auxiliary craft. The conference did, however, accept resolutions drawn up by Elihu Root intended to safeguard commerce against submarine attack.

THE NINE-POWER TREATY

The third and last section of the conference's work, embodied in the Nine-Power treaty of 6 February 1922, concerned China. The Chinese sent a body of able

delegates to the conference, and they were able to state effectively the nationalist point of view. Japan, after a good deal of haggling, was persuaded to give up Shantung, and towards the end of the conference made further concessions which amounted to the surrender of seventeen of the Twenty-One Demands of 1915. The Chinese failed, however, to secure the return of Manchuria to China, which meant in effect the removal of Japanese troops and the recognition of China's full sovereignty. In fact it may be said that, broadly speaking, China's right to complete political and economic independence was effectively stated, but that the restriction on her sovereignty remained virtually unaltered. This was not due merely to the greed of foreign vested interests, although the damaging of foreign trade and investments was obviously a possible consequence of the abolition of the existing foreign rights in the country. It was due in part to the whole atmosphere of the conference, which had met to remove international friction by the adjustment of the interests of the great powers on a *status quo* basis, in part to the conviction that the internal conditions which had led to the nineteenth-century restrictions on China's sovereignty still applied.

There was little real chance at this stage that she could secure the complete abolition of extra-territoriality and the surrender of the international concessions and leased territories, but her delegation made a strong effort to secure tariff autonomy—that is, the right of the Chinese Government to have the sole voice in fixing and differentiating tariff rates. Although the powers were not ready to grant this demand on the spot, the British agreed that the existing tariff should be increased to make it an effective five per cent, and that the rate should be subsequently raised to 7½ per cent. The conference, by the tariff treaty of 6 February

1922, appointed a revision committee to meet at Shanghai and establish a revised customs schedule.

The best that China secured from the conference was perhaps the four Root principles, adopted unanimously by the committee on Far Eastern affairs. By these the nine powers promised, (1) to respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China; (2) to provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity for China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government; (3) to use their influence for the purpose of effectually establishing and maintaining the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations throughout the territory of China; (4) to refrain from taking advantage of the present conditions in order to seek special rights or privileges which would abridge the rights of the subjects or citizens of friendly states, and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such states. This was a statement of principles which it was hoped would save China from the imperialistic struggles which had formed so much of its history for the past hundred years; it also gave the Japanese an opportunity of conciliating American opinion while more specific problems were avoided. There is no reason to think that the British delegation objected to this solution.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE: AN ESTIMATE

We may sum up the results of the conference by saying that Great Britain secured a permanent strengthening of her friendship with the United States at the expense of a permanent weakening of her position in the Far East. The United States had taken the initiative in proposing that the naval armaments race should be abandoned, and was entitled to all the praise she got for her action; 'the magnitude of the

renunciation which America offered', wrote Professor Toynbee, 'not only took the conference by storm but captured the imagination of the world'.

The magnitude of the British renunciation may also be stressed. The maintenance of her position as the world's leading naval power had been a constant aim of Great Britain's policy for over two centuries; it had become one of the most deeply seated of national traditions, and had been secured during the Great War at the cost of tremendous sacrifices of wealth and men. The factors which could be advanced to justify a large British navy—the proximity of potential rivals, and the necessity for adequate forces to defend a world-wide empire—were largely lacking in the case of the United States, where the possibility of naval primacy had scarcely been considered a few years before, and where the desire for a navy equal to the largest in the world was due primarily to reasons of prestige. Great Britain had certainly a stronger case on the grounds both of prestige and of necessity. It cannot even be argued that the British were indifferent to the size of the American Navy; the problem of neutral shipping rights had produced serious tension between the two powers in the early stages of the Great War, and remained a source of some anxiety to the British after 1921, so that a more or less remote possibility of friction continued. Nor does it necessarily follow that the United States Government would have been allowed by technical factors (such as the width of the Panama Canal), or by American public opinion, to embark on a phase of excessively ambitious building. America's chief naval rival was Japan, and there was no desire for war even with her in 1921.

The British position in the Far East was certainly weakened. Article 19 of the naval treaty specifically prohibited the building or extension of fortifications

in 'Hong Kong and the insular possessions which the British Empire now holds or may hereafter acquire in the Pacific Ocean, east of the meridian 110° east longitude, except (*a*) those adjacent to the coast of Canada, (*b*) the Commonwealth of Australia and its Territories, and (*c*) New Zealand'. It also prohibited the fortification of similar American islands, such as Guam. The treaty left the British free to strengthen the naval base at Singapore, but this was too far away to form a base for effective naval operations against Japan. In other words Japan was impregnable against attack either on her mainland possessions, or on her sea communications with Korea, Manchuria, and China; the British settlements in Hong Kong and on the Chinese coast were, on the other hand, almost defenceless against Japanese attack. The United States gave no promise, and obviously did not intend, to supply assistance in such circumstances. Furthermore the friendship with Japan, although not formally broken, had been so relaxed that Great Britain could scarcely look to Japan for support in any future trouble with the Chinese Nationalists—a fact which many Britons were to recognize and regret a few years later.

Against this could be set the fact that the concessions to Japan had been sufficient to sway Japanese opinion in favour of the temporary abandonment of her expansionist policy; it appeared at the time that the British Government had been wise to secure this measure of tranquillity in the Far East when her struggle with the Indian Nationalists had already commenced. This consideration pointed to the expediency of tangible concessions to Chinese Nationalist demands, particularly in view of the strong current of popular sympathy for China in the United States. The British Government showed no undue reluctance to make these concessions during the next few years, but they

were forced to make them in circumstances which suggested compulsion.

British policy throughout the Washington negotiations, great and positive as the results in many respects were, must be criticized for its willingness to secure the immediate emotional satisfaction of a dramatic act of friendship and temporary appeasement at the cost of a permanent weakening of the conditions on which the British position in the Far East was based.

CHAPTER III

THE PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE NEAR EAST

THE Franco-British differences over the treaty settlement in Europe were paralleled in the Near East, although the relative positions and policies of the two powers were largely reversed: in Asia Minor Great Britain took the lead, and received lukewarm support from an ally who doubted both the honesty and the expediency of her aims. The war had not modified the fundamental aims of British policy in the Near East; the protection of the routes to India through the Eastern Mediterranean necessitated the establishment of direct or indirect control over the Moslem areas adjacent to the Persian Gulf and Suez Canal, and over the Straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. Britain's pre-war hold on Egypt, her support of the Arab revolt, and the fact that she had borne almost the entire weight of the fighting against the Turks, enabled her to demand substantially all she wanted in the Arab areas, although the ambitions and counter-claims of France and Italy placed difficulties in the path of such direct action in Constantinople and Anatolia.

The broad outlines of the future settlement of the Near East had been indicated in secret treaties between the Allies in 1915, 1916, and 1917. By the Constantinople agreement of 18 March 1915, England and France had promised Imperial Russia the acquisition of Constantinople, the Bosphorus, and the European shores of the Dardanelles and of the Sea of Marmora. A further agreement between the three powers at Petrograd in March 1916 anticipated the better-known Sykes–Picot agreement of 16 May 1916, by which France was to receive an administrative zone including

Cilicia, a part of central Anatolia, the Lebanon, and the Syrian coastal strip; Great Britain was to receive administrative zones including Mesopotamia, and, on the Syrian coast, Haifa and Acre. There were also to be 'zones of influence', the French lying to the south-east of her administrative zone, and including Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama, and Mosul, while the British included the territory between Palestine and Mesopotamia; within these zones of influence an Arab state or confederation, under an Arab chieftain, would be established. Italy was promised in the treaty of London of 26 April 1915 an 'equitable' share of the Mediterranean region adjacent to the province of Adalia; at the conference at St. Jean-de-Maurienne she was promised some 70,000 square miles in Adalia and the Smyrna region. But the St. Jean-de-Maurienne agreement was dependent on Russia's consent, which was never given; the collapse of Russia and repudiation of the secret treaties by the Soviet Government re-opened the question of the future of Constantinople and the Straits; above all, the British pledges to the Arabs, in spirit and probably in letter, were incompatible with what had been promised to the French. It will be the task of the future diplomatic historian of the war to decide how far these contradictions were due, on the British side, to calculated duplicity, and how far to the confusing effect of parallel negotiations in war-time conditions, to hasty and panicky decisions made to meet immediate crises, and to the general sense of unreality inseparable from such large-scale planning for hypothetical victory. There can be no doubt that each of the Allies was consciously stating his maximum demands in order to secure adequate bargaining weapons in the event of victory.

Negotiations with the Arabs were carried on both by the Foreign Office and by the India Office, the former

through Sir Henry MacMahon with the Emir Hussein of the Hejaz, the latter with Ibn Saud, Sultan of the Nejd. It seems clear that the district later included in the French zone of influence in the Sykes–Picot agreement had been left to Hussein by MacMahon. Picot was certainly informed on 23 November 1915 of Hussein's demands, although not, apparently, of the complete details. He told Sir Arthur Nicolson that the French Government accepted Arab administration of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, but only under French influence. In addition, Ibn Saud was promised by the India Office, without Hussein's knowledge, territories in central and eastern Arabia. The Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, favouring the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people, added a further complication, although the consent of the French and Italian Governments had been secured.

The armistice of Mudros with the Turks of 30 October 1918 left Constantinople and the Straits, as well as Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, in British possession; this meant not merely that France was in no position to take matters into her own hands, but also that she was dependent on the British for support in Syria, where she had every reason to anticipate future trouble. England, as Lloyd George took care to point out to his French colleagues, had some 500,000 men on Turkish soil, and had incurred hundreds of thousands of casualties, whereas the other Governments 'had only put in a few nigger policemen to see that we did not steal the Holy Sepulchre'! Consequently France had little choice but to agree, in the winter of 1918–19, to a series of definitions of the position in the Near East which were substantially favourable to the British point of view. The Franco-British declaration on Arab policy of 9 November 1918 pledged the two

powers to encourage and assist the establishment of native governments in Syria and Mesopotamia; on 15 February 1919 the French Government agreed to the administration of Mosul and Palestine by the British. The Near East was, however, regarded as a minor sphere of importance where decisions could be safely postponed, and the settlement was therefore left open at Paris. Nevertheless on 29 April 1919 Italian troops landed at Adalia, and on 5 May Lloyd George forestalled further Italian action by proposing a redistribution of troops in accordance with which Greek troops landed at Smyrna on 14 May.

These moves indicated clearly the British Government's plans and difficulties in respect of Constantinople and the Straits. They were still influenced by the nineteenth-century fear of the possession of this area by a strong and hostile power, and they were conscious of the difficulty of occupying it themselves in the face of French and Italian opposition. An American mandate would meet these difficulties; failing this, an international régime, or an occupation by some smaller power such as Greece, or even a reduced and emasculated Turkey, seemed to provide the best alternative. Indian Moslem protests against any excessive slighting of the Sultan and Caliph had also to be considered. After Wilson had turned down the proposal of an American mandate the British Government began to lose interest in the idea of expelling the Turks. In December 1919 Clemenceau visited London, and was persuaded by Curzon and Lloyd George to agree to an international régime; but this solution was, in spite of the support of Curzon, Lloyd George, and Balfour, rejected by the British Cabinet on 6 January 1920. The alternative policy was instead followed of maintaining the Sultan in Constantinople, and of imposing on him terms

of peace which would satisfy the interests of Great Britain.

The plan encountered difficulties, not from the cowed and accommodating ministers in Constantinople, but from the irreconcilable leader of the new national movement in Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who had landed at Samsun on 19 May 1919 after his appointment as inspector of the third army, had rapidly convinced himself that the old social, religious, and political structure of Turkey needed drastic reform; the almost unqualified hostility of the Sultan's Government rapidly removed any chance of co-operation between the two, although on 8 January 1920 the Government adopted the national pact drawn up by the nationalist deputies at Angora. This statesmanlike document proclaimed the independence and the indivisibility of the people of Anatolia and Turkey who were predominantly of Ottoman stock, left the Arabs and the people of western Thrace to choose their own fate, repudiated all restrictions inimical to their political, judicial, and financial development, and undertook to open the Straits to the 'commerce and traffic of the world', providing that the security of the Turks in Constantinople and the Sea of Marmora were maintained. On 16 March British troops under General Milne occupied Constantinople and the entire Nationalist Government at once removed itself to Angora, where on 23 April Mustafa Kemal was elected president of the republic.

The Allies nevertheless went ahead on the assumption that their control of the docile Sultan would enable them to execute their plans. On 26 February 1920 Lloyd George argued in the House of Commons that the maintenance of the Turks in Constantinople would make possible the freedom of the Straits, and this in turn would enable Great Britain to ensure the

freedom and safety of the Armenians. There were certainly other motives for British policy. The San Remo oil agreement of 24 April 1920 delimited the oil interests of France and England in Mesopotamia, and also in Russia, Rumania, and the British and French colonies. French capital was guaranteed 25 per cent of whatever sums might be invested in the oil-fields of Mesopotamia, or alternatively 25 per cent of the output of crude oil in the event of the oil-fields being developed by the British Government. The agreement had subsequently to be modified to meet the demands of the United States, who insisted on an ample share of the spoils of war in this area. The San Remo conference also considered the problems of Batum and Armenia, and the allocation of the Near Eastern mandates. On 12 March the mandate for Armenia had been offered, after the refusal of the United States, to the League of Nations, which had also declined the task. At San Remo it was decided to create an Armenian state with access to the sea, but without Trebizond or Erzingan, and to allot to Great Britain the mandates for Mesopotamia and Palestine, to France the mandate for Syria and the Lebanon.

By the terms of the treaty of Sèvres the new Turkish state was to retain Constantinople, the shores of the Sea of Marmora, the Gallipoli peninsula and the interior of Anatolia, but was to lose the mandated and Arab areas; Smyrna was to be administered by Greece for five years, when the local parliament or a plebiscite should decide its fate; the Aegean islands were to be renounced in favour of Italy. Turkey was to renounce to England all rights in Cyprus, Egypt, and the Sudan. A group of representatives of Great Britain, France, and Italy were to supervise the financial, economic, and administrative policy of the country, and the same powers were to take over the functions of the old

council of the Ottoman public debt, the German and Austrian members being definitely eliminated. Finally, the Straits were to be open in peace and war to commercial and war vessels of all nations, and Turkey was to delegate control of the Straits and the Sea of Marmora to an international commission which was to be completely independent of the local authority. In spite of bitter protests the Constantinople Government was compelled to sign the treaty on 10 August 1920.

It is the inexpediency rather than the injustice of these terms which calls particularly for comment. The Arabs were successful rebels, and the Turks were willing to let them go; there was certainly a case for the self-determination of the Armenians, and perhaps of the Greeks in western Anatolia. The Straits formed an international waterway in which many powers besides Turkey could claim a legitimate interest; Turkey's rights in Cyprus, Egypt, and the Sudan could never after 1914 have been more than nominal. But the practical result was disaster. By an additional agreement Italy, France, and England agreed that Italy should have rights, 'to help Turkey to develop her resources' in southern Anatolia and Adalia, France in Cilicia and western Kurdistan. But Italy and France soon had the sense to abandon their ambitions; the British Government went ahead.

By the summer of 1920 it seemed probable that another war would be necessary in order to impose the Allied terms. For this the British Government, which had to satisfy the post-war demands for economy and demobilization, was not really prepared; instead of cutting its losses in time it decided to rely on the Greeks. The British Government could at least furnish military supplies, and its reliance on the Greeks in the region of the Straits was illustrated when Greece was assigned by the treaty of Sèvres the islands of Imbros

and Tenedos, which controlled the mouth of the Dardanelles. At the Hythe Conference in June 1920 Venizelos offered Lloyd George and Millerand 90,000 men to destroy the Turkish nationalists: the proposal was supported by Lloyd George, and accepted with some hesitation by the Allied military experts. On the other hand Count Sforza, the Italian Foreign Minister, strongly opposed the Greek plan, and it formed the basis of further discussions at the Spa Conference in July. It was, however, ultimately carried out successfully, and by the end of 1920 the Greeks were in occupation of large portions of Anatolia. From the start the Turkish resistance was considerable, and the Greeks suffered some defeats. But by the summer of 1921 their troops reached Afium-Karahissar and Kutaya, and were able to hold this position for the next twelve months.

The military resistance of Turkey was sufficient to make possible a diplomatic campaign which was almost uniformly detrimental to British policy. During 1921 she made settlements with Italy, the U.S.S.R., and France which satisfied her own programme under the national pact, and were tacitly or openly hostile to Great Britain. The British and Soviet Governments were open rivals in the Middle East, and the opening of the Straits under the Sèvres treaty would place the Russian shore of the Black Sea permanently at the mercy of the British fleet. The Moscow treaty of 16 March 1921 was essentially therefore a treaty of mutual defence; it disposed of the Russo-Turkish frontier regions to the mutual satisfaction of the two powers, provided for Russia's acceptance of the abolition of the capitulations, and of the territorial claims of the national pact, and pledged both powers not to recognize any settlement imposed on either by force. Three days earlier a Turco-Italian agreement

established Italy's right of economic exploitation in south-western Anatolia; Italy withdrew her troops from Adalia in June. Finally, on 20 October 1921 Henri Franklin-Bouillon and Yussuf Kemal Bey signed the Franco-Turkish agreement which signified France's open abandonment of co-operation with Great Britain in the Near East. By this agreement France gave up her claim to some 18,000 square kilometres of territory, including Cilicia and a section of the Baghdad railway; in return Turkey agreed to the transfer of the section of the railway between Bozanti and Nisibin to a French group, and promised concessions in the Kharshut valley and elsewhere. Article One stated that the state of war would cease between the high contracting parties.

The justification for France's action is to be found in her consciousness of military and political weakness in Syria, in her conviction that the futile Greek policy must be abandoned, and in her belief that Great Britain had abandoned her in the European settlement. Curzon protested, and the French reply of 17 November was unconvincing in its attempt to prove that the British had had adequate warning, but was on firmer ground in stating that the French Government could not prolong indefinitely the sacrifices of every kind which the occupation of Cilicia involved.

The Greeks were now left virtually alone to face the astute and resolute Turks. In the summer of 1921 the Greek Government had rejected an Allied proposal that Smyrna should be made an autonomous province under Turkey, and had renewed the war; by the autumn, however, they were in a more accommodating mood, and Gounaris, the Prime Minister, after visiting Paris and London, placed his country in Curzon's hands. A British scheme of pacification, whereby Smyrna should be autonomous under the League of

Nations, was pr uncil at
Cannes in Januai nd, who
was succeeded b[illegible] of the
Italian Government in February, further delayed matters. On March 6 Curzon was compelled to reply to an appeal from Gounaris that England could not help. The injudicious publication by Mr. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, of a pro-Moslem communication from the Viceroy, Lord Reading, caused a Cabinet crisis and Montagu's resignation, and it was not until the end of March that the Allies, represented by Curzon, Poincaré, and Schanzer, could meet in Paris. They proposed an armistice, and propositions for peace which would have given Turkey the whole of Anatolia, the Straits, and Constantinople, although there was to be a demilitarized zone on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles. The Angora Government was not satisfied with these terms. The Supreme Council refused to agree to a Greek occupation of Constantinople, and the Greek Army, now very near to exhaustion, renewed its advance early in August. On the 18th the Turkish Army counter-attacked along its entire front on the Sakaria River, and after an ineffective resistance the Greek forces collapsed, and were rapidly driven back towards Smyrna. The Turks occupied Smyrna on the 9th; a fire which broke out on the 13th destroyed most of the Christian quarter of the city, and by the 20th all the Greek forces had been expelled from Turkish soil.

The Greek advance in August has always been attributed to an injudicious speech by Lloyd George on 4 August, although the Greeks were quite prepared, without any particular encouragement, to continue the adventure. Even so the speech put the British Government very much in the wrong. 'Our continued bolstering up of the Greeks and hostility towards the

Turks', wrote Churchill to Curzon on 22 April, 'has been incomprehensible to the French, who have been unable in their minds to discover any British interest behind it, and consequently have continually suspected all sorts of extraordinary motives.' Lloyd George on 4 August said in effect that the Greeks had been handicapped by the Allies, whereas the Turks were receiving supplies 'from Europe'. 'We cannot allow that sort of thing to go on indefinitely.' The Greeks apparently accepted this as an invitation to advance. On 11 September the Allied commissioners at Constantinople warned the Turks that they would not allow the violation of the zones which Allied troops were still occupying on the Asiatic shores of the Straits. On the 14th Poincaré agreed to support this attitude at Angora. But when, on the following day, an appeal was addressed by the British Government to Greece, Yugoslavia, and Rumania, and to the Dominions, for help in defending the Straits, Poincaré at once expressed his disapproval; on 19 September he ordered the withdrawal of all French troops from Chanak and the region of the Straits, and advised Great Britain to do the same. The Italian troops were also withdrawn. Curzon left for Paris on the same day to confer with Poincaré and Count Sforza, and some extremely tempestuous and emotional scenes followed. In the end, however, Curzon and Poincaré were able to agree to an invitation being sent to Turkey on 23 September recommending the summoning of a conference on Near Eastern affairs, and proposing as a basis the Maritza frontier in Europe, freedom of the Straits under the auspices of the League of Nations, and demilitarized zones north and south of the Straits. The Allies would evacuate Constantinople, and Turkey was to be invited to join the League.

The crisis was not to end without a direct clash

between the British and the Kemalists. French prestige had certainly not been enhanced by its withdrawal from the Straits at the moment of danger. The British stayed, and, when the Turkish cavalry had advanced almost up to the British barbed wire defences at Chanak, Mustafa Kemal in a telegram to General Harington demanded, on 25 September, that the British should evacuate the Asiatic side of the Straits. Harington, however, on the 27th, with the approval of the British Government, refused, and on the 29th the Angora Government accepted the armistice conditions. Nevertheless at the Mudania Conference the Turks made counter-proposals, and even demanded the immediate cession of the part of eastern Thrace to be evacuated by the Greeks; they were actually informed, by the French General Charpy, that his Government agreed to all the Turkish demands. Ismet Pasha accordingly threatened that if his demands were not immediately granted the Turkish Army would advance on 6 October. It was only after a further visit by Curzon to Paris on the 6th that Poincaré agreed to support the British; a compromise arrangement was devised, and Turkey accepted on the 10th. The British were inclined to suspect that Franklin-Bouillon's presence at Mudania had much to do with this further crisis in Anglo-French relations.

The fall of Lloyd George and the break up of the Coalition Government on 19 October were direct results of the spectacular failure of the British Near Eastern policy. Curzon, however, remained at the Foreign Office, and at the Lausanne Conference (November 1922–July 1923) gained successes which showed that in reality the Kemalist victory had not defeated the underlying aims of British diplomacy in the post-war settlement. The British had long been prepared for Turkish rule in Constantinople, and desired, not the

exclusion of the Turks, but satisfactory regulations for the future of the Straits. This formed the main subject of discussion in the earlier stages of the Conference, and on 20 December Ismet Pasha, the chief Turkish delegate, agreed to the British demands for the demilitarization of the Straits, freedom of passage, and the establishment of an international commission. The Turks had already separated from the Soviet delegation, whose proposal that the Black Sea should be recognized as a *mare clausum* of the littoral powers would have meant its dominance by Russia; on the other hand Curzon had successfully resisted the political guarantee that Ismet Pasha had demanded. The other outstanding British interest was Mosul; the sympathetic attitude of the *Daily Express* and other English papers convinced the Turks that Curzon would not be able to persist in his demands on this point, and they were not prepared to give way.

Nevertheless by the end of January 1923 it was clear that the British had, except for Mosul, secured practically all their programme, whereas the French, in spite of their earlier Turcophil policy, were unable to agree with the Turks on the outstanding financial, economic, and capitulatory clauses. On 29 January the Allies presented a draft treaty and an ultimatum to the effect that the conference would be dissolved if the treaty were not accepted by 4 February. But any possibility that the Turks would be bluffed or stampeded into acceptance was ruined by the French: on 30 January Bompard, the first French delegate, informed Ismet that the French Government did not regard the draft treaty as final, and on the same day a Havas agency telegram made a similar statement. Poincaré's action appears to have been governed by the general animosity towards the British Government created by the Ruhr occupation, and by the belief that the settlement at

Lausanne of the matters which particularly concerned Great Britain implied a betrayal of French interests. Whatever the reason, he soon changed his mind; the Havas statement was declared to be unauthorized, and on the 31st he strengthened this with a further statement. Ismet Pasha, however, realized that the Allies were once more divided, declined to withdraw his objections, and the British delegation left Lausanne on 4 February.

In spite of the apparent failure of the conference, and therefore of Curzon, British policy finally triumphed. The Turkish National Assembly rejected the draft treaty, but was willing to renew negotiations, and when the discussions at Lausanne were renewed the British, who had surrendered nothing, found the French decidedly more Turcophobe, and more ready to co-operate. The Turks' final proposal, that the economic clauses should be discussed separately, was rejected at a short conference in London (21–28 March); negotiations were then resumed at Lausanne, with Sir Horace Rumbold as the chief British delegate; prolonged discussions were necessary before mutual Franco-Turkish concessions produced agreement on the financial terms, but the treaty was finally signed on 24 July.

Any attempt to estimate the wisdom or success of British policy in the post-war Near East is difficult, for the immediate objectives were seldom ends in themselves, and were frequently subordinated, and even hostile, to wider interests and powerful traditions. In the Cabinet the anti-Turkish feeling of Lloyd George and Curzon, founded on the Gladstonian traditions, had been stimulated by the war, by the Armenian atrocities of the pre-war and post-war periods, by the persuasiveness of Venizelos, and by the vision of British mastery of the Straits; but the Moslems had also had

their champions. As in the nineteenth century the protection of the route to India could best be secured by the maintenance of independent native states; nevertheless Great Britain gave every excuse to Italy and France for territorial acquisitions by herself taking Palestine and Irak as mandated areas, and by showing as obvious interest in the material advantages of Mosul oil. Yet this confusion of motives meant also that apparent defeat might not be entirely disadvantageous in the long run, and the acceptance of the Kemalists' territorial demands, although delayed until the last moment by the Government's stubborn Greek policy, supplied in the end as satisfactory a solution of the problem of the Straits as could have been secured by establishing the Sultan or the Greeks in Constantinople. The lukewarm support of the French and Italians also proved less disastrous in the long run than had first appeared; their withdrawal prevented the establishment of larger French or Italian colonies which might have threatened British interests if they were hostile, and might have been embarrassing if they had remained friendly and permanently exposed to Kemalist attacks. The expediency and morality of British policy in securing control of the mandatory areas in Palestine and Irak could of course only be tested by time.

CHAPTER IV

REPARATIONS, THE RUHR, LOCARNO

THE fall of the Coalition Government in October 1922 was followed by the formation of a Conservative ministry under Bonar Law, in which Curzon retained the Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs. In May 1923, after Bonar Law's resignation, the ministry was reconstructed, with Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister; the party lost heavily in December as a result of its failure to carry the country on the protection issue, and a Labour Government under J. Ramsay MacDonald took office, with the support of the Liberal vote, in January 1924. This Government was in turn defeated at the polls in October, and the Conservatives returned to office in November 1924 under Baldwin with a majority of 211 over the other parties combined. Austen Chamberlain succeeded Ramsay MacDonald at the Foreign Office. British foreign policy showed greater continuity during this period than these frequent Cabinet changes might suggest; there was a substantial measure of agreement between the parties as to the necessity for continuing the efforts of the Coalition Government to secure appeasement and normality in European affairs. Differences in temperament and in interpretation were nevertheless inevitable.

At the moment of Bonar Law's accession to office the Near Eastern question was in the state of crisis which had necessitated Lloyd George's resignation, but Curzon's diplomacy extricated the country with considerable profit from this embarrassment, and supplied the Government with its one outstanding success in foreign affairs. The war debt settlement with the United States of February 1923 ought perhaps to be

regarded in the same light, although the onerous terms created mixed feelings in London. Anglo-Russian relations remained in a very unsatisfactory state, but did not dominate British foreign policy except towards the end of the Labour Government. The two main developments of the years 1923–5 were, in fact, firstly, the reparations struggle, and, secondly, the attempts of the League to solve satisfactorily the problem of security. The two were closely related, for the creation of any satisfactory general system of disarmament and mutual assistance depended necessarily—though not technically—on the removal of the outstanding causes of international friction.

ANGLO-FRENCH DIFFERENCES: THE BALFOUR NOTE

On the face of it the essential difference between the British and French theses on the reparations issue concerned Germany's inability to pay: the British Government had never maintained that reparation payments were in themselves unjust, and even Poincaré would have admitted that there were some figures too extreme to be considered. The French believed that in Germany the country was richer than the Government; that the great industrialists, with Hugo Stinnes as their leader and model, were building up huge combines in the great industrial centres of Westphalia, modernizing their plants, collecting huge fortunes in their own hands, transferring capital abroad, and evading taxation with the connivance of the Government. The French tended to lose sight of the impoverishment of Germany in other directions, the cost of the war, the loss of foreign markets, and the transfer of important industrial areas to the succession states. But even if their view of Germany's resources was not too optimistic it could hardly be expected that the German industrialists would readily pay enormous taxes on

account of reparations so long as the astronomical proportions of the Allied demands remained: all classes in Germany rightly assumed that the more they paid the more they would have to pay. The opposition of the Nationalists to the policy of fulfilment had therefore the obvious sympathy of the industrialists: Erzberger, whose financial policy they detested, was assassinated in August 1921, and Rathenau, who had made a serious attempt to meet the Allied demands, in June 1922. The problem, then, appeared to be that of finding the sum which Germany could, with a sufficient effort, pay, and then of inducing payment by making the consequences of non-payment sufficiently drastic.

In practice the differences between British and French policy were governed by a variety of other political and economic factors, and by incompatibility of psychology and temperament which prevented the rational assessment of 'ability to pay'. British ministers admitted their inability to sympathize or make friends with Poincaré. Great Britain with her dependence on external markets and a flourishing state of world trade had reason to doubt whether even a large sum in reparations was worth collecting by means of coercion which would once more throw international politics into turmoil. France's economy was so constituted as not to be particularly sensitive to this kind of shock; she felt, too, a grievance on account of her own indebtedness to Great Britain.

The attitude of the British Government towards the question of inter-Allied debts had been made clear towards the end of the Lloyd George ministry. During the first three years of the war Great Britain had been the principal banker of the Allies, and had made loans amounting to over £900,000,000. After her entry into the war in 1917 the U.S.A. took over this function,

and lent either directly to the continental Allies, or to them through Great Britain. The result of the latter transaction was that Great Britain found herself after the war with a debt to the U.S.A. of 4,277,000,000 dollars, while £1,423,000,000 were owing to her. The American debt had been contracted by Great Britain entirely on behalf of her allies; she had financed her own war effort from her own resources. The repayment of debts on this scale involved the same practical difficulties as the payment of reparations. The effort to keep up the heavy payments would impoverish the debtor nation, and by reducing its purchasing power, directly hit the exporting industries of the creditor nations; commodities sent as payments would directly compete with the products of the creditor country, and payment by gold was clearly impracticable on the vast scale that these transactions would involve. The essential similarity of the position with regard to both war debts and reparations was not fully realized by the British delegation at the time of the peace conference, although the connexion was more fully grasped by them than by the Americans. Wilson continued until the end of his term of office to insist that neither public opinion nor Congress in the United States would consent to the cancellation of any part of the British debt, and in February 1922 Congress set up the 'World War Foreign Debt Commission', with instructions to collect the debts by 1947, and to insist on a rate of interest of not less than 4½ per cent. Hitherto Great Britain had refrained from any demands on the Allies for repayment, and had thus made clear its desire for all-round cancellation. The British position was now defined in a note drafted by Lloyd George, and sent on 1 August 1922 by Balfour, as acting Foreign Secretary, to the European debtor countries. The note contained three main points: (1) Great Britain occupied a strongly

creditor position, being owed altogether four times as much as she owed the U.S.A.; (2) she was prepared to remit all debts due to her by the Allies in respect of loans, and by Germany in respect of reparations, if such a policy formed part of a general international settlement; (3) as this all-round cancellation was impossible through America's insistence on payment, Great Britain would ask from her debtors as much as was necessary to pay her creditors.

The note met with an almost universally unfavourable reception. In London the City was at best apathetic, and it was clear that in business and some political circles there were still hopes that vast sums could somehow or another be collected from the Continent. The political parties were more interested in their preparations for the overthrow of the Coalition Government. France and the U.S.A. were both hostile: both, for different reasons, refused to recognize the connexion established by Great Britain between war debts and reparations. The predominant feeling in America was expressed in President Coolidge's comment: 'They hired the money, didn't they?' This insistence on the letter of the bond was due in part to the fear of the individual American that the wily and unscrupulous Europeans were cheating him; but most of all perhaps to his inability to identify himself emotionally with European problems, or to feel that the quarrels of the war period had really been his own. The French stated the alternative view in its most extreme form: the financial contribution of England and the U.S.A. was a form of support to the general cause of which less wealthy nations had supplied an equivalent in flesh and blood. In a very bad-tempered letter on 1 September Poincaré virtually accused the British Government of slackness in her war effort, and of over-charging on her supplies of war-material. In

any case he said that Germany's reparation debt was the result of her wilful acts of destruction in France, and of the payment of pensions due to losses inflicted by her, and that until reparations had been fully paid there could be no question of settling war debts.

His indignation at the British attitude towards the question of inter-Allied debts seems to have increased his determination to take 'productive guarantees' from Germany. The German Government had been granted a partial moratorium in May 1922, but after a further fall in the mark in June it proposed to the Reparations Commission on 12 July a total moratorium for the rest of 1922, and for the two following years. From this point Poincaré took the attitude that no further postponement of German payment could be accepted without 'productive guarantees'. On 7 August at the London Conference he defined these as including the exploitation and contingent expropriation of the state mines in the Ruhr basin, and of state forests; the appropriation of 60 per cent of the capital of German dyestuff factories on the left bank of the Rhine; the collection of customs duties along Germany's western frontier; the appropriation of German customs receipts and of 25 per cent of the value of German exports. The British on 12 August proposed a scheme of alternative and milder guarantees, which Poincaré rejected.

British policy was now in the hands of Bonar Law, who had a good grasp of the technical intricacies of the reparations question, but was in two minds as to the best course to pursue, and inclined to shirk any issues that threatened a breach with the French. A further conference in London on 9 December produced a reiteration by Poincaré of his plans for productive guarantees; he offered to deliver to Great Britain out of the French share of 'C' bonds 'a capital nominally equal to the nominal amount of the French debt'. The

'C' bonds of the 1921 Schedule of Payments were generally accepted as worthless. The conference was adjourned on 11 December; on 26 December, at a further meeting of the Reparations Commission, Barthou moved that Germany should be declared in default on timber deliveries, and in spite of the emphatic objections of Sir John Bradbury, the British delegate, who characterized the particular default as 'almost microscopic', the French, Italian, and Belgian delegates voted for the declaration. At the end of the conference in London Bonar Law had told the French Prime Minister that British public opinion would not stand an advance into the Ruhr; nevertheless when the conference resumed in Paris on 2 January 1923 Poincaré made it clear that he intended to carry out the occupation, and rejected summarily the British counter-proposals. On 9 January the Reparations Commission declared Germany in default on her coal deliveries, the British delegate again dissenting, and on 11 January the French occupation of the Ruhr basin began.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN DEBT

The Government was able to offset this crisis in Anglo-French relations with a thoroughly amicable settlement of the debt question with the United States. This arrangement was a further example of the high price that Great Britain was prepared to pay for the removal of possible causes of Anglo-American friction, and as a financial bargain caused consternation in some quarters in London. The British delegates were Stanley Baldwin and Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England; the latter was, as Lloyd George has remarked, 'the high priest of the golden calf, and his main preoccupation was to keep his idol burnished and supreme in the Panthéon of commerce'. His technical advice was in favour of the acceptance of the

best that the United States would consent to offer, and Baldwin, who was almost ostentatiously inexperienced, could make little fight against the keen and hard-boiled American negotiators. He did, however, in his opening speech, state clearly the difficulties of payment. 'This debt is not a debt for dollars sent to Europe. The money was all expended here, most of it for cotton, wheat, food products, and munitions of war. . . . We intend to pay—but how can international credits be made liquid when the creditor nation is unwilling to permit liquidation through the direct delivery of goods, and is also unwilling to see the current sale of her products to the debtor nation interrupted, and when the debtor nation is unwilling to be put in the position of being unable to buy the products of the creditor nation?' However, there was very little attempt to bargain; the British delegation accepted without argument the obligation of paying the whole of the principal of the debt, and was prepared to pay 3 per cent interest. The delighted and astonished Americans replied that they would not be able to induce Congress to agree to anything better than 3 per cent for the first ten years, and 3½ per cent after. Baldwin telegraphed this offer to London, and as the Cabinet was divided the negotiations were adjourned. The proposed agreement was backed by Lord Cave, and strongly supported by the City, and Bonar Law in the end gave way, against his better judgment. He was said later to have regretted that he had not insisted on resigning, sooner than approve the terms. It must be remembered that the debt had been contracted by Great Britain on behalf of France, and there seemed little prospect that anything could be extracted from Paris. The effect of the settlement was that the British funded debt was fixed at 4,600,000,000 dollars (approximately £980,000,000 at par), to be repaid over

sixty-two years with an average rate of interest of 3·3 per cent.

THE RUHR OCCUPATION

Bonar Law showed himself to be increasingly unhappy at the state of foreign affairs. At the end of December 1922 he made it clear to Curzon that he was 'longing to clear out of Mosul, the Straits, and Constantinople, willing to give up anything and everything rather than have a row'; and this attitude, although it did not hamper Curzon in the Near Eastern settlement, resulted in a negative and indecisive attitude by the British Government towards European affairs. Bonar Law's ill health accounted to some extent for his depression and lack of energy, but it cannot be said that British policy showed any great changes after Baldwin succeeded him in May. France's activities in the Ruhr were being met by a policy of passive resistance on the German side, and by counter-measures from the French and Belgians. A separatist movement in the Rhineland was encouraged, and on 24 October 1923 an autonomous state was set up in the Palatinate, and 19,000 of the regular officials deported. The German people was behind its Government in the policy of passive resistance; in some cases there was actual bloodshed, and the effect on both the French and German financial systems was disastrous. Yet while both countries seemed determined to ruin each other as speedily as possible Great Britain remained little more than an embarrassed spectator.

'Public opinion here is getting more restive,' Curzon noted on 18 March, 'and will not stand benevolent neutrality *ad infinitum*.' He felt keenly the equivocal nature of his position: Germany was still the ex-enemy, the difference with France merely a *rupture cordiale*: the Government was not at all inclined to break

completely with the French by a wholehearted support and approval of the German resistance, nor could it take any steps to ensure a French success. In March Curzon declined to bring some tentative German proposals to Poincaré's notice; a French approach in April, when M. Loucheur visited Bonar Law at Torquay, was equally unsuccessful as an attempt to secure British support. A concrete example of British neutrality was the fact that the special ordinances imposed by the French and Belgian Governments through the Reparations Commission for the carrying out of their sanctions policy remained a dead letter in the British occupied zone. The *non possumus* attitude was partially abandoned in April. On the 20th, in reply to Lord Buckmaster, Curzon said that the Government had never given, and would not give, the smallest encouragement to Germany to evade her liabilities; he could not, however, help thinking that if Germany were to make a statement of her willingness and intention to pay, and to have the amount fixed by authorities properly charged with the duty, an advance might be made. Germany thereupon made an offer to the powers (2 May); but on 5 May France and Belgium gave adverse replies without consulting Great Britain—an action which Curzon and Baldwin criticized in Parliament on 8 May—and the British reply to Germany of 13 May was also unfavourable. Even *The Times* criticized the Government for not commending the German Government's offer to abide by the decision of an expert international commission. On 7 June the German Government sent a further note which went considerably beyond its previous offers, but the French continued to insist that Germany must abandon passive resistance in the Ruhr before any negotiations could commence.

Apart from the inherent difficulties of its position

between France and Germany, the Government was hampered by considerable differences of opinion among its own supporters. A serious crisis over Russian infringements of the Trade Agreement of 1921 somewhat took attention off the Ruhr in May and June. Baldwin on 12 July told the Commons that the German note of 7 June seemed to contain the germ of a possible settlement, and on 11 August, Curzon in a very vigorous note (drafted largely by Sir Eyre Crowe) did at last speak emphatically to the French and Belgian Governments. He started by refusing to agree to recent claims by the two powers to receive a larger proportion of reparations than those agreed on at Spa, and remarked that sunk ships and cargoes rotting at the bottom of the sea might not shock the eye like the ruined villages of France and Belgium, but they represented equally heavy losses of national wealth. The note then proceeded to uphold the British contentions in favour of expert inquiry into Germany's capacity to pay, and as to the illegality of the Ruhr occupation, and finally re-stated the British reparations policy: that Germany should be made to pay up to the maximum of her capacity, which should be determined by impartial inquiry, and that as a preliminary to payment her finances should be restored and her currency stabilized. The note certainly encouraged the German Government to face the realities of the situation. On the 8th the mark fell to 1,000,000 to the pound; the Cuno Government fell on the 12th, and a new Cabinet under Gustav Stresemann admitted at last that passive resistance had failed. On 26 September all ordinances regarding passive resistance were withdrawn, without any assurances being obtained from the other side.

At this point occurred the 'Corfu incident', which is of interest to-day as an early example of Mussolini's tactics of scoring easy diplomatic triumphs in the

Mediterranean when France and England were distracted by German affairs. On 20 August four Italians were murdered on Greek soil near Janina, and when Greece proposed to submit the Italian demands for reparations to the League, the Italian fleet bombarded and seized Corfu. Mussolini refused on 5 September to accept the League's intervention, and the matter was referred to the Conference of Ambassadors. Greece and Italy both agreed to the proposal that 50,000,000 lire should be paid by Greece to a Swiss bank pending a decision by the Permanent Court. But on 26 September the ambassadors accepted the Italian demand that the money should be paid directly to Italy. After this Corfu was evacuated. Although the movements of the British Mediterranean fleet facilitated the Italian decision not to linger indefinitely, it seemed evident that the three western powers had regarded the League with little esteem.

On 20 September Baldwin saw Poincaré in Paris, and when a *communiqué* after the meeting announced that 'a common agreement of views' had been established, many people, including Curzon, believed that Baldwin had abandoned the stand made in the note of 11 August; this impression deepened when, after the German announcement of 26 September, day after day went by without any French move. Baldwin, however, on 12 October, invited the United States Government to collaborate in the appointment of an expert committee to inquire into Germany's capacity to pay. The U.S. Government agreed on the 15th, and the Belgian and Italian Governments at the end of October; Poincaré, however, at first made reservations which seemed likely to wreck the whole prospect. It was not until 30 November that the French Government agreed to participate in the expert inquiry. The committee, with General Dawes and Mr. Owen D. Young

as the American representatives, was constituted in December. Great Britain was represented by Sir Josiah Stamp and Sir Robert Kindersley.

RAMSAY MACDONALD'S FOREIGN POLICY

The accession to office of the Labour Government in January 1924 was an important event in the history of British foreign policy. It was able to give expression to the growing desire of the country for a change in the spirit and the methods of British foreign policy, which would, more than five years after the Armistice, bring Great Britain and the world to a state of real peace. After a tour in Europe MacDonald himself had, at the end of October, when there was still no immediate prospect of a dissolution, indicated clearly the part he would like to play in this transition:

> 'Our policy has been amateurish, feeble, uncertain. We have, therefore, almost ceased to count except as a hope (a no mean asset, however, if used). . . . Europe is getting sick of Napoleonism. Therefore, my general conclusion is that whilst in Governments there may be no change, whilst vain men gain some reputation from vociferous sections in their own States for empty triumphs, the general mind turns away from them and looks for other voices and other leading.'

Apart, however, from a general instinct in the country to get back to normal and peaceful conditions, there were still very wide divergences in public opinion on matters of foreign policy. While there was general support for an improvement in relations with France and Germany, very many sections of middle- and even working-class opinion looked with suspicion on the policy of *rapprochement* with the U.S.S.R., and the

Labour Government's policy, which included *de jure* recognition (on 1 February), a long drawn out conference in London from April to July, and the signature in August of two Anglo-Soviet treaties, became the basis of attack even by the Liberals. MacDonald was, again, able to secure the support of the growing body of pacifist feeling in the country, but the attempt to give positive expression to this caused apprehension among the even larger section which preferred to rely on the more conventional safeguards of national security. Nevertheless, there was common sense as well as idealism in the view that as Great Britain was not in a position to coerce other powers by arms she would be wise to appeal to public opinion and to place her faith in international goodwill.

THE DAWES REPORT

The appeal to French public opinion was facilitated by the obvious fact that France was predisposed to listen: the franc had fallen by nearly a quarter of its normal value, there were huge deficits to be faced, and both governing circles and the masses were forced to realize that settlement by negotiation was inevitable. Nevertheless, it could be argued that French policy had justified itself. The German politician and industrialist had been taught that deliberate evasion of payment was unprofitable; the French had managed to secure 1,392,689,175 francs from Germany during the year; Great Britain and the United States, while looking askance at French methods, were sufficiently alarmed by the grimness of the struggle to abandon the attitude of disapproving aloofness which had in itself become a matter of prestige. Poincaré did not at first appear very amenable. On 23 November the Düsseldorf agreement was concluded between the French authorities and the Ruhr mine-owners: this, by assigning certain

receipts exclusively to the French, worked to the disadvantage of the other allies, who had not been consulted. On 19 November Poincaré proposed that Allied military control which had been withdrawn during the Ruhr struggle, should immediately be reimposed on Germany, in order to enforce the execution of the military clauses of the treaty, and the surrender of the Crown Prince, who had returned to Germany. A demand was made that the British authorities should allow the Franco-Belgian Railway Régie to run their trains through the British occupied zone in the Rhineland, and finally, on 2 January 1924, the Rhineland High Commission, with its Franco-Belgian majority, took certain decisions which amounted to recognition of the self-styled 'Autonomous government' of the Palatinate. Curzon, who had practically a free hand for a few weeks while Baldwin was involved in the election campaign, took a very firm stand on all these points, and secured Poincaré's virtual surrender. On 20 November, after a threat that British representatives would be withdrawn from all inter-Allied bodies, the French agreed that there should be no threat of sanctions or demand for the Crown Prince's surrender. Poincaré did not, after this, make any haste to bring the Düsseldorf agreement before the Reparations Commission. In the face of strong French protests Mr. Clive, the British consul at Munich, was sent to report on the separatist proceedings in the Palatinate, and his report, which stated that the overwhelming mass of the population in the Palatinate was opposed to autonomous government, was announced in the Commons on 21 January.

Ramsay MacDonald's accession to office on 22 January 1924, after his specific promises of a pacific and conciliatory foreign policy, enabled Poincaré to abandon with a good face the struggle with Great

Britain, which Curzon's firmness had, however, already virtually settled. The Clive Report was followed by Poincaré's definite repudiation of the Separatists, and on 9 February the French accepted the British proposals of 14 December that the Cologne railways should transport French goods through the British zone. Poincaré's relations with MacDonald were more friendly than with any British minister since his accession to office; in January also the problem of Germany's future had, for the moment, passed into the hands of the Dawes committee, and the Foreign Office were able for some months to postpone direct negotiations on the more important issues. The experts took rather longer to complete their work than had been anticipated. The report, presented on 9 April, insisted on the two essential conditions of a stabilized currency and a balanced budget; the new Reichsmark was to succeed the Rentenmark (introduced as a temporary measure in November 1923), and the bank of issue, although free from Government control, was to be supervised in order to protect foreign interests. German payments were to rise in five years from £50,000,000 to the standard rate of £125,000,000; they were, however, to be made in German currency, and the recipients were to conduct the transfer operations. A foreign loan of 800 million gold marks would be necessary to tide Germany over her immediate difficulties. The report also insisted that Germany should revert to the position of an economic unit—in other words, that the Ruhr should be evacuated—and the French experts were induced to agree that the report should be regarded as an indivisible whole.

The French Press began, within forty-eight hours of the presentation of the report, to hint at the necessity for additional measures of control; on 1 May M. Theunis, the Belgian Prime Minister, visited London,

but had to inform MacDonald that Poincaré insisted, in return for abandoning his existing position in the Ruhr, on a specific British agreement to support France in military and economic 'sanctions' against Germany for any default in executing the Dawes scheme. However, Poincaré's Government resigned on 1 June, after the victory of the Left, and he was succeeded, after a considerable political crisis, by M. Herriot, the Radical Socialist leader, who on 2 June had secured the support of the Socialist party. His statement of policy promised support for the League of Nations, and the acceptance without *arrière pensée* of the report of the experts; but it announced that it was impossible to evacuate the Ruhr until the pledges prescribed by the experts had been put into force. An Allied conference met on 16 July, and progress was facilitated by the decision that problems of inter-Allied debts and of security should be dealt with later. On the first day Colonel Logan, the second United States delegate, announced that his Government would agree to be represented on the Reparations Commission for the purpose of establishing a default: this removed the danger of a Franco-Belgian majority on the Commission which would once more force on sanctions. Considerable difficulty appeared, however, when Montagu Norman and Mr. Lamont, representing the London and New York banks, threw doubt on the security for the international loan. In practice, also, it was found impossible to avoid the question of the French and Belgian military occupation of the left bank, although this was to have been discussed at a later conference. The first difficulty was met by an American proposal that the German Government should give priority over every other state obligation to the bondholders' claims in any contingency, including that of a default. The French and Belgians were

to be allowed to continue their military occupation for one year, and to employ their own railwaymen on the strategic railways. With these points settled, the German delegation was invited to London, and arrived on 5 August; they made strong objections to certain points, particularly the prolongation of the military occupation of the Ruhr, but finally accepted the Allies' proposals, although under protest, on 16 August. The necessary legislation was passed in the Reichstag by the end of the month; in October the loan was floated successfully, the largest portion being subscribed by the United States.

LOCARNO

The successful settlement of the immediate differences between Germany and the Allies turned general attention towards the problem of placing these improved relations on a permanent footing: in other words, of finding a permanent solution of the problem of security in Europe. This might take the form either of direct understanding between the powers, whose differences were mainly responsible for the crises of the last ten years, or of a more generalized agreement which would remove both existing and hypothetical causes of war. The search for this wider type of agreement was naturally taken up with energy by the League of Nations, but the official British attitude towards these aspirations was cautious and decidedly hesitant, and British opposition played a decisive part in 1925 in the failure of the Geneva Protocol, which the Labour Government had helped to draft. These developments will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

The general election in October 1924 brought Stanley Baldwin back to office with a decisive majority, and Great Britain entered on five years of Conservative rule, with Austen Chamberlain at the Foreign Office.

The circumstances of the election influenced to some extent the new Government's attitude towards outstanding points in its predecessor's policy, and probably helped to strengthen its hostility to the Protocol and to the U.S.S.R. The quarrel with Russia, and the serious crisis in British relations with Egypt after the murder of Sir Lee Stack on 19 November, compelled it to postpone consideration of the Protocol; this allowed time for full discussion with the Dominions, and largely as a result of their unfavourable comment, Chamberlain in March 1925 informed the Council that his Government had decided not to accept the Protocol. This necessarily meant its general abandonment.

The rejection caused acute disappointment in Belgium and France, where its terms were felt to provide a more definite guarantee of the 1919 settlement than had hitherto seemed possible. They had, however, already been assured, by Chamberlain's important statement in the Commons on 5 March, that the British Government did not propose to revert to a policy of complete isolationism. On 12 March, after announcing to the League Council the British decision, he stated the Government's willingness 'to supplement the Covenant by making special arrangements in order to meet special ends'. Even this cautious statement was too much for some of his colleagues, led by Curzon; but after a threat of resignation this undercurrent of opposition disappeared. He was able to count throughout on the loyal, and almost uncritical, support of Baldwin. The statement of 12 March contained the germ of the western European pact known later as the Locarno treaty, and it indicates the extent and limitations of Chamberlain's policy. In rejecting any serious attempt to devise a general system of international security the British Government had in effect declined to participate in regional pacts except where the more

immediate interests of the country were involved, although its rejection of complete isolationism meant that an agreement concerning the French frontiers was also visualized.

Two possible forms of this agreement had already been indicated by the British and German Governments in 1922, and Chamberlain's contribution consisted in the effective combination of these two partly contradictory plans. The British proposal in question was the abortive scheme for an Anglo-French guarantee of each other's territories discussed at Cannes in January 1922, and subsequently dropped owing to Poincaré's demand for a military pact. After the decision to reject the Protocol the Foreign Office brought forward the idea of a defensive alliance with France, but the Cabinet, influenced by Balfour, rejected this. The German proposal, made later in 1922, was for a pact giving a bilateral guarantee, between Germany and the Allies, of the western frontiers of Germany. Dr. Cuno, the Chancellor of the Reich, proposed to Poincaré, through the medium of Washington, that the powers interested in the Rhine should undertake not to resort to war against one another for a generation. This was, however, rejected by the French Prime Minister as a 'clumsy manœuvre'. The offer was repeated in May and September 1923, but was again rejected by Poincaré, who cannot perhaps be blamed for regarding it as a tactical move to influence world opinion during the reparations struggle. Nevertheless, the German Government had succeeded in suggesting how a British guarantee of France could be given a form acceptable to British opinion.

During the winter of 1924–5 the possibility of a western European pact was discussed in many quarters, and suggestions on these lines were made with increasing insistence in the Belgian and French Presses as

British hostility to the Geneva Protocol became more apparent. Germany continued during the last months of 1924 to display considerable initiative, but to suggest reservations concerning her proposed membership of the League. Her public opinion was again antagonized by the Allied note of 5 January 1925, in which it was announced that the Cologne zone would not be evacuated on 10 January, as the inter-Allied Commission of Control had found that Germany was in default in respect of disarmament. Nevertheless the German Government was sufficiently attracted by the possibility of a Rhineland agreement to persevere. On 20 January a German memorandum proposing a pact of mutual security was forwarded by the British ambassador, Lord D'Abernon, to London. Chamberlain's response was not, at first, encouraging; he was so concerned lest discussions between London and Berlin should be interpreted as disloyal to France that he gave an impression of hostility to Germany. During February, however, the importance and the possibilities of the German suggestion became clear to him. On 9 February Stresemann made to the French Government the substance of Cuno's proposal, namely, that the powers interested in the Rhine—'above all England, France, Italy, and Germany'—should enter into a solemn obligation for a lengthy period not to wage war against a contracting state. Stresemann felt that he could go no further on his own initiative, but on 24 March Austen Chamberlain gave his provisional support to the proposals, and urged 'that we must work with good faith and goodwill in the hope that we might make them the basis of a real security and a real peace'.

The French and Belgian Governments were willing to negotiate on the basis of the German offer, and during the next few months the essential problem was that of the eastern, rather than the western, frontiers

of Germany. France and her two allies, Poland and Czechoslovakia, were naturally apprehensive lest a guarantee of her frontiers in the west should merely concentrate Germany's attention on the east, and the German Government did not even pretend to exclude this possibility. It was, however, prepared to renounce the intention of going to war to alter the eastern frontiers, and to rely on Article 19 of the Covenant, which expressly provided for the modification of treaties by peaceful negotiation. The dominant opinion in France seemed, at first, to be that this assurance was not enough, and that it would be wiser to reject the German offer altogether if Great Britain were not prepared to extend her guarantee to the east. Herriot's Government resigned on 10 April, and Briand, the new Foreign Minister, continued for the next few weeks to seek a formula which would secure a British guarantee, if not of the eastern frontier, at any rate of the arbitration treaties which Germany offered to Poland and Czechoslovakia. But on 28 May Chamberlain finally made it clear that British participation could cover only the western frontiers, and Briand accepted this in substance on 4 June. This acceptance of the British reservations was facilitated by Chamberlain's obvious devotion to France; his 'honesty coupled with partiality' was, however, to prove a handicap in the later years of the ministry.

Germany also made counter-proposals; she wished to make her entry into the League dependent on the evacuation of the Ruhr, the sanctions area, and the first Rhineland zone; she desired a special status with regard to Article 16 of the Covenant, and wished to stipulate that the security pact must not place Germany in a worse position than was hers under the treaty of Versailles. The reservations were not well received in Paris and London, but were referred to a committee

of legal experts, representing Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Italy. As a result of their deliberations in London during September the five powers were able to assemble at Locarno on 5 October for the final negotiations. Throughout the negotiations Stresemann's difficulties were great; Lord D'Abernon believed that 'the chances of assassination to which he exposed himself were such that no prudent insurance company would have assumed the risk of a life policy'.

Germany displayed at Locarno considerable reluctance to accept Article 16 and other parts of the Covenant; she felt it almost impossible, for example, to give any pledge to support Poland in a war with Russia, or to allow the transit of bodies of foreign troops across her soil. In fact her fear of offending Russia caused her to doubt the wisdom of entering the League at all. The discussions on the Geneva Protocol had, however, suggested a solution, and the other signatory powers at Locarno agreed to address to Germany a collective note expressing the view that each League member was bound to resist aggression 'to an extent which is compatible with its military situation and takes its geographical position into account'. Other difficulties were removed very quickly: Germany agreed to conclude arbitration treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia simultaneously with the other agreement, and to drop the demand for the immediate evacuation of parts of the Rhineland, although she secured promises on this point which satisfied substantially her immediate requirements. The entire body of documents was initialled on 16 October. By the treaty of Mutual Guarantee Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Italy severally and collectively guaranteed the inviolability of Germany's existing western frontier and the observance of the Versailles provisions regarding the demilitarized zone. Article 9

stated that the treaty should impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government concerned should signify its acceptance. Arbitration conventions were also concluded by Germany with Poland and Czechoslovakia. The treaties were ratified in all the countries concerned, and the formal signing took place in London on 1 December.

The Locarno settlement, like that of Washington in 1921, purchased a temporary cessation of trouble in certain spheres by arrangements which created conditions of fresh trouble elsewhere. Yet it is clear from the negotiations that neither British nor German opinion would have made possible a similar settlement of the eastern frontiers. The predominant Conservative opinion would not have accepted anything more than the western guarantee; the Liberals were opposed even to this. Nevertheless the Locarno agreement had provided merely a partial solution of the general problem of security; and if British and European opinion allowed nothing more at this stage it remained the task of statesmanship to educate opinion in order that more could be achieved. On the whole it must be said that the Baldwin Government showed very little desire to achieve more than the immediate objectives indicated in 1925. Germany's election to a permanent seat on the League Council was sadly bungled; in spite of some well-intentioned lobbying by Chamberlain in March 1926 the matter had to be postponed until June. The counter-claims of Poland, Spain, and Brazil were partially met by the creation of three 'semi-permanent' seats, but Brazil ultimately left the League. Before the end of Austen Chamberlain's term of office, steps were initiated to complete the reparations settlement on the lines laid down in the Dawes plan; this resulted in the Young plan of 1930 (Chapter VI). An air of false security was created by the absolutely

punctual payment of reparations instalments, and by the substantial schemes of social welfare which the German Government was able to forward during these years. This partial prosperity was an artificial and transitory product of extensive foreign loans, and the economic crisis of 1930 left German Governments with no adequate answer to those of their opponents who proclaimed the futility of efforts to seek salvation for Germany by conciliating the western powers.

CHAPTER V

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE LEAGUE, 1919–29

THE LEAGUE AND BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION

IN tracing the main lines of British post-war foreign policy up to this point it has not been necessary to give more than incidental reference to the work of the League of Nations; it was accepted in Great Britain and abroad that diplomatic transactions arising from the peace settlement should normally be conducted by the existing governmental and Foreign Office machinery of the states concerned. By 1924, however, the phase of post-war struggle seemed to be passing, and the League, still suspect in many quarters, but still untried, and therefore still a possible source of miracles, was turned to by many sections of European opinion in their search for an international New Deal.

It was already clear by 1924 that there were, both in England and elsewhere, widespread differences of opinion concerning the possibilities of the League. In England these differences may possibly have been greater than in other countries, and they certainly led to contradictions in British official policy which justified much criticism and bewilderment abroad. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that this was evidence of some typically British muddle-headedness or hypocrisy, from which the logical and realistic foreigner was happily immune. In practice, much the same differences appeared elsewhere concerning the League, or the problems which were associated with it. Germany denounced, joined, and later on left it; Italy, one of the original members, flagrantly challenged the jurisdiction of the Council as early as the Corfu incident of 1923; France somehow persuaded herself that her

coercion of Germany before 1924 was a suitable preliminary to the system of Peace through Law that she desired; the United States demanded a League, rejected it, denounced war and armaments, and insisted on as fine a navy as money could buy. From the U.S.S.R. came laborious attempts to open up normal political and economic relations with western Europe, alternating with flaming denunciations of capitalistic society and all its works.

In England the League of Nations was for many classes and individuals a wish-fulfilment, an apparent realization of ideas and aspirations which the emotionalism of the war period had strengthened, but not created. England had not fought consciously for the precise political and territorial objectives which had influenced the continental belligerents. She fought neither for the liberation of her own soil, nor for the restoration, acquisition, or emancipation of border provinces; she did not—as in the eighteenth century—fight deliberately for Empire, and in spite of her plentiful war-time blackguarding of the enemy she had no deep-seated tradition of anti-German sentiment comparable with that of France, or even with the Italian feeling towards Austria. Within the memory of most adults in 1914 France and Russia had, indeed, been greater rivals. The predominant feeling in business circles had regarded war of any description as a disaster, and until a few hours before her final entry into the war the French Foreign Office had been agonized by the knowledge that Great Britain was under no treaty obligation to come into it at all. It may be said that after a hundred years of remarkable commercial and industrial prosperity and of immunity from prolonged major wars, Great Britain had no class or group which publicly accepted war as a necessary—if unpleasant—'instrument of national policy': whereas in the case of

at least four continental great powers a powerful war machine was kept in permanent readiness for the war which, though dreaded in many quarters, was regarded as the inevitable solution of various problems of national honour, ambition, or security.

In Great Britain there were, of course, as elsewhere, business groups whose profits would flourish with the creation of war industries, and after 1900 conscription and preparation for war with Germany began to be advocated with increasing frequency by various political, military, and naval leaders. Nevertheless the war was, to the average Englishman, literally no more and no less than a war to end war: he was not conscious of any objective other than the overthrow of the German 'militarists' who had, he honestly believed, deliberately hurled their military machine against an unsuspecting world. After the successful termination of the war the fundamental aim of the country was to establish a permanent state of peace; it was willing enough to hang the Kaiser, to try 'war criminals', and to destroy ruthlessly what it regarded as the war-making institutions and war-machine of Germany, but it had no traditional animosity towards Germany itself. It looked also for some guarantee that peace would be permanently preserved, but its overwhelming demand for demobilization and the ending of conscription meant that it shrank from the view that world peace or its own security must be maintained by large British armaments.

The majority of English men and women accepted the League of Nations as an institution with ready-made machinery for solving peacefully all international problems; its health and vigour were felt, in some rather mystical way, to depend on the zeal of those who believed most ardently in its possibilities. This view was not without meaning or dignity, but its advocates in the pulpits and in the many voluntary organizations

formed to promote the 'support of the League' shirked the unattractive constructive thinking that the subject required. They could not admit that any considerable modification in the existing political and economic situation of Europe was necessary, and they could not admit that the maintenance of peace, even by the most orthodox League methods, must involve preparedness for a major European war. The League, in short, seemed to have provided a happy solution of the problem of making war safe for democracy. A League condemnation of any aggressive power would preserve peace, because the aggressor would never dare to involve himself in war with the fifty or so remaining powers. The British advocates of the League could not face seriously the possibility that the aggressor state might decide to risk it, and that British forces might have to bear the brunt of the fighting.

For British Governments after 1919 this sentimental and uncritical cult of the League was both a help and an embarrassment. The temptation to catch votes with vague and resounding affirmations of faith in the League was almost irresistible, and perhaps it is fair to congratulate the parties on their comparative restraint in this connexion. British Cabinets and the Foreign Office were, however, forced to ask themselves precisely what the League was, and what Great Britain could contribute to it. Before the League had come formally into existence on 10 January 1920, American action had done much to make the scheme, in the British Government's eyes, abortive. The United States had not only rejected, at the end of 1919, the idea of herself joining the League, but had also, a year earlier, turned down a British proposal that the war-time inter-Allied economic organization should be widened into a general international system, which the ex-enemy countries would be forced, and the neutrals be persuaded, to join.

If this plan had succeeded there would have been an international organization of the economic forces of the world, which would, in the words of the Foreign Office, supply 'the inevitable corollary of the whole idea of a League of Nations'.

The failure to devise means for the control of peace-time capitalistic competition was followed by a general refusal to consider seriously the idea of a world organization in the form of a union of communistic states; the League of Nations came into existence therefore without machinery for the control of the international anarchy of economic interests. Even as a political organization the League, without the membership of the United States, Germany, and the U.S.S.R., had not the universal authority and clearly defined support of all the world's effective political and military forces, and could not, therefore, claim that its mere existence automatically extinguished aggression. The non-members provided from the start an extensive neutral element whose non-participation in League action might easily make the imposition of economic sanctions on an aggressor impracticable. Among member states Japan was obviously not prepared to interest herself very closely in resistance to aggression outside the Far East, and Italy, as her action in the Corfu incident in 1923 showed clearly enough, had evolved a 'realistic' attitude towards international politics, which excluded sacrifices for causes beyond the sphere of her more immediate and obvious interests.

Moreover, Great Britain would remain—to use the admirable terminology of Professor Zimmern—a 'producer' rather than a 'consumer' of security. As a policy of economic sanctions against almost any state would involve a naval blockade, Great Britain as the chief naval power in the League would become the chief producer, and as long as the United States with an

approximately equal navy was unwilling to join, or establish a *modus vivendi* with, the League, a conflict over neutral shipping rights with America had to be visualized as a possible consequence of a sanctionist policy. This would make success difficult even against a European power. In the Far East an economic blockade of Japan would certainly be ineffective without American co-operation, which would probably not be forthcoming. For these and similar reasons British Governments after 1919 felt it necessary to treat the whole guarantee function of the League as, in existing circumstances, unworkable; it was strengthened in this view by the hostility of the Dominions to the sanctions' clauses. On the other hand, public feeling in Great Britain made it impossible for the Government to propose leaving the League, or even to propose a formal suspension of the guarantee system; British official policy during the 'twenties was forced to be satisfied with the alternative of defining and limiting the guarantee obligations, and of demonstrating loyalty to the League by encouraging its less embarrassing activities.

The latter included what became known as the 'technical' functions; work on these lines was planned as early as 1919, following a tentative plan drawn up by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Arthur Salter in the spring of that year. Three organizations—dealing respectively with Communications and Transit, Health, and Finance and Economics—were set up by the League Council at its meeting under Balfour's chairmanship in February 1920. These were all in varying degrees the continuation of the *ad hoc* international co-operation of the peace conference era, and in addition to much valuable work of a technical character they supplied activities which enabled the League, in spite of its failure to become the effective controller of the world's high politics, to justify some form of existence.

A somewhat similar justification was found in the work of the Mandates Commission, and in the settlement under League auspices of specific problems (such as the Aaland Isles dispute of 1920–1, and the Upper Silesian frontier problem of 1921) referred to it by League members.

THE DRAFT TREATY OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

The critical attitude of the British Government towards the guarantee provisions became clear at an early stage; at the first Assembly in November 1920 the Canadian delegates proposed the complete elimination of Article 10, which provided for the maintenance of the territorial integrity of member states, and during the next two years proposals from various quarters which tended to make participation in the application of economic sanctions permissive and not compulsory on member states, received considerable support from British delegates. Nevertheless the divergences in British opinion were speedily illustrated when the movement towards a complete abandonment of the new guarantees for security was checked by counter-proposals in which individual British representatives at Geneva played an active part. The French, with their eyes on an apparently irreconcilable Germany, desired to make the League an organization with complete provisions for mutual assistance against aggression, and they were supported by Belgium, the central European succession states, and various non-European states such as China and Haiti, who had similar qualms about their own safety. This system, which was compatible with the maintenance of extensive armed forces as weapons of defence, was directly opposed to that advocated particularly by the Scandinavian states, Holland, and Switzerland. They placed disarmament in the foreground, and, arguing that extensive military forces were

both a symbol and a cause of international rivalry, advocated the reduction of armaments to the minimum necessary for the maintenance of internal order. British public and official opinion was in favour of the reduction of armaments, although it could never accept the idea of the sacrifice of its naval supremacy in European waters; and British official circles were prepared to consider some limited and localized guarantees of security, although it was hard to say what the British public would have agreed to in this respect if presented with positive proposals of a more extensive character. There was a tendency also to link security with disarmament, partly from a feeling that countries which had disarmed had a greater moral claim to support than those which had not; partly, however, for the more practical reason that extensive disarmament of land forces would make a sanctions policy (imposed by the strong naval powers of the League) correspondingly easier.

At the first meeting of the Assembly in 1920 a proposal by the Norwegian delegate, encouraged by Lord Robert Cecil, led to the appointment by the Assembly of a civilian committee, known as the Temporary Mixed Commission, to study disarmament. An early proposal by one of the members, Lord Esher, was for a scheme of European land armaments based on units of 30,000. France was to have six such units; Italy and Poland, four each; Great Britain and several other powers, three each; and so on. General opposition soon killed this proposal, but Lord Robert Cecil, who at this time represented South Africa in the Assembly, returned to the problem in July 1922 by proposing first to the Commission, and later to the Assembly, propositions affirming that the reduction of armaments to be successful must be general, and that the provision of guarantees of security, which should

also be general, should depend on an undertaking to reduce armaments. From this arose the very ingenious proposals known as the Draft treaty of Mutual Assistance; Lord Cecil presented his own proposals, which introduced the idea of strengthening the general guarantee of security by regional agreements, to the Temporary Mixed Commission in February 1923; Colonel Requin, the French member of the Permanent Advisory Commission, presented an alternative draft, and an amalgamation of these two schemes was presented to the Assembly in September 1923. In this Assembly Lord Robert Cecil sat as a representative of the Baldwin Government. The Draft treaty insisted on the obligation of all members to assist one of their number in a war of aggression, and left it to the Council to allocate their duties; but it also allowed the formation of voluntary regional agreements between states who would be more particularly responsible for the maintenance of peace in their own areas, and limited the obligation to engage in military operations against an aggressor to powers in the same continent. The Labour Government, which had to consider the Draft treaty, rejected it on 18 July 1924, for reasons very much the same as those of previous British Governments. There was the same heavy responsibility imposed on British naval power; in addition, the scheme of continental agreements cut right across the organization of the British Empire. The agreements were also objected to as foreshadowing a return to the pre-war system of alliances.

THE GENEVA PROTOCOL

The Labour Government took its part in the negotiations for the Geneva Protocol, the general principles of which were laid down by Ramsay MacDonald and Herriot on 6 September 1924. Nevertheless at

a later stage in the debate Arthur Henderson, speaking as a delegate of the British Empire, insisted on reservations which seemed to render the Protocol entirely innocuous from the British point of view. The basic idea of the protocol was to maintain the essential connexion between security and disarmament, but to supply a satisfactory test of aggression, and to close the 'gap in Article 15' by means of compulsory arbitration. Article 15 had provided that the Council should endeavour to find a solution of any dispute submitted to it by a member, but had left war legitimate if this mediation failed. It had also excluded matters within the domestic jurisdiction of one of the parties. The protocol provided that all disputes of a legal character should be submitted to the Permanent Court of International Justice, whose decision would be binding; other disputes should be dealt with by the Council, but if the Council should fail to arrive at a unanimous decision the matter should be referred to a board of arbitrators, whose decision would be binding. The protocol also provided, as the result of a Japanese proposal, that disputes concerning matters of domestic jurisdiction should be submitted to the conciliation procedure of Article 11. But it also contained reservations which took most of the sting out of it. Great Britain had insisted that she must retain complete juridical liberty to decide what action she would take for the enforcement of sanctions, and Denmark, who was practically disarmed, had asked for a wording which should recognize this fact. It was accordingly provided that each state should co-operate 'in the degree which its geographical position and its particular situation as regards armaments allow'. A further provision was that the protocol should come into force only after a plan for the reduction of armaments had been adopted.

The decision as to whether the protocol should be

ratified fell to the Conservatives. During the winter of 1924–5 the British Dominions expressed their opposition with varying degrees of bluntness; they were particularly concerned lest the provisions concerning disputes on matters of domestic jurisdiction should work to their detriment. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand made clear their fear that they might have to submit to arbitration the question of alien immigration. In Great Britain the possibility of difficulties with the United States, and with the Dominions over the colour question, was soon raised; the Foreign Office had, also, long-standing objections to compulsory arbitration. What was wanted, in the words of Sir James Headlam-Morley, was 'a European protocol'. The idea of revising the protocol may have been contemplated, but it was soon abandoned, and as compensation for its rejection in March 1925 the Government offered the suggestion of local agreements, which led to the Locarno settlement. The British objections were embodied in the Balfour memorandum, which was read to the Council by Austen Chamberlain on 12 March. Its main argument was the now familiar one that the League was crippled by the absence of the United States, and that in these circumstances Great Britain and the Dominions could not take the 'strong' view of the Covenant and its obligations; he also pointed out that the framers of the Covenant presumably felt 'that the objections to universal and compulsory arbitration might easily outweigh its theoretical advantages'.

The dismay caused by the British rejection of the protocol was to some extent removed by the success of the Locarno settlement; the 'Locarno spirit' was further exemplified in the close and friendly relationship established between Stresemann, Briand, and Chamberlain. They continued to control the foreign policies of the respective countries until 1929, and by

making Geneva their normal meeting-place they automatically raised the prestige of the League and made it for a time the political directorate of international affairs that its founders had intended. Yet the problem of security had not been solved: if anything the new importance of the League made the solution more difficult, for it promoted complacency and a dangerous tendency to regard goodwill as an adequate substitute for specific commitments.

THE DISARMAMENT DEADLOCK, 1925–7

This tendency was well illustrated by the contrast between the halting progress of the disarmament discussions and the easy success of the Kellogg Pact. In December 1925 the Council set up a preparatory commission to prepare material for an international conference on disarmament (which ultimately met in 1932). The only substantial progress hitherto made had been that of naval limitation at Washington in 1921; the new conference was to deal with both land and sea forces. Throughout 1926 the technical experts of the powers struggled to define the nature and value of the armaments in question and the principles on which reduction should be based. The disadvantages of this method of approach were obvious. It meant that the problem of disarmament was judged according to the soldier's conception of security rather than the statesman's: and as the statesman had failed to discover any system which would give general guarantees against aggression it followed that the soldier's pyschological inability to believe in the desirability of substantial disarmament could not be challenged.

Each delegation accordingly put forward schemes of disarmament which would increase the relative strength of its own forces. Great Britain, with a small standing army, was interested in preventing the existence of

large foreign armies which could win a lightning war before her Territorial forces were mobilized, and new armies raised; her assets were her industrial and financial resources, and her excellent strategical position as a first-rate naval power. France, on the other hand, was determined to maintain a large force which on the outbreak of war would deliver or repel a sudden attack; but she felt inferior in those forces, industrial and otherwise, which constituted 'war-potential' and which could be brought into action after the outbreak of hostilities. She desired, therefore, to maintain her existing ratio of superiority in trained forces to Germany, but to limit war-potential, and budgetary expenditure, and to establish effective international supervision of armaments. Great Britain considered the limitation of budgetary expenditure and war-potential impracticable, but proposed the limitation of war-material both in service and in reserve. The Germans strongly supported the British proposal to limit the trained reserves; France and the conscription countries argued strongly against such restrictions. Little real progress towards genuine disarmament could come from such discussions. In March 1927 the British experts deposited a draft convention setting forth their view; the French replied at once with a second draft maintaining their own thesis. In April, after failure to compromise, a draft report was issued setting forth the rival viewpoints. The British and French were also strongly opposed on the question of naval limitation; France demanding a limitation of total tonnage, Great Britain, limitation by separate categories.

The differences concerning naval limitations were illustrated by the abortive naval conference at Geneva in June and July 1927. When the United States Government invited the Washington-Conference signatories to a separate conference to deal with categories

of ships not limited in 1921, France and Italy declined. Great Britain and Japan accepted. The American proposal was simply that the Washington ratio of 5–5–3 for capital ships should be extended to cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, with a total tonnage for each class more or less the same as those proposed at the Washington Conference. The British were mainly concerned with securing what was considered an adequate number of cruisers: seventy was fixed by the British experts, on the basis of experience in the Great War, as the minimum necessary to protect the number of convoys visiting the country, to protect fixed patrol areas, and to deal with possible attacks of enemy cruisers in massed bodies. They proposed that cruisers should be divided into two classes, those of 10,000 tons maximum with 8-inch guns, and those of 7,500 tons maximum with 6-inch guns; Great Britain would need fifteen cruisers of the larger type and fifty-five of the smaller—a possible total tonnage of 562,500. The Washington figure for cruisers had been 300,000. The United States was not prepared to agree to a total tonnage of more than 400,000, and they desired 25 cruisers of 10,000, which would allow for only 20 cruisers of 7,500 tons. It was also not prepared to accept less than 8-inch guns. On this point of difference no compromise was found to be possible. The fundamental difficulty, as Lord Grey pointed out in a letter to *The Times* of 10 August 1927, was that 'parity, which is designed to avoid competition, does in fact imply rivalry. It means, it is true, that neither country is to have a bigger navy than the other; but it also means that each country must have as large a navy as the other.'

The land disarmament discussions remained in a similar state of deadlock. The preparatory commission resumed its discussions on 30 November 1927; it

declined to take seriously a proposal of the Russian representative, M. Litvinov, for the immediate and total abolition of all armies, navies, and air forces, but made little progress with the more conventional problems. The German delegate, Count Bernstorff, had a good case when he argued that his country, which was already largely disarmed, had the right to look with impatience on the slow progress elsewhere. An attempt by the French and British Governments to expedite matters by separate negotiations resulted in an agreement whereby Great Britain withdrew her demand for the limitation of trained reserves, and France accepted the British preference for naval limitation by categories; unfortunately this compromise created a very bad impression owing to the air of mismanaged secrecy which accompanied it. Secret clauses were suspected, and the impression was created that an attempt was being made to force the hands of the remaining powers. Ultimately the arrangement had to be dropped, owing to the refusal of Italy and the United States to accept it.

THE BRIAND-KELLOGG PACT

Two attempts to cut a way through all these entanglements were made, but in these Great Britain played only a subordinate part. On 24 September 1927 the Assembly unanimously adopted a Polish resolution 'that all wars of aggression are, and shall always be, prohibited'; on 27 August 1928 fifteen powers signed the Pact of Paris, or Briand-Kellogg Pact for the Renunciation of War. In the latter case the initiative was taken by Briand, who, after a conversation with the American Professor Shotwell, proposed on 6 April 1927 that France and the United States should agree mutually to 'outlaw war' between their two countries. This was expanded to include the fifteen signatories of the pact, who agreed to renounce war as an instrument

of national policy, and to use only pacific means for the solution of any problem that might arise between them. Other powers joined later; by 1933 no fewer than sixty-five governments had signed.

The pact contained no time-limit, but on the other hand it contained no mutual guarantee or machinery of enforcement, and the original authors made it clear that they did not ban wars of self-defence. It is in this sense that the various reservations put forward by the signatories must be understood. Great Britain, for example, stated explicitly in a dispatch of 19 May 1928, that there were certain regions in the world in which she was vitally interested, and that the protection of these regions against attack was to the British Empire a measure of self-defence. The Suez Canal zone was clearly indicated here. The United States reserved action in defence of the Monroe Doctrine. These reservations did not create any loophole for aggression; they are only to be condemned if the existing interests of the two states in the areas concerned are considered morally reprehensible.

BRITAIN'S LOST OPPORTUNITIES

In the last two chapters we have traced—necessarily in summary fashion—the development of British foreign policy between 1922 and 1929 with regard, firstly, to the more immediate and more urgent problems of European politics, and, secondly, to the attempt to construct a better international society, primarily through the medium of the League of Nations. We have seen that in the latter case the effectiveness of British policy was seriously reduced by the fundamental unwillingness of the British public either to accept the risks, or to repudiate the responsibilities, involved in an active League policy, and by the Government's conviction that, with five of the seven great

powers openly or virtually neutral, a zealous support of every possible victim of future aggression would involve exertions far beyond the country's military and economic strength.

The British public had fallen into the dangerous habit of assuming that the League, by the mere fact of its existence, had made such exertions unnecessary. It is, of course, difficult to generalize satisfactorily about anything so muddled and so vague as this phase of British opinion. We have seen that the predominant influence was extreme and vivid recollection of the horrors of the previous war, and that the attempt by individuals to formulate a rational policy was a more or less unconscious effort at escapism. It seemed difficult to believe that any national cause was worth an international war: difficult to believe that other people did not, in their heart of hearts, think the same. It was difficult to concentrate attention on those complex problems of foreign politics which still—the fact could not be altogether ignored—seemed to be causing an unnecessary amount of excitement abroad. On the whole it was difficult to avoid the conviction that peace abroad could be adequately guaranteed by sufficient goodwill among Englishmen. British Governments remained profoundly convinced that this was not the case, and that there existed in certain countries tendencies towards extremes of political and economic nationalism which were fundamentally insusceptible to the sentiments of men of goodwill in western Europe; and that these could, in the last resort, be resisted only by force.

Unfortunately no party had the courage to go before the country with a demand for clear thinking on these unfashionable lines. Successive Governments had made it clear enough to the League and to foreign powers that they would only be prepared to take action in

defence of certain specific interests; but no formal refusal was ever made, in language that the British public and world opinion could understand, to adopt economic, and if necessary military, sanctions in other cases. The result was that although a British Government had declined at Locarno in 1925 to guarantee the frontiers of states so near to England as Czechoslovakia and Poland, Great Britain was still liable in 1931 and 1935 to defend, as a League power, areas so geographically remote as Manchuria and Abyssinia. League action in both cases failed, as it was bound to do, and England, as the strongest League power, was supposed to have suffered defeat. The real delinquents were those British statesmen who, before the first serious test to the League in 1931, had shirked the task of convincing the country that a formal limitation of obligations under Article 16, or even a withdrawal from the League, was necessary.

This was partly because each party had burnt its fingers in attempting to introduce what seemed to them more important innovations in external policy. The Conservatives had failed in 1923 to introduce protection, and Labour had failed in its attempt to come to terms with Russia in 1924. Nevertheless by 1931 the chance had been lost of retreating from the more impracticable League obligations with a good face. The same is perhaps true of Anglo-German relations; Austen Chamberlain's loyalty to France led him to acquiesce all too readily in French hostility to further concessions. The 'Locarno period' from 1925 to 1929 certainly brought about a noticeable amelioration in Germany's position. But grievances remained which could have been removed at this stage without loss of prestige. Even such steps as the cancellation of reparations, the return of the colonies, the revision by arbitration of Germany's eastern frontiers, could all have been carried

out before 1930 without any appearance of surrender to German aggression, and the effect would have been to strengthen the more liberal tendencies which were overwhelmed in the *débâcle* of Germany's economic crisis between 1929 and 1933.

PART II
THE WORLD IN CRISIS
1929–33

CHAPTER VI
LABOUR IN OFFICE, 1929–31

LABOUR AND FOREIGN POLICY

THE general election in May 1929 made Labour, with 288 seats, the largest party in the state. The Conservatives were reduced from over 400 to 261; the balance was held by 57 Liberals and 9 Independents. The country had clearly rejected the Conservative policy, whose decidedly negative attitude was summed up in the election slogan, 'Safety First'. But the Labour Government accepted very much the same slogan in its domestic legislation, and failed to take any adequate steps to counter the adverse effects on the country's industry and employment of the world economic crisis; unemployment, with about a million out of work, had done a good deal to put Labour in office, but it helped in turn to discredit them when the figure reached over 2,600,000 early in 1931. The foreign policy of the ministry was, on the other hand, strikingly successful until its career was cut short by the *débâcle* of August 1931.

For this success it was mainly indebted to Mr. Arthur Henderson, who by his tenure of the Foreign Office scored a greater personal triumph than any of his successors and predecessors between 1919 and 1939. Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister was also able to contribute one or two notable successes to the Government's record. The Labour party had had since 1919 a definite and constructive programme of foreign

policy, based on support and extension of the scope of the League, and the building of a world society which would eliminate national rivalry by disarmament, arbitration, the removal of the obnoxious features of the peace treaties, and, ultimately, the abolition of capitalism. In connexion with the last of these objectives its policy was, in the foreign as in the domestic sphere, one of 'gradualness'. The overwhelming majority of its supporters among the English trade unions and middle classes wanted, not the early achievement of a socialist society after a glorious but probably bloody revolution, but the establishment of a period of peace, with the tranquillity and relative prosperity which it was prepared to believe might yet be attained under the existing social and economic order. Thus its more immediate objectives did not differ greatly from those of the Conservative party: in its belief that the universal yearning of the masses in all countries for peace made possible the elimination of the causes of international war it even showed a greater faith in the possibilities of 'capitalistic' society than its opponents.

In the first part of this book we have described the efforts of British Governments to exploit victory, and we have seen that all accepted in some degree the view that to do this successfully they must not merely seize certain specific and immediate advantages, but must use the opportunity which their position of exceptional influence gave them to make the existing position acceptable to other powers. It was realized more quickly in England than in France that the latter aim could only be temporarily secured by an Allied superiority in armaments which made the consequences of war more unpleasant for Germany than the humiliations of peace: ultimately Germany must be appeased by the restoration of her pre-war prosperity, by equality

with other great powers in status, armaments, and other prestige factors, and by the solution of her frontier problems in central and eastern Europe. Some sort of *modus vivendi* had also to be established with Soviet Russia, and a solution found of the continued economic depression. The absence of any decisive progress in these directions by the Conservatives after the Locarno settlement in 1925 helped to sway opinion in favour of the Labour party, whose programme of 1928, *Labour and the Nation*, promised a decidedly more constructive policy. Unhappily the chances of success were already passing when Labour attained office.

Before the end of 1929 various events had occurred which were to plunge the world into a fresh phase of economic and international crisis, and to destroy the possibility of peace and appeasement along the lines desired by Great Britain since 1919. The decisive event was the sensational collapse of the New York stock market on 29 October 1929; this was followed by a rapid diminution in the export of American capital abroad, and a series of increasingly serious financial crises in various parts of the world, resulting from the calling in of loans or from counter-measures to check the flow of money from various countries. This helped to accentuate, or create, widespread industrial depression, with alarming increases in unemployment, and to produce in turn a demand for drastic, or at least dramatic, action in every country concerned. In countries like France, Britain, and the United States, with more or less stable political systems, it produced an intensification of economic nationalism in the attempt to regain prosperity; in Germany, Italy, and Japan it gave a powerful stimulus to economic nationalism, but it also helped to popularize extremist groups who satisfied the craving for decisive leadership and action. The death of Gustav Stresemann on 3 October 1929 removed

the one statesman whose ability and personality might have saved Germany from this result.

Thus it may be argued that the Labour programme was already out of date when Henderson took office. This fact did not, however, become really obvious until 1931. In 1929 the main problem of foreign policy still appeared to be the removal—by means of disarmament, arbitration, modification of the peace treaties—of the political problems which were impeding economic recovery; after 1930 the problem was to solve a world economic crisis which was driving the world towards a fresh era of political strife and international war.

THE ANGLO-SOVIET AGREEMENT

The establishment of normal relations with the Soviet Union was one of the first matters to which the new Government turned. We have noted in earlier chapters the unsatisfactory character of Anglo-Russian relations since 1919, and it will be convenient to give here a brief survey of these differences. Although the Bolshevik revolution had produced the most ruthless hostility towards the old aristocratic and governing classes, professional men, wealthy industrialists and the like, it was not opposed in western countries merely because of the destruction of privileged classes: it appeared to be a threat to the whole political and social structure in France and England, and resistance was offered by all the main political parties. The progress of communism in Hungary, Germany, Italy, and China suggested that the world revolution which Moscow desired might really succeed. The revolution failed, however, to maintain itself outside Russia, and even here conditions were sufficiently difficult to necessitate, after 1921, the pacific policy and modified state socialism involved in the New Economic Policy. Russia had to accept foreign relief in the severe famine that the

agrarian policy of the régime had brought on the peasants in 1921. Lenin himself undoubtedly desired, at this stage, pacific relations with western Europe; a Russian trade delegation under M. Krassin visited England as early as May 1920. Some elements in the Coalition Government, headed by Lloyd George, were prepared to resume commercial relations, and the Anglo-Russian trade agreement of 16 March 1921 was signed by a Conservative minister, Sir Robert Horne. But many incidents, due partly to the inflammatory language of the leaders of the Third International, and partly to the mere absence of clear purpose among the Russian leaders, prevented closer economic contacts, or diplomatic recognition. The die-hard Conservatives like Curzon and Churchill looked with distaste even on the partial recognition of 1921. When he was reproached in the Commons for launching the 'adventure' of Allied intervention in Russia in 1918, Churchill retorted that it had yet to be proved that it was a greater adventure to attack the Bolsheviks than to try to live peacefully in the world beside them. In 1922 and 1923 Curzon encountered repeated cases of Russian hostility: antagonism in the Near and Middle East which revived nineteenth-century fears for India; repeated violation by Russia of the 1921 undertaking to refrain from hostile propaganda; specific problems such as the rights of the British to fish outside Russian territorial waters near Murmansk.

When Labour came into office in 1924 the Soviet Union was granted full recognition in February, but the difference in attitude between the British parties was more apparent than complete. While some Conservative elements favoured the resumption of normal political and economic relations, the Labour party was determined to maintain its own identity and political methods inside the international labour movement, and

showed itself quite capable of defending British nationalist interests in the trade negotiations that followed recognition. The conference on this subject which opened on 14 April came to a deadlock at the end of May; it was only after prolonged efforts by MacDonald and Ponsonby in August that a paper agreement became possible. The deadlock had arisen over the British refusal of a loan except in return for a more comprehensive recognition of its liability for Tsarist debts than the Soviet Union was prepared to offer. The draft Anglo-Soviet treaty provided that the British Government would recommend to Parliament the guaranteeing of a loan only after the signature of a second treaty defining Russia's liability to British bondholders, and her method of payment. The fact that Lloyd George, whose Russian policy between 1920 and 1922 was on the same lines as the Labour Government's, led the opposition to the treaty, shows how party tactics were exaggerating the differences on the question. The fuss over the Zinoviev letter, which, whether forged or not, was but a repetition of familiar Comintern tactics, illustrated the same tendency. The circumstances made inevitable the refusal of the new Conservative Government to ratify the Anglo-Russian treaty, but *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Union remained. Conservative hostility was, however, kept alive by the financial aid offered to the British workers during the general strike in 1926; Comintern propaganda within the British Empire continued; in February 1927 a British note on the subject met with a hostile reception in Moscow, and in May the London police raided the headquarters of the Russian trade delegation at Arcos House. Documents confirming the subversive attitude of the Soviet authorities were said to have been discovered; the British Government thereupon abrogated the trade agreement of 1921, and

requested the trade delegation and Russian diplomatic staff to leave the country.

The Labour leaders, although they had their own differences with the Russians, were convinced that some of the difficulties of the Government were of its own creation, and would disappear automatically if full recognition were accorded. The establishment of normal relations with the Soviet Union was therefore demanded in *Labour and the Nation* in 1928. There was, however, no compromise between British Labour and the Third International. The socialist conference at Berne in 1920 had failed to provide any reconciliation between the Second and Third Internationals, and had even produced an intermediate grouping, the Adler-Longuet, or 'Two-and-a-half' International. The controversy continued after 1924. In August 1925 the Adler-Longuet amalgamated with the Second, with Arthur Henderson as chairman of the executive committee. Discussion produced some spectacular duels between MacDonald and the spokesmen of the Third, such as Radek and Bukharin; but at this stage co-operation with other Left groups did not form part of the Moscow programme, and reconciliation by compromise proved impossible. Nevertheless the Labour party demanded the full recognition of the Soviet Union. It sympathized with the struggle to achieve a stable and prosperous workers' state, and was inclined to condone the terrorism involved, although it had neither the stomach nor the sense of urgent necessity for such methods itself. It also understood better than the Conservatives the nature of the internal struggle in Moscow. After Lenin's death in 1924 a fight for supremacy among his former associates led to the triumph of Stalin, and the expulsion of Trotzky and Zinoviev from the Communist party, in November 1927. This was soon to be followed by the commencement

in October 1928 of the first 'Five Year Plan', aimed at producing the complete socialization of industry and agriculture in Russia; Stalin's breach with the giants of the Third International meant that the commercial contacts with 'capitalistic' countries which were necessary for the success of the Plan would not in future be upset by the injudicious thunderbolts of Zinoviev.

Henderson surprised the Commons in his first speech as Foreign Secretary on 5 July 1929 by informing them that diplomatic relations with Russia had never been legally severed. On the 15th MacDonald committed himself to a promise that no Russian ambassador should arrive until Parliament had formally ratified the invitation. This did not, however, embarrass the negotiations as much as might have been expected; Moscow agreed on Henderson's proposal to send its ambassador in Paris, M. Dovgalevsky, to discuss outstanding questions; he arrived at the end of July, and a provisional agreement was reached in October. In November Henderson told the Commons that the Soviet Government was to give pledges concerning propaganda covering the activities of the Third International, and was not to expect Parliament's guarantee of a loan. A professional diplomatist, Sir Esmond Ovey, was, at the Soviet's own request, sent to Moscow. Negotiations proceeded during the winter with the new Russian Ambassador, M. Sokolnikov, and a commercial agreement was signed on 16 April 1930. This was based on the 'most-favoured-nation' treatment for the citizens, produce, and manufactures of the two countries; the Soviet state, in view of its monopoly of foreign trade, was to have the right to establish in Great Britain a trade delegation, the personnel and premises of which should enjoy diplomatic immunity. Trade between the two countries should be eligible for consideration on the same

basis as trade between the United Kingdom and any other foreign country with regard to credit and other facilities. A further agreement, signed on 22 March 1930, settled the long-standing disputes concerning the right of British trawlers to fish up to the three-mile territorial limit on the Murmansk coast.

Negotiations on other matters—such as the Russian debts—were also instituted, and continued on amicable, though very leisurely, lines. When the Labour Government fell in August 1931 its successors did not reverse its Russian policy; the increasingly pacific attitude of Russian diplomacy, and the slow improvement in Anglo-Soviet trade, gave the harassed National Government every cause to welcome the cessation of trouble in this sphere. Exports from the United Kingdom to the Soviet Union rose from £4,801,000 in 1928 to £9,545,000 in 1930, although this was still less than half the total of British exports to the U.S.S.R. in 1925.

THE YOUNG PLAN AND THE HAGUE CONFERENCES

Party differences in England had given relations with Russia a prominence out of proportion to their real importance. A satisfactory solution of Anglo-German differences was the main objective of Labour foreign policy, as it had been of the Conservatives. It might perhaps be emphasized at this point that the Labour Government was no more anxious to imitate the more repellent methods of Soviet government than the Conservatives were, a few years later, to model themselves on Hitler and Himmler. Enough remained of the economic and political liberalism of mid-Victorian England to give the political, social, and industrial system of the country an independent existence between the totalitarian extremes, and there was general approval some years later of Mr. A. P. Herbert's

comment, 'A plague on both your blouses!' Distance and the rigours of Soviet censorship made knowledge of Russian life somewhat generalized and theoretical, and whether one regarded the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics as a new Heaven or a new Hell one tended to regard it as far removed from mundane experience.

The social and industrial structure of Germany was, on the other hand, a product of the merging of bourgeois industrialism and landed aristocracy on lines similar to, and complementary with, that of England; it was as natural for the dominant British political and business interests to feel after 1920 that Germany remained, and must remain, an integral part of the world in which they moved, as for them to feel that Russia had drifted out of that world completely. For the British Labour movement the position was more complicated; they watched with interest and sympathy the application in Russia of the socialist doctrines which formed their intellectual programme, but for them also the working conditions, political aspirations, and mental outlook of the German working classes, with their trade unions and social democratic programmes functioning inside a western European capitalistic structure, appeared decidedly more normal and familiar.

Henderson certainly found it easier to establish sympathetic relations with Stresemann and Briand than with the Russians. 'They were men of the people,' writes his biographer, Mrs. Mary Agnes Hamilton; 'Briand, son of the little innkeeper of Nantes, and Stresemann, born in the beer-seller's establishment in the Kopenickstrasse, had had more chances of early education than the iron-moulder, but all three were fundamentally bourgeois, in the good sense, now, and none of the three ever forgot the struggles of the past.' Henderson had made Stresemann's acquaintance at Geneva in 1924, and their mutual confidence was

strengthened by the rescue of The Hague Conference from disaster in August 1929.

The conference had met to discuss the recommendations of the Young committee on German reparations. The Dawes plan of 1924 had not been intended as a final settlement; in April 1928 Poincaré himself had suggested that a settlement by mutual agreement might be the best guarantee of French security, and in August Stresemann, visiting Paris for the first time to sign the Kellogg Pact, had suggested further negotiations. In January 1929 a new committee met, and after very difficult discussions the Germans, headed by Dr. Schacht, accepted in May the compromise scheme of the American, Mr. Owen D. Young. It fell to the Labour Government to represent Britain at The Hague; the two principal British representatives were Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Henderson.

The aim of the Young report was to provide a final settlement of all economic problems arising from the Great War, and thereby to remove the existing causes of political tension. It reduced and fixed the German reparations debt, arranged for payment by a progressive scale of annuities, and provided, by implication, for the ending of the Allied occupation of German territory and of other means of control and interference in Germany inherited from the Versailles settlement and Dawes plan. It established a Bank of International Settlement which would act as a clearing-house for international payments under reparations, and might later become the directing institution of world finance. The creditor countries had to accept a considerable reduction in the amount that they might have received from the continued working of the Dawes scheme, and they had to surrender their military control of the Rhineland; in return they were to secure the final

liquidation of post-war animosities. The crisis at The Hague arose from the fact that in distributing the German payments between the Allies the Spa percentages had been departed from, very much to Great Britain's disadvantage. Moreover, the German annuities were classed as 'conditional' and 'unconditional', and about five-sixths of the latter were assigned to France. It appears that this modification had been introduced in order to give France compensation in cash for the surrender of her military rights in the Rhineland. The Conservatives before going out of office had indicated their dissatisfaction with this arrangement, and Snowden was strongly convinced that Great Britain was being asked to make inequitable sacrifices to appease the greedy French and truculent Germans. Henderson, on the other hand, regarded the financial point as of slight importance in comparison with the positive advantages of removing international friction by the ending of the Allied occupation.

Snowden stated the British grievance bluntly at the beginning of the conference. He referred to earlier British sacrifices; Great Britain had agreed to accept £227 million in settlement of France's war debt of £600 million, and £78 million in settlement of Italy's debt of £560 million; she had already paid £200 million in debt settlement to the United States, and had received nothing from Italy and France. Yet her receipts under the Young plan would come mainly from the less secure 'conditional' payments, and her share had been reduced from 23 per cent (under the Spa agreements) to 17·5. This seemed a formidable case, but the sum involved, assuming full German payment, was only £2,400,000 per annum. MacDonald at first seemed inclined to restrain Snowden, but sent a telegram on 12 August expressing full support, and adding that Great Britain had 'reached the limit of inequitable

burden-bearing'. After this, attempts were made to readjust the figures, although mainly at Germany's expense. On 27 August agreement seemed almost impossible, and the Germans were packing to leave the conference, when Henderson persuaded them to accept any settlement on which the creditor powers could agree. A meeting of the latter was then held at 5.30 p.m.; at 1.30 a.m. the following morning it was announced that agreement was reached. During the evening Henderson had got the British delegation into a separate room and had told them that they would remain there until the matter was settled. The Germans gave their consent at 3 a.m. The British claim was largely met from the surplus which would arise from the overlapping of the Dawes and Young plans, and by a rearrangement in the unconditional annuities. The evacuation of the Rhineland was to commence in September, and was to be completed not later than June 1930.

Henderson travelled to Geneva immediately afterwards for the meeting of the League Assembly, and found little sympathy there for the British attitude at The Hague. MacDonald made an excellent speech at the opening of the Assembly, and left soon afterwards; Henderson, however, stayed until the end of the meeting, and by his unaffected sincerity and genial determination did much to strengthen the good atmosphere which he expected the Rhineland and reparations settlement to create. On 5 September Briand broached his project of a 'United States of Europe', and was supported in an impressive speech by the dying Stresemann. It still seemed possible at this stage that the German reparation payments could, and would, continue; The Hague agreements were, in spite of opposition from the German Nationalist party under Herr Hugenberg, ratified by an overwhelming majority in

the Reichstag on 30 November, and by a referendum on 22 December. Further details were arranged in a second Hague Conference in January 1930. But before many months had elapsed the rapid deterioration in economic conditions in Germany produced a political crisis which rapidly made the schemes of 1929 inoperative.

THE LEAGUE AND DISARMAMENT

The Government hoped that the settlement of outstanding differences with Germany and Russia would make possible further progress in disarmament and in the establishment of the League of Nations as the effective director of a peaceful Europe. MacDonald himself took a prominent part in the disarmament discussions, while Henderson's regular attendance at Geneva, and his determination to increase the efficiency and the importance of the League machinery in every possible way, helped to maintain the prestige which it had enjoyed since 1925.

The preparatory commission, which had been appointed in 1925 to prepare material for the disarmament conference, had continued its labours in spite of the failure of the Geneva Conference in 1927. The League Assembly in 1928 presented for the accession of all states a 'General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes', which provided machinery for conciliation, arbitration of justiciable disputes by the Permanent Court of International Justice, and of other disputes by special machinery. In accordance with its election pledges the Labour Government signed the 'Optional Clause' of the Statute of the Permanent Court in September 1929; after consultation with the Dominions at the Imperial Conference of 1930, Great Britain and all other members of the Commonwealth excepting South Africa acceded to the

General Act in the summer of 1931. More specific 'risks for peace' were taken when the Prime Minister announced on 24 July 1929 that the Government had decided to suspend all work on two cruisers, to cancel a submarine depot ship and two contract submarines, and to slow down dockyard work on other naval construction. In a statement on 13 November Mr. Alexander announced that for the time being work on the Singapore base would be slowed down, and suspended where possible.

These decisions were justified in their immediate objective of securing a satisfactory naval agreement with the United States and Japan. A new American ambassador, General Dawes, arrived in England on 14 June, and proposed a fresh attempt to secure naval agreement by avoiding the deadlock which would ensue if the matter were left in the hands of naval experts: the statesmen of the various countries should agree on general principles before the experts were allowed to confer. MacDonald—without any naval advisers—visited the United States early in October, conferred with President Hoover, and addressed both the House of Representatives and the Senate on the 7th. The visit was a personal triumph for MacDonald; he and Dawes had also been careful to consult the Japanese since June. When the naval conference met in London in January 1930 the ground was therefore well prepared. France and Italy also accepted invitations, but here agreement proved impossible, owing to Italy's claim for parity with France. The French claimed that they needed, in addition to a Mediterranean fleet equal to the Italian, further vessels to defend overseas possessions and their two other coastlines. The British Government was not prepared to secure French acquiescence by guaranteeing the French position in the Mediterranean, nor by undertaking more binding

obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant. Great Britain, Japan, and the United States did, however, sign a Three-Power treaty. Great Britain reduced her demand for cruisers from seventy to fifty, and it was agreed that tonnage might, under certain conditions, be transferred from one category to another. Japan received the right to build up to 70 per cent of the British and American figures. There was to be a five-year holiday in capital ships.

The conference was a success, but it illustrated very clearly the limited possibilities of the Government's methods. A conciliatory manner and a willingness to take the initiative in proposing reduction of armaments might succeed where questions of prestige alone were involved. It made possible very friendly transactions with the United States, because neither power had any desire to attack the other. It did nothing to solve the problems of security. The British naval experts still believed that seventy cruisers were necessary to meet the country's war requirements; the French still wanted assurances against German and Italian attack. Japan for the first time openly asked for parity with Britain and America. Labour had found no means of meeting the French demands, and was no more willing than the Conservatives to undertake military preparations in order to defend other League members under Article 16. It continued to take very seriously the preparations for the great disarmament conference, and the election of Henderson in May 1931 as president was a recognition both of his personal success as a chairman and negotiator at Geneva, and of the role that Great Britain was expected to play in the discussions. MacDonald had his own plans for the presidency; jealousy of Henderson's popularity, and the fact that he had intended to propose General Smuts, caused an embarrassing delay in his approval of Henderson's

appointment. But in any case the Labour Government had resigned before the conference met, and the events that ruined the Labour party had rendered the work of the conference futile before its first meeting took place.

CHAPTER VII

CRISIS, RECOVERY AND DISARMAMENT

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

IN spite of the increasing tension of international affairs, and the increasing gravity of the unemployment crisis at home, the Labour Government was able to keep its head above water until the spring of 1931. After that it struggled with increasing desperation in a flood of events which finally overwhelmed both the Labour Government and the Labour party.

The crisis was primarily economic, inaugurated by the collapse of the New York stock market in October 1929. This event was followed by a series of inter-related crises in various parts of the world during the next six years, and even in the best of circumstances these would have provided a very severe example of the type of slump and depression with which the western world had been familiar for the past hundred years. But the profound hostility and distrust between the nations, and the inability of some of the precariously balanced governments of the post-war world to weather further domestic storms, led to a wave of political crises which in turn prevented the restoration of confidence necessary for economic recovery. Inside the British Empire Australia was the first unit to raise the signal of distress. In 1930 the loss of revenue from external loans and from the sale of foodstuffs and raw materials abroad produced a drastic fall in revenue, and there was a strong demand for the easing of the situation by the repudiation of existing debts. This policy was, however, rejected, in favour of economies and an inevitable lowering of the standard of living.

The rapid rise in unemployment in England led to

criticism of the Government even inside the Labour party, but little could be done. The fact was that the ministry was debarred from advocating any drastic innovations by its dependence on Liberal support. Otherwise it might have put forward a 'Plan' embodying an advanced socialist programme, or it might have sought a solution on more conservative lines by abandoning its opposition to protective tariffs. The difficulties of a free-trade policy in an increasingly protectionist world had been recognized from the start; Mr. William Graham, President of the Board of Trade, had made a striking appeal to the League Assembly in 1929 for the lowering of the economic barriers between nations and for a tariff truce. Stresemann made a similar plea in his last speech. The truce proposal met with a sufficiently favourable response for a tariff truce conference to meet at Geneva in February 1930. Thirty states took part, but the United States sent only an 'observer', and in the meantime, between May 1929 and June 1930, the United States Congress was elaborating the new and excessively high Hawley-Smoot tariff system. Many powers who attended the conference had prepared for it by further increases of tariffs, and the Hawley-Smoot tariff bill was followed by new tariffs in France and Italy, and, in the British Empire, in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. The conference was a complete failure, and free trade died with it.

Germany was severely hit by the world economic crisis, but in spite of the death of Stresemann in October 1929, the policy of fulfilment which he had represented continued. His successor as Foreign Minister was Dr. Curtius; in March 1930 the Chancellor, Hermann Müller, was defeated, and he was succeeded by Heinrich Brüning, the leader of the Centrists. The Social Democrats, who had broken

away from the Müller Government owing to its drastic financial policy, also refused to support Brüning. It is perhaps not surprising that the seriousness of the German situation was not understood abroad. By the end of 1923 the inflation had led to the destruction of the prosperity of Germany's middle class, but the great industrialists had benefited from the situation to modernize plant, pay off loans, and employ artificially cheap labour; in 1924 the Dawes report stated that German industry and transport were in excellent physical condition, and only needed vitalizing with international credit. From 1924 to 1929 Germany was able to secure all the credit she wanted—mainly in loans from America—and from these resources to pay her reparations debts, to finance further modernization and reorganization of industry, and to execute large programmes of public works. In 1929 her industrial output exceeded that of 1913. But when the world crisis led to the cessation of the flow of foreign money into Germany, and to the withdrawal of money through the calling in of short-term loans, Germany was faced with the necessity of meeting her existing heavy obligations, not by further borrowing, but by what she could raise from taxation at home; this was largely dependent on her ability to find markets abroad for her export surplus, which was in turn adversely affected by the increasing tariff barriers or decreased buying power of depressed foreign countries. Müller, and after him Brüning, made heroic efforts to meet the increasing national deficit by drastic economies; in July 1930, however, the Reichstag rejected the Government's budget, and the President, Hindenburg, dissolved it, although he proceeded by emergency decree to institute a financial programme very similar to Brüning's. At the elections of 14 September 1930 the impoverished middle class, terrified by fears of further poverty and

deflation, and the smaller shopkeepers and business men, fearful of the competition of the great combines and trusts, voted strongly for the National Socialist programme, with its promises of nationalization, dispossession of Jews, and robust foreign policy. The party increased its seats from 12 to 107.

The largest party in the state was still the Social Democrats, who gave their support to Brüning. Nevertheless the continued necessity for drastic measures of economy made his position increasingly precarious. Further trouble was threatened by the shakiness of Austrian finances, in which the German banks were closely interested. The announcement on 21 March 1931 of an agreement to establish an Austro-German customs union was an attempt to relieve the economic difficulties of the two countries, and a desperate effort to strengthen the Government in Germany by a striking success in foreign policy; unfortunately it had international repercussions which Curtius should have foreseen, and which caused a great strengthening of French hostility during the next few months. Henderson was extremely angry at what seemed a typical example of German tactlessness; he had been doing his best to further the conciliatory tendencies in France represented by Briand's proposal for a European union, and as recently as 3 March, in a debate in the French Chamber on the General Act, Briand had given an assurance that nothing in the nature of an Austro-German *Anschluss* was imminent. Henderson, however, did his best to calm Briand, and the situation was eased when Curtius agreed at the end of March to the British proposal to leave further discussions to the League Council. The failure of the largest Austrian bank, the Credit-Anstalt, on 11 May, made clear the extreme gravity of the Austrian situation, and to that extent justified the Austro-German plan.

The Austrian disaster precipitated a financial catastrophe in Europe which even the British money market could not, for the time, surmount. After 1928 the United States and France not only reduced their export of capital, but began to recall it in large quantities. Great Britain endeavoured to maintain her pre-war functions as the world's leading creditor state, and lent extensively in 1928 and 1929, but by 1930 was already beginning to find difficulties in procuring ready money for foreign loans. British financial policy was very largely determined by the officials of the Bank of England and the Treasury, whose advice had been accepted by Baldwin in the American debt settlement in 1922, and by Churchill when in 1925 the pound was restored to its pre-war gold content. This financial policy aimed at the return to a system of stable foreign exchanges as a basis for the restoration of a stable world economic system; it was accompanied by the attempt to free international trade by the lowering or abolition of tariffs, subsidies, and other restrictions. It appears, however, that the pound was over-valued in 1925; with the world crisis in 1929 it became increasingly clear that the failure of other powers to fall in with the British financial and commercial programmes must necessitate ultimately the adoption by Great Britain of similar methods of economic nationalism.

On 16 June 1931 the Bank of England advanced £4,300,000 to Austria; this helped to prevent a complete collapse, but was carried out without consulting Henderson, who was thereby deprived of a very useful bargaining weapon in the negotiations with France over the Austro-German customs union. The Austrian crisis cast further doubt on the soundness of German finances; in the first half of June the Reichsbank lost £36,000,000. On 5 June the German Government blamed the 'unbearable reparations obligations' for its

desperate position. On 20 June President Hoover proposed a moratorium for one year on all intergovernmental payments. This was promptly accepted by Germany and Great Britain; the psychological effect was, however, spoiled by the French, who delayed their acceptance for a fortnight, and the withdrawals from Germany recommenced. A series of disasters culminated in the failure of the Danat Bank on 13 July; the German Government assumed complete control over the foreign exchange of the country, and in the London Conference (20–23 July) made a final appeal to other powers for help. Dr. Luther, President of the Reichsbank, had found on 9 July that the Bank of England could not save Germany by granting a long-term credit; America's only concern was to withdraw its money from Germany as speedily as possible. France, who had by now built up an enormous gold reserve, could alone supply Germany's needs, and demanded substantial political concessions—such as a specific understanding to refrain from treaty revision during the period of the loan—in return. On 21 July the Nazi leaders informed Brüning by telegraph that they would not recognize such terms. Brüning was forced to leave London without the loan, and Germany had to recognize that its sole hope lay in economic and political self-sufficiency.

Britain was herself involved, by this stage, in the most dramatic of this series of national crises. The Macmillan Report on Finance and Industry was published on 13 July, and was followed by heavy withdrawals of gold to France and Belgium; the Bank of England had lost nearly £45 million in gold by the end of the month, and the reserve had fallen to £133 million. The French gold reserve was now £486 million. On 27 July MacDonald and Henderson, still apparently worrying as much about Germany as about

themselves, arrived in Berlin. Their reception was enthusiastic; there were long conferences, and one of MacDonald's fine speeches at a banquet in the evening. The visit, however, was without result. They returned to London; the House of Commons rose on the 31st, and on 1 August the May Report was published, forecasting a budget deficit of £120 million.

The crisis that followed was more a matter of domestic than of foreign policy, and we can only note the outline of events. There is no doubt that the Government handled the situation badly; no attempt was made to mitigate the effect of the May Report by an accompanying explanation, and it was not, for example, pointed out that the estimated deficit included the provision of £60 million for the Sinking Fund. These questions of high finance were, however, of too esoteric a character for the leaders of any of the political parties, and Snowden certainly seemed unable to enlighten his Labour colleagues. The Report proposed economies in the form of drastic cuts in the social services and unemployment pay. The latter was demanded by the Opposition on the plea of 'equality of sacrifice'; Labour retorted that the more prosperous sections of the community should pay. Henderson was willing to consider a revenue tariff, but Snowden's opposition killed this idea. The Cabinet split on the question of unemployment cuts, and resigned on 24 August; a National Government then took office under Ramsay MacDonald.

RECOVERY

The new Government was so successful in extricating the country from the worst effects of the crisis that it was able to establish itself in office for an indefinite period. On 15 September the Commons adopted its supplementary budget, presented by Snowden; the

sense of crisis suggested by its drastic economies and heavy taxation was strengthened by the 'mutiny' at Invergordon—a refusal of the ratings to put to sea, as a protest against the 10 per cent cut in their pay. The momentary suggestion that England could be saved only by economies which were driving the country to revolution produced a further financial panic abroad; on the assumption that England was probably 'finished as a great power' further vast withdrawals took place; on 21 September the Bank rate was raised to 6 per cent and the gold standard was suspended. After this the overwhelming victory on 27 October of the National Government, with 554 seats, made a correspondingly powerful impression. Confidence in Britain's economic and political strength was restored; this renewed prestige was in itself a factor in the rapid escape of the country from the worst of its embarrassments. The depreciation of the pound sterling to about 70 per cent of its previous value helped exports, and the rapid collection without any political friction of the increased income tax demonstrated the financial strength of the country, although it strengthened the conviction of many Labour supporters that the 'crisis' of the previous autumn had been artificially created to discredit them. The Conservatives seemed equally convinced that Labour had 'let down the country', and it is charitable to assume that all the political groups were to a large extent in the dark as to the real character and extent of the crisis. The conversion in July 1932 of the vast War Loan from 5 to 3½ per cent was a further economy and a further demonstration of national solidarity. The Import Duties Bill of February 1932 imposed protection, and this was followed by the Ottawa Conference in July, which established preference for certain British exports in imperial markets. These and similar measures meant that Great Britain had secured a return to

comparative prosperity by adopting the methods of economic nationalism, thereby utilizing in her emergency a reserve weapon which other powers had already exploited more fully, and could therefore no longer employ with the same immediate success.

The circumstances of its accession to power dominated the foreign policy of the new Government during the next few years, just as surely as the more warlike nationalism of Germany, Italy, and Japan arose from the economic crises of the period. There was in each country a disposition to distrust and retreat from the rather tentative internationalism of the 'twenties, and to seek a return to prosperity by means of a more vigorous utilization of any available national weapons. It was significant that for some years the Chancellorship of the Exchequer appeared to be the most responsible post in the Government, and the success in this office of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who succeeded Snowden after the general election, made him the inevitable choice as Prime Minister after Baldwin's retirement in 1937. The tendencies of the new Government were also shown in its choice of Foreign Secretary. The last phases of Austen Chamberlain's tenure of the Foreign Office had considerably reduced the popularity which the Locarno settlement had brought him; in the interim National Government of September 1931 he went to the Admiralty. The Liberals demanded the Foreign Office as one of the two key positions in the Cabinet; Lord Reading held the position for a few weeks, and was then, after the election, succeeded by Sir John Simon. An able and conscientious lawyer, he mastered with ease the technical problems of current foreign policy; but he was not by temperament a crusader, and his constitutional caution was confirmed by the unwillingness of the new Cabinet to involve itself in any crises and fresh responsibilities abroad. France and the

United States, to whom Great Britain looked principally for collaboration in foreign affairs, adopted a similarly negative and defensive attitude. The result was a temporizing, rather than a short-sighted, policy; at times the new Foreign Secretary seemed primarily interested in clearing his country of the sole responsibility for the deterioration in international relations of the early 'thirties. Great Britain was not, however, primarily to blame for this deterioration, and it is difficult to see how any isolated action on her part could have secured more satisfactory results in the Manchurian and disarmament questions—the two urgent problems which faced the new Government during its first year of office.

THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

The Far Eastern crisis will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter. We may note here that it coincided in a most unfortunate manner with the disarmament discussions. The chance of effective League action in relation to Manchuria had already been seriously reduced by the fact that the League discussions on the question had commenced in September 1931, some weeks before the future of the National Government was assured. A second, and even more alarming, phase of Japanese action began with the bombardment of the Chapei district of Shanghai at the end of January 1932. The opening session of the disarmament conference had been arranged to commence at 3.30 p.m. on 2 February, but had actually to be postponed for an hour so that an emergency meeting of the Council could discuss the situation at Shanghai. The delay was ominous, and it was soon evident that political conditions in other parts of the world would provide similar obstacles to success. The preparatory commission had reached nominal agreement

at the end of 1930, but the draft disarmament convention had only been passed by a majority vote, and in face of the more or less frank disapproval of several powers, particularly Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. No complete agreement had been possible on such questions as budgetary limitation, the position of trained reserves and service troops, the definition of offensive weapons, or the outstanding problems of naval disarmament. Above all, no reconciliation had been found between Germany's demand for equality and France's demand for security, which necessarily implied the maintenance of her existing superiority in land armaments.

By the beginning of 1932 the chances of Franco-German agreement were slight; effective mediation by Great Britain, or possibly by the United States, alone supplied hope of a solution. In happier circumstances Henderson might have secured it. As Foreign Secretary he had established friendly relations with the other two Governments, and at the time of his election to the presidency of the conference it was assumed that he would have the whole technical resources of the British Foreign Office at his disposal. But the fall of the Labour Government, and his very strained relations with Ramsay MacDonald, made it impossible for him to speak for Great Britain; furthermore, his illness in the autumn of 1931 considerably reduced his personal energy and effectiveness. It is possible that a different president—Lord Cecil or General Smuts—might have shown greater skill, and received better support, in securing a Franco-German agreement on the one or two occasions on which it still seemed possible. Sir John Simon's speech at the opening of the conference showed that he had not attempted to secure any such agreement by direct mediation, and was, in fact, content to await events. The new Foreign Secretary was

inexperienced and overworked, and his difficulties were increased by the fact that Britain's thoroughgoing disarmament of land forces after the war had deprived her of a valuable bargaining weapon. The continental powers were inclined to regard this unilateral disarmament, as they had always regarded her unilateral free trade policy, as a condition forced on the Government by internal politics, and one which they need not meet by corresponding concessions.

The opening discussions (8–24 February 1932) served to expose the now familiar differences between the powers. Simon indicated the difference between 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' disarmament; M. Tardieu emphasized the French prerequisite of security, which he proposed to reconcile with disarmament by bringing the guarantee and coercive functions of the League into effective existence. He circulated a 'Plan' which was designed to secure this by means of an international force and the internationalization of civil aviation. Brüning, who received a warmer reception than any other delegate, asked for equality of rights for Germany, but did not suggest a desire or intention to rearm up to the level of other powers, and did not reject the French plan outright. Litvinov made the usual Soviet demand for total disarmament, and then joined the other delegates in laughing heartily at the proposal. He made, however, some shrewd criticisms of the French plan, asking what guarantee there was that an international army 'would not be exploited in the interests of some state which has won for itself a leading position in the international organization?' But from all these speeches no agreement on the fundamental issues seemed likely to emerge, and the reference of the various points to technical commissions merely led the conference to mark time for the next six months. A resolution passed on 20 July was intended

to consolidate such progress as had been made, but it did little more than register a ban on chemical and bacteriological warfare.

The essential problem was, of course, that of German armaments. The French Government had ample reason to fear them, and its distrust was increased by the elaborate dossier on Germany's secret rearmament which it was tempted to publish on several occasions during the conference. France at the moment was the strongest military and financial power in Europe, and the Government was determined to maintain its superiority over Germany until French security was guaranteed by Great Britain, the League, or otherwise. Unfortunately the only effective guarantee of French security would have been a peaceful and satisfied Germany, and timely concessions might have confirmed in office the more moderate régime which was now fighting its last battles with the more irreconcilable Nationalist and Nazi elements. An opportunity for an agreement occurred in April, when Mr. Stimson, the American Secretary of State, visited Geneva, and was followed there by representatives of France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. Brüning made proposals which, in the light of subsequent German demands, were surprisingly moderate; he wanted to increase the Reichswehr to 150,000, to reduce the period of service from twelve years to six, and to create a militia army of 50,000 men with three months' service. Stimson and MacDonald were favourably impressed by these proposals; but when Tardieu was invited to visit Geneva on 28 April to discuss them he declined on the ground of ill health. The French Government was facing an election, and concessions would have been particularly embarrassing to it; the British and American Governments should, nevertheless, have done everything in their power to secure France's agreement. Nothing

effective was done to follow up the German proposal, and Brüning's Cabinet was succeeded in June by von Papen's 'Cabinet of Barons'.

The new German Government almost at once secured a success which might have saved Brüning. A conference under the presidency of MacDonald met at Lausanne on 16 June to consider the situation which would arise when the Hoover moratorium on reparations and war debt payments ended. The result was the abolition of reparations, except for the delivery by Germany of bonds to the value of £150 million. This decision was a proof of the conciliatory disposition of the new French Government under Herriot, and the history of Europe might have been very different if it had been in office at the time of Brüning's offer in April. An agreement on 2 July made the settlement dependent on the satisfactory adjustment of the Allies' war debts with America, and this meant in effect the indefinite suspension, and virtual repudiation, of war debt payments. On 1 December 1932 a British statement of the whole case against war debts was forwarded to the United States; the Government made token payments in June and December 1933, but as America was not prepared to accept this expedient, or to discuss a scaling of the payments, no further British instalments were sent. In spite of the very weighty technical arguments that could be advanced against continued payments, there was considerable popular irritation in the United States against these defaults.

The von Papen Cabinet followed up its success on the reparations issue by withdrawing from the disarmament conference in September in protest against the continued withholding of recognition of her claims to equality. This at last produced a definite step forward, and on 11 December 1932 a five-power conference at Geneva (between France, Germany, Italy, the United

States, and Great Britain) produced a declaration recognizing Germany's claim to 'equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations'. Although 'equality' was thus reconciled with 'security' the powers were as far as ever from a practical scheme of disarmament, and it was not until the following March (1933) that the British Government, in a desperate effort to save the conference, presented the powers with a precise scheme. This was mainly the work of Mr. Anthony Eden, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the British technical advisers at Geneva. Its merit was that it presented the conference with a draft convention containing exact proposals and figures; it included the French plan of short-service armies, gave suggested figures for the size of armies, limited war-material on a qualitative basis, banned military and naval aircraft completely, and proposed a permanent disarmament commission with wide powers of inspection. The plan was presented by MacDonald on 16 March, and the first reactions were decidedly favourable. But in the subsequent discussions point after point was criticized; the Germans in particular were not prepared to give up the long-term army which had been forced on them by the Versailles treaty, and which they had come to like. In any case the accession to office of Hitler in January had already placed European politics on a new footing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAR EAST, 1929–33

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE EMPIRE, 1921–31

IN two previous chapters (II and III) the post-war settlement has been discussed in its relation to the British Empire. The next ten years provided a period of relative calm between the international storms, and British Governments took advantage of it to attempt to solve the more pressing of the nationalist problems inside the Empire. Considerable progress was made at the same time in the elaboration of plans of imperial defence. The position was, for the British Government, one of considerable difficulty and embarrassment. In the Near East, India, and China the demand for reduction or complete abolition of the white man's control and privileges appeared in a variety of forms, and was not always representative of the preponderant native feeling, or just to the character of British rule or of its economic contacts. The simple demand for 'freedom', backed up by a certain amount of revolutionary violence, helped to create, in the minds of liberal-minded Englishmen, a picture of the Empire as the scene of unrelieved oppression and exploitation, and to hurry British Governments into unduly precipitate surrenders of responsibility. The Government knew well enough that the purely economic interests of the country could often be better served by the setting up of independent native administrations: such a withdrawal might, however, leave the way open to the advancing imperialism of other powers, a development from which both the British and the Asiatic might suffer. The temptation to seek a basis of accommodation with these rival imperialisms was, however,

very strong. Could Great Britain bear indefinitely the main burden of defending dominions, colonies, and dependencies in every part of the world? The Imperial Conference of 1923 laid down that each part of the Commonwealth should bear the main responsibility for its own local defence; it provided for adequate facilities to safeguard the maritime communications of the Empire, and noted the vital importance to India, New Zealand, and Australia of a naval base at Singapore. Each of the Dominions tended, however, to object to an active imperial policy which did not directly defend its own interests.

In 1921 South Africa accepted responsibility for the land defences of the naval base at Simonstown, which the Admiralty could use at all times. General Hertzog characterized the Union's relation to the base as an international servitude, similar to the relation of Spain to Gibraltar. The construction of a first-class naval base at Singapore was planned in 1919; it was postponed for some time owing to the Washington Conference, and work had not gone very far when the Labour Government shelved the scheme in 1924. It was restarted by the Baldwin Government in 1925, suspended again by the Labour Government in 1929, and again restarted, this time by the National Government, in 1931. The base did not become really effective until 1938. In diplomacy, as in war, attack may be a legitimate means of defence, and it was extremely difficult for British Governments to build up in the 'twenties the chain of fortifications and friendships—either with individual powers or through the League—which would guarantee the Empire effectively against the probable dangers of the near future. The main achievements of British imperial policy in this period were negative, and consisted in the judicious removal of actual and potential causes of internal friction.

In Egypt, Great Britain proposed a treaty whereby she should guarantee the independence and integrity of the country in return for the right to defend the imperial communications and other interests, but this was rejected by the Wafd in November 1921. The assassination of Sir Lee Stack, the Sirdar and Governor-General of the Sudan, in November 1924, was followed by an ultimatum which had the effect of postponing any further measures of self-government, and when another draft treaty was presented in 1928 it was again rejected. In May 1930, however, an agreement was reached whereby Great Britain recognized Egypt's independence, and right to join the League of Nations, and an alliance was established. British troops were allowed to remain in the Suez Canal zone, but no agreement could be reached concerning the Egyptian Sudan. There was a somewhat similar course of events in Irak. The delay in the settlement of the Near East in 1919 caused the wildest suspicion of British intentions, and this was only partly removed when the military occupation ended in October 1920 with the return of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner. Feisal, the famous son of the King of the Hejaz, was made king, with overwhelming popular support, in August 1921. Great Britain, as the mandatory power, retained the ultimate word in the government, and in September 1925, after an acute Anglo-Turkish crisis, a League commission of inquiry recommended that the Mosul vilayet should go to Irak if the mandate were continued for twenty-five years. The Labour Government's success in Egypt was accompanied by a similar improvement of relations with Irak; in the autumn of 1929 the Iraki Government was informed that Great Britain was prepared to support unconditionally its admission to the League. The admission took place on 3 October 1932. Great Britain had thus fulfilled its obligation

under the 'A' mandates to prepare the mandated area to 'stand alone'.

In India, as in Irak, nationalist demands for independence tended to cast doubt on the genuineness of the British promise of eventual self-government, and to represent any references to internal dissension or political immaturity as insulting and hypocritical attempts to evade substantial concessions. These developments lie outside the scope of the present work, and it need only be noted that, in accordance with the Montagu–Chelmsford scheme of 1919, a British parliamentary commission with Sir John Simon as chairman presented a report in May 1930 which recommended the establishment of self-government (in place of diarchy) in the provinces, the separation of Burma from India, and a strengthening of the native element on the central legislature. After a series of round-table conferences in London (1930–2) and further discussions in India, the Government of India Act of 1935 introduced the Federation of India on lines considerably in advance of the proposals of 1930.

In China also the British had been engaged for some years before 1931 in judicious, though perhaps not very enthusiastic, negotiations concerning the restriction of their privileged position. The Kuomintang, or People's party, had made its views known to the powers at Washington in 1921, and in 1925, after the death of its leader, Sun Yat-sen, at Peiping (Peking), a split had appeared between the Communist section and the more conservative elements under General Chiang Kai-shek. The two wings held together during the triumphal progress of the Nationalist army north to the Yangtze valley in 1926, but before the last remaining opponent, Chang Tso-lin, the war lord of Manchuria, could be dealt with, the struggle within the party came to a head. Chiang Kai-shek was prepared to come to terms

with the foreign interests, and in return for financial support to find a way by peaceful negotiations to the revision of the 'unequal treaties'. In December 1926 the British Legation in Peiping announced its sympathy with the aims of the new Nationalist Government, and Mr. Miles Lampson, the British minister, went to Hankow to negotiate with the Kuomintang. To frustrate this *rapprochement* of Chiang and the right wing with the foreign capitalists, the Communists launched violent anti-foreign campaigns, which produced an attack on the British Concession at Hankow on 3 January 1927. The British, however, showed great restraint; they recognized the Government set up by Chiang in Nanking, and in February undertook to surrender the concession at Hankow to Chinese control. The Communists also stirred up anti-foreign riots in Nanking and Shanghai. The British forces at Shanghai were strengthened, but the British troops and authorities continued to show restraint; a civil war broke out between the two wings of the Kuomintang, and in July 1927, after Chiang Kai-shek had gained the upper hand, the Russian adviser Borodin was expelled.

After the capture of Peiping in June 1928 by the Nationalists, and the formal recognition of the Nationalist Government under Chiang Kai-shek, there was no repetition of Anglo-Chinese tension comparable with that of the period 1925–7. But there was no certainty that another internal crisis in the Kuomintang might not drive Chiang Kai-shek from office, and his prestige in the party necessitated a somewhat high-handed bearing in his dealings with foreign powers. He was not likely to demand anything so drastic as the surrender of leased territory (such as Hong Kong), but he pressed the treaty powers to relinquish or modify their rights in respect of such matters as extra-territoriality and tariff restrictions. The comparatively

slow progress of these negotiations led the Nanking Government on 28 December 1929 to abrogate all extra-territorial privileges of foreigners as from 1 January 1930. Negotiations, however, continued, in spite of further unilateral declarations by the Chinese, and a draft treaty had been drawn up, but not signed, just at the time of the Mukden incident. The report of Mr. Justice Feetham on the future of the International Settlement at Shanghai was published in two parts in April and June 1931, and recommended the ultimate rendition of the settlement to Chinese control, although it also laid down that the objections to immediate action were overwhelming.

Thus it is not perhaps surprising that for the British community in Shanghai, and for the Foreign Office in London, the threat to the established position and vested interests of the British in China provided in 1931 a more obvious and immediate source of anxiety than the future policy of Japan. The death of a young Englishman, John Thorburn, who after shooting two Chinese gendarmes was himself shot dead a week later during cross-examination by Colonel Huang Chen-wu, helped considerably at this critical period to increase Anglo-Chinese tension.

JAPAN AND CHINA

There had been before September 1931 no serious departure by Japan from the pacific foreign policy which she had followed since the Washington Conference; the Minseito party, whose opposition to financial and foreign adventures attracted both the heavy industrialists and the liberal idealists, had been in office since 1929, and had succeeded for two years in maintaining towards China a 'policy of conciliation' which had much in common with that of Great Britain in the same area in this period. Both Governments

saw clearly enough the futility of attempting to maintain their vast economic interests by force, or by an uncompromising insistence on the letter of 'unequal' treaties; both had to face the clamour of military and business elements who were equally convinced that an uncompromising attitude, backed if necessary by force, could alone maintain and strengthen the country's interests. It was inevitable that the Japanese Government should find it harder to resist this pressure than the British: the policy of the Chinese Nationalists towards the Japanese was more provocative, Japanese interests in Manchuria and North China were relatively greater, and geographical proximity magnified the effects of 'incidents' on Japanese public opinion.

The tendency in some British circles to regard Japanese aggression with complacency was, however, undoubtedly short-sighted. The many difficulties through which Japan had to pass from 1929 to 1931 did not result merely in an isolated outburst of military exasperation in Manchuria; it meant the establishment in power of the military and big business elements favourable to an expansionist policy, and therefore launched Japan on a phase of aggression which made her a much greater and more consistent danger to British interests than the Chinese Nationalists were likely to be. The world economic crisis produced a catastrophic drop in the export trade on which Japan's ill-balanced economic system largely depended; raw silk, her chief export in raw materials, was severely hit in the U.S.A., its best market, and there was a total decline in her export trade from 2,100,000 yen in 1929 to 1,118,000 in 1931. The private soldier and officer classes in the army were largely recruited from the peasantry and small landed gentry, and the agricultural depression supplied a powerful incentive to the discovery of a dramatic solution by military adventure.

Manchuria offered an accessible, and apparently profitable, field. Here Chang Tso-lin's son and successor, the 'young Marshal' Chang Hsueh-liang, after coming to terms with the Nanking Government in December 1928, had hoisted the Kuomintang flag. In 1929 he seized control of the Chinese Eastern Railway, on the ground that the Soviet management had engaged in Communist intrigues; but the Soviet forces replied with substantial military raids into Manchuria, and after heavy defeats Chang gave in completely. In dealing with Japanese interests he was less directly provocative, and the 'conciliatory' policy of the Japanese Foreign Minister, Baron Shidehara, between 1929 and 1931, encouraged the belief that the anti-Japanese programme could be pushed with impunity. The chief expedient was the construction of a Chinese railway system which, properly developed and manipulated, would ruin the South Manchurian Railway Company.

At the end of June a Japanese officer, Captain Nakamura, and his three assistants, were murdered in Manchuria by Chinese soldiers; at the beginning of July the Wanpaoshan affair, a riot arising from a dispute between Korean and Chinese farmers in Manchuria, led to anti-Chinese riots in Korea with over five hundred Chinese casualties, and a revival of the anti-Japanese boycott in China. The Japanese claimed that three hundred other incidents remained unsettled, and although Baron Shidehara still clung to the policy of 'conciliation' the Japanese military authorities now decided to seek direct methods of settlement. On the night of 18–19 September, following a further incident in the shape of an explosion on the South Manchurian Railway, the Japanese troops seized without any real fighting the barracks, arsenal, and aerodrome at Mukden; within four days various strategical points in the railway zone and beyond it had been seized, and

by the beginning of 1932 Japanese troops were in effective military occupation of the whole of Southern Manchuria. Very little resistance came from Chang Hsueh-liang, who had, a fortnight before the Mukden incident, warned the garrison there against injudicious retaliation to Japanese acts of provocation, and who now withdrew his army south of the Great Wall. There was, however, more resistance in the north and north-west, both from Chinese regulars and guerrillas, and this resistance kept the Japanese forces busy throughout 1932.

THE LEAGUE AND THE 'MUKDEN INCIDENT'

The Mukden incident provided the first major crisis in foreign affairs of the new National Government in Great Britain, and its representatives were called upon to play an active part in the international discussions at Geneva before the future of the Government was assured by its election victory on 27 October. The sympathy for Japanese action among the dominant element in the British community in China influenced, and was supported by, similar pro-Japanese feeling in various 'big business' and professional circles in England; the traditional friendship with Japan, the irritation caused by nationalist opposition to the British in India and China, and the warnings of military and naval experts, all served to render uncongenial any idea of military or economic coercion of the Japanese. In the country at large the fact of aggression and its significance as a blow to the principles of the League destroyed all possible sympathy with Japan's action, and even in circles nearer to the Government there was much alarm as to the probable consequences, both to the world in general and to British interests in particular, of this deliberate flouting by a great power of the principles of collective security. This did not;

however, produce any precise or spontaneous demand for the imposition of sanctions, and it was clear that to the majority of Englishmen the maintenance of peace still meant primarily the avoidance of any policy that might lead to war. The economic crisis at home and in Europe also helped to distract attention from the Far East. It has been pointed out that Japan's military resources were quite as badly hit by the crisis as were Great Britain's; but although this reduces the validity of this excuse for inaction by the British Government it does not alter the fact that British public opinion was hardly in the mood for a crisis overseas.

The only other League power whose interests and military resources were strong enough for her to play an effective part in the imposition of sanctions in the Far East was France, but here also the Government showed no desire to incur such responsibility. The Governments of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. made it clear as the crisis developed that they were only too ready to approve any action that the League might take in restraint of Japan, but the British Government remained convinced that nothing beyond diplomatic action could be expected from either. All this meant that if the British Government had felt sufficient alarm at Japan's action to urge and secure the imposition of economic sanctions it would have had to bear the main brunt of the fighting if a war with Japan had followed. The renunciation by Great Britain and U.S.A. at the Washington Conference of the right to build new fortifications and naval bases at various points in the western Pacific would have made it difficult for either power to make effective use of the naval superiority over the Japanese which each possessed on paper. Certainly there seemed little hope in this case of restraining the aggressor by the overwhelming concentration of economic and military strength which the

authors of Article 16 of the Covenant had depended upon to make war virtually impossible.

All these considerations predisposed the British Government to seek to localize the conflict, and to extenuate, if not to condone, Japanese action. On 21 September the Chinese Government addressed appeals to the United States Government, and, through its representative at Geneva, Mr. Sze, to the League under Article 11. This authorized any member to bring to the attention of the Assembly or of the Council any circumstance which threatened to disturb international peace. On the following day the matter was debated at a special meeting of the Council, and the Japanese delegate, whose general bearing reflected the conciliatory attitude of Baron Shidehara, deprecated 'premature intervention' by the League, and maintained that a pacific solution could best be achieved by direct negotiations between the two Governments concerned. The Council had little hesitation in following the lead of the British delegate, Lord Robert Cecil. He proposed that the League should follow the procedure that it had adopted in the Græco-Bulgarian dispute in 1925, and in similar conflicts, and should concentrate its efforts in the first instance on stopping hostilities, and persuading the combatants to return to their respective frontiers; until this was done the settlement of the merits of the dispute would not arise. An appeal was therefore made to the two Governments to refrain from any action which might aggravate the situation, and to find means to withdraw their troops immediately.

At the same time Lord Robert Cecil pointed out that the dispute was affected by the Washington Pact and Kellogg treaty, to which the United States was a party, and he therefore proposed that an account of all the proceedings of the Council relating to the

dispute should be submitted to the United States Government. This move met with a favourable response from Washington; on 22 September the Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, had addressed a note to the Japanese ambassador which stated that responsibility for liquidating the situation rested largely upon Japan, and he now announced that his Government was in wholehearted sympathy with the action taken by the Council in the dispute. But the United States Government was not prepared to join in the immediate dispatch of a commission of inquiry in accordance with the Græco-Bulgarian precedent of 1925, and in his address to the Council on 25 September Lord Cecil retreated from this precedent. To some observers this early indication of a divergence between America and the League was decisive: it was followed by a hardening of the Japanese position, and the crucial moment, when Japan might still have been overawed by world opinion, passed. But it is by no means certain that even in the first week the Japanese Government had the power to control the army. It certainly remained politely unhelpful throughout; while continuing to protest desire for a satisfactory settlement, it did not withdraw its troops, and it was clearly determined to limit itself to direct negotiations with the Chinese.

The Council adjourned for a fortnight on 30 September, after passing a unanimous resolution recording the Japanese Government's repudiation of territorial ambitions in Manchuria, and its promise to continue, as rapidly as possible, the withdrawal of its troops into the railway zone. During the next fortnight, however, the Japanese continued, equally rapidly, to advance; the Commander-in-Chief, General Honjo, announced that Chang Hsueh-liang's Government would no longer receive recognition, and on 8 October Chinchow, the seat of the provincial Government, was bombed

from the air. The League found some consolation in the favourable attitude of Washington. On 11 October Stimson sent to Tokyo a strongly worded memorandum concerning Japanese activities; on 16 October, following an invitation from the Council, Mr. Prentiss Gilbert, the United States consul at Geneva, took his seat at the Council meeting. The wisdom of this course has been questioned; the presence of an American representative did not, in practice, give the League any more support in the United States than it had had before, and may indeed have alarmed the isolationists; on the other hand it gave the Japanese, who had opposed the invitation on constitutional grounds, a sense of grievance which stiffened their attitude during October.

When the session ended on 24 October it was clear that the Council was rapidly approaching disaster. On the 22nd a resolution was proposed calling on Japan to complete her evacuation by 16 November, after which the two interested powers should begin direct negotiations. The resolution was lost owing to the adverse vote of Japan, who demanded the reversal of the suggested order of procedure. When the Council again assembled on 16 November there was no sign of the desired evacuation, and the United States delegate, General Dawes, did not take a seat in the Council, although he remained in close touch with its activities. As the breakdown of the technique of localization and appeasement under Article 11 could no longer be concealed the Council appeared to be faced with the imminent necessity of decisive action—even if this took merely the form of a declaration of impotence. But it was saved by the decision, arising from a proposal of the Japanese delegate on 21 November, that the League of Nations should send a commission of inquiry to the spot.

The acceptance of this proposal by a resolution of the Council on 10 December necessarily involved the indefinite postponement of any possible coercive measures, and must be regarded as the decisive event in the history of the international discussions on the Manchurian question. By this stage the fact of Japanese aggression was obvious enough, and the willingness of the dominant powers on the Council to postpone the consideration of effective action for several more months implied their conscious abandonment of any real attempt to influence the Manchurian situation. The Commission, which consisted of five members, representing Great Britain, the United States, France, Germany, and Italy, sailed for the Far East early in February, after a protest from Dr. W. W. Yen, the new Chinese delegate at Geneva, at the delay in its departure.

The Council's resolution on 10 December reaffirmed the promise of China and Japan 'to adopt all measures necessary to avoid any further aggravation of the situation'; the Japanese operations, however, went rapidly ahead, and Chinchow was occupied on 3 January 1932. The setting up of local, and nominally Chinese, governments in various parts of Manchuria had already indicated before the end of 1931 that the future government of the area would probably be nominally Chinese, but would be completely dominated by Japan. On 7 January 1932 Stimson presented to the Japanese and Chinese Governments a note announcing that the United States Government would not admit the legality of any situation *de facto*, nor recognize any treaty or agreement between the two Governments which might impair the treaty rights of the United States or its citizens in China. The effectiveness of this doctrine of non-recognition was greatly impaired by the muddle which arose between London and Washington in its

enunciation. The British Government could not immediately make a similar declaration, as it had to act in concert with the other League powers. A note to this effect was sent to Stimson on 9 January. An official British *communiqué*, published on 11 January, was unfortunately worded, and gave the impression of a distinct rebuff to the United States Government. It stated that the British Government stood by the policy of the open door for international trade in Manchuria, and that, as Japan had explicitly stated, as recently as 28 December, that she would adhere to this policy, the British Government had not considered it necessary to address any formal note to the Japanese Government on the lines of the American Government's note.

The failure of the British Government to follow the American lead at this moment has frequently been criticized, and has helped to form in the United States the wholly untenable view that the willingness of the American Government to take effective action against Japan was ruined by Great Britain. The fact is that neither Government was prepared to resort to an economic boycott or military action, and both hoped that the exercise of moral pressure, and the mobilization of world opinion, would provide an adequate substitute. For Great Britain the League supplied the obvious machinery for this type of action, and the League had not (rightly or wrongly) arrived at the beginning of 1932 at a complete breach with Japan. The United States Government, on the other hand, felt that the possibility of inducing Japan to adopt a more moderate policy had passed, and that the time had come for a definite stand and assertion by the United States of its rights, on the model of the non-recognition warning addressed to Japan in 1915. Later it became clear that Stimson regarded the non-recognition doctrine as a moral force which, if adopted by the civilized world,

would supply a substitute for sanctions and effectively check Japanese aggression. Obviously, however, it was unwise of him to proceed to enunciate this doctrine publicly in circumstances which made almost impossible immediate support by the League powers. This failure to secure effective co-ordination between the United States and the League was due in part to the fact that no machinery existed for American co-operation in the League's procedure against aggression; in part to the fact that isolationist sentiment in the United States tempted the Government to resist aggression in a style of its own. The British *communiqué* of 9 January is said to have been drafted by the permanent officials at one o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and was clearly intended only to mean that the Government had to continue to support the League procedure; the fact that the United States Government had not attempted, before taking this new step, to secure the approval of the League Council, probably strengthened the impression in London that the move was one of limited importance, in defence of American interests only.

This does not alter the fact that Washington was right to argue that further appeals to Tokyo would be useless, and the British *communiqué* received a welcome in some parts of the British Press which revealed the sympathy for Japanese action which still existed in some circles in London. It is clear enough to-day that if the British Government believed that Japanese action would stop short of the point at which British interests were threatened it had misjudged, or shut its eyes to, the realities of the situation. It does not follow that it was deliberately seeking to ingratiate itself with the Japanese Government by allowing the U.S.A. to assume the sole responsibility for decisive language. It is probably nearer the truth to say that it was without a policy: sympathy for Japan was beginning to be

replaced by fear for the future of the British economic interests in Manchuria, but at the moment these had not been attacked, and an open declaration of hostility might stampede the Japanese into measures of retaliation.

Every effort was, however, made to support the mild but independent line followed by Washington. The Council assembled on 25 January; on 29 January it drew up a declaration which referred to the American note of 7 January, and stated that it would be impossible for the League to endorse a settlement secured by methods at variance with the treaties referred to by the American Government, or under Article 10 of the Covenant. This declaration was followed by further assertions of the doctrine of non-recognition by the Council on 16 February and by the Assembly on 11 March.

SHANGHAI

An extension of the Sino-Japanese dispute provided a further field for Anglo-American co-operation. At the end of January hostilities broke out between the Chinese and Japanese forces at Shanghai, and at the same time the Chinese Government issued a fresh appeal to the League, invoking this time Articles 10 and 15. These developments were a sign of the growing exasperation of both parties; the resistance of the Chinese at Shanghai, and the imposition of a further boycott on Japanese goods, made it clear that the Chinese Nationalists were by no means cowed. After five Japanese had been wounded in Shanghai on 18 January the Japanese consul-general presented demands for reparations and for the immediate dissolution of all anti-Japanese organizations; the failure of the Chinese authorities to accept the latter demand was followed by the landing of Japanese reinforcements, the

Chinese area of Chapei was largely destroyed by incendiary bombs on 29 January, on 1 February Japanese warships bombarded Nanking, and on the 20th large-scale fighting began when the Japanese attempted to drive the Chinese troops out of the Settlement. Although the Chinese were ultimately dislodged, they held their position until 3 March, and their stubborn resistance to the hitherto invincible Japanese had a valuable psychological effect throughout China. The United States Government showed its disapproval of Japanese action by sending to Shanghai the American Asiatic Squadron and a regiment from the Philippines; at the end of January Stimson proposed that the British and American Governments should make representations to Japan concerning the situation in the city. He refused, however, to appoint a representative to the consular committee of inquiry constituted by the League Council at Shanghai. The two powers declared through their ambassadors in Tokyo that they could not approve the use of the Settlement except for defensive purposes; on 2 February Mr. J. H. Thomas declared at Geneva that his Government felt it to be impossible 'that the present situation in the Far East should be allowed to continue'. Through their representatives in Shanghai the two powers endeavoured to arrange for a truce, and later for the mutual withdrawal of the rival forces. Formal negotiations began on 9 March, with Sir Miles Lampson as the representative of the neutral powers, and an armistice agreement was finally signed on 5 May. It provided for the 're-establishment of normal conditions', and the bulk of the Japanese forces were duly withdrawn by 31 May.

THE POWERS AND MANCHUKUO

It would be a mistake to assume that a similar display of firmness and energy by the British Government

would have secured the withdrawal of the Japanese troops in Manchuria; the willingness of the Japanese to bring the Shanghai incident to a close was due primarily to the fact that it had never been more than a sideshow. On 18 February the North-Eastern Administrative Council, a body of Chinese officials amenable to Japanese control, issued a declaration of Manchurian independence, and during the next three weeks the state of 'Manchukuo', with the ex-Emperor, Mr. Henry Pu-Yi, as President, was formally established. It was at once apparent that its independence was merely nominal, and that, behind a façade of more or less complaisant Chinese officialdom, real power was in the hands of the Japanese Army. The appointment of Japanese 'advisers' in Government departments, industrial enterprises, and public utilities, secured to the Japanese the effective control of the political and economic machinery, while the nominal independence of the new state helped to stifle the criticism of the League, and of the more timid and more scrupulous in Japan, and also enabled the Japanese to put an end to the operation in Manchuria of such Chinese public services as the Maritime Customs, the Salt Gabelle, and the Post Office.

A further attempt by Stimson to overawe Japan by means of the policy of non-recognition was made in February. As in January, his proposal really amounted to an invitation to Great Britain to join the United States in action independent of, though not necessarily detrimental to, the League. The proposal, approved by President Hoover on 8 February, was that the Nine-Power Pact of 1922 should be invoked against Japan. The matter was discussed with the British ambassador on 9 February, and, between the 11th and the 15th, Stimson had several conversations by transatlantic telephone with Sir John Simon in Geneva and London.

On receiving the draft of Stimson's proposal the British Government drafted a paragraph containing the non-recognition doctrine, and this was embodied in the declaration issued by the twelve members of the League Council on 16 February; at the same time a written reply to Washington expressed the British Government's anxiety to co-operate with the United States in the matter, and the hope that League powers signatory to the Nine-Power treaty would also associate themselves with the joint invocation of the treaty. It would seem that the next step should have been a series of approaches by the United States to the other signatories; Stimson appears, however, to have decided not to proceed with his plan, and instead published his proposals in the form of a letter to Senator Borah of 24 February. Later, writing in 1936, he said that his conversations with Simon convinced him 'that the British Government felt reluctant to join in such a *démarche*. . . . The British nonjoinder obviously killed the possibility of any such *démarche*. . . . For several days I was deeply discouraged at my inability to carry out the co-operative plan which we had suggested.'

There seems to be confusion here between Britain's support of the doctrine of non-recognition, and her support of the procedure described as 'invoking the Nine-Power Pact'. The former was given promptly enough; the latter was not excluded, although it was obviously important to avoid any impression in Tokyo that the League procedure had been put aside. At the most the difference was one of method, and there seems no justification for the conclusion, which has sometimes been drawn from Stimson's words, that but for British inaction the United States would have proceeded to lead the world in some further and more effective campaign against Japanese aggression. Official statements in Washington deprecated the idea of an official

boycott of Japan as likely to lead to war; unofficial attempts in the States to organize boycotts of Japanese goods received little support, and were soon abandoned. In a speech on 8 August 1932 Stimson himself expressed pleasure at the support of the non-recognition doctrine by the League Assembly in March. 'Never before has international opinion been so organized and mobilized.'

The Council of the League on 16 February had warned Japan that it considered that no change in the political independence of any member state brought about by the infringement of Article 10 ought to be recognized as valid by other members of the League, and a special Assembly, convened on 3 March at China's request, resolved on 11 March that members should not recognize any situation brought about by means contrary to the Covenant or to the Pact of Paris. This resolution was drafted and proposed to the Assembly by Sir John Simon, although British official pronouncements were noticeably more cautious than those of the smaller states who had been able to make their own views known as a result of the meeting of the Assembly, and who could denounce aggression without having to fight it themselves. The Assembly was mainly concerned with the Shanghai question, and after the satisfactory settlement of this in May no further step of importance was taken until the publication of the Lytton report on 1 October.

The Japanese Government, which had hitherto maintained a pretence of reserved judgment towards Manchukuo, granted *de jure* recognition to the new state on 15 September, and at the same time asked for at least six weeks' delay in order to send to Geneva its observations, and a special delegate. The delay was granted, and the Council discussed the report from 21 to 28 November. The report, while recognizing

the substance of some of the Japanese grievances, rejected the various Japanese pretexts for invading Manchuria, denied that the state of Manchukuo was in any real sense independent, and proposed that an autonomous régime should be set up under Chinese sovereignty. A special Assembly on 24 February 1933 presented a report which followed the recommendation of the Lytton commission, although its condemnation of Japan was not presented in language which would have pointed directly to sanctions. The Japanese Government continued to insist on the maintenance of the new régime, and on the settlement of all differences by direct Sino-Japanese negotiations, and after the voting of the report the Japanese delegate withdrew from the Assembly; on 27 March Japan announced her resignation from the League.

So, for practical purposes, ended the unheroic episode of the League's handling of the first major challenge to its existence. Great Britain's responsibility was great; as the only League member among the three great 'neutral' powers directly concerned she was in a position to dictate the course of the League's policy, and the line that it followed during the crisis had been only as bold as British caution would allow. That Japan now felt little cause for apprehension was shown by her further offensive against Jehol, the mountainous province north of Peiping and the Great Wall; on 12 January 1933 the Japanese War Office claimed Jehol on behalf of Manchukuo, and when Japanese troops entered the province on 25 February resistance collapsed very rapidly. In April the Japanese troops crossed the Great Wall, and were in a position to threaten Peiping; the Nanking Government brought temporary relief by signing on 31 May the Tangku truce, which provided for the demilitarization, and therefore the Chinese evacuation, of an area of about

5,000 square miles on the Chinese side of the Great Wall. For a short period—from 28 February to 13 March 1933—the British Government imposed an embargo on the shipment of arms to both China and Japan, but no other state followed its example, and the League's action petered out with the appointment of an advisory committee to follow the situation and concert action between member states and with non-members. Of the latter the U.S.A. appointed a non-voting representative; the U.S.S.R. declined to participate.

Any criticism of the British Government's role which fails to take into account the virtual impossibility of effective action by the League is largely beside the point. Article 16 was not invoked by China, and the imposition of effective economic sanctions would have been impossible without the co-operation of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. Neither power contemplated even this much action, and there was equally little willingness for action from such interested states as Holland, France, Canada, and Australia. In each country it was felt that the faults were not entirely on Japan's side, and that in any case her preoccupation with the assimilation of Manchuria would be a welcome diversion of the danger of Japanese aggression against themselves. In these circumstances it is hardly possible to blame Great Britain for not embarking on a policy of coercion in the name of the League: such isolated activity could not in any sense be described as collective action, and although the British Government's lukewarm attitude in the early stages of the crisis may have damped the ardour of some of the League members it cannot be said to have altered the fundamentals of the situation.

It is easier to criticize the Government's interpretation of the facts. It professed its satisfaction with

Japanese assurances regarding the maintenance of the Open Door in Manchuria, and seemed to assume that if it avoided any very serious or open breach with the Japanese Government it would be able to get along well enough with it in the future. A year or two was to elapse before its error became obvious.

PART III

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE DISSATISFIED POWERS, 1933–9

CHAPTER IX

GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY, 1933–5

ON 30 January 1933 Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich as head of a coalition ministry which included nine non-Nazis under the leadership of Papen and Hugenberg, representing the Nationalist Right. During February the bewildered and panicky electorate was bombarded by the Nazis with furious denunciations of the Red Peril, and of Bolshevik plots; all meetings of the Communist party were banned; on the 27th the Reichstag building was largely destroyed by fire. Even so the Nazis could only secure 288 seats, representing 43·9 per cent of the total votes cast, at the elections on 5 March. The real extinction of the older parties came when they all, with the exception of the Social Democrats, voted in support of the act of 23 March which conferred dictatorial powers on the Cabinet. The Reichstag and Reichsrat soon became all-Nazi assemblies, and after the death of Hindenburg on 2 August 1934 the offices of Chancellor and President were combined in the person of Adolf Hitler.

The new dictator, as leader of the Germany of 1933, did not control resources more powerful than those at the command of Stalin in the U.S.S.R., or display a will to power more grimly persistent than that of Mussolini in Italy. But Soviet foreign policy was now unquestionably pacific, and Italy's limited economic resources made her at most a nuisance rather than a danger to British security. The new German régime

combined aggressive intention with powerful war-potential, and Hitler became at once the greatest personal problem of British diplomacy.

Yet the exact nature of this problem was difficult to determine. The writings and speeches of Hitler and his supporters, both before and after his assumption of office, supplied such a profusion of ambitions—many of them mutually exclusive—that any precise conclusions were difficult to draw. The official programme of the National Socialist party was adopted in 1920, and the two volumes of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925 and 1927, greatly elaborated the programme and expounded the political philosophy on which it was based. The latter—particularly in its references to the Jews—contained so much pure moonshine that it is easy to ignore the fact that it also put forward a coherent scheme of foreign policy, and insisted on the necessity for caution and adaptability in putting the programme into effect. His plan for the future of Germany was the union of all people of German 'race' in a great German state, and the acquisition of control over further territory for the maintenance and future expansion of the German people. This additional territory must be sought at the expense of Russia. 'We put an end to the perpetual Germanic march towards the South and West of Europe and turn our eyes towards the lands of the East.' The Jew had now taken the place of the Germanic nucleus to which Russia owed its livelihood in the past; the Jew is 'a ferment of decomposition', and consequently 'this colossal Empire in the East is ripe for dissolution'. Hitler believed that the only power which would be irreconcilably opposed to this expansion was France: she was and would remain 'the implacable enemy of Germany'. Ultimately a 'final reckoning with France' would have to be sought; for this purpose he hoped to

secure the support of France's former allies, Italy and, in particular, England.

In 1921, and for some years after, his public speeches revealed the violent anti-British feeling of the war years. 'Who now believes that England ever cared about establishing the freedom of small nations, since it has robbed the greatest cultural people of the earth, Germany, of the last remains of its freedom?' he exclaimed in 1921. In the second volume of *Mein Kampf*, however, the possibility of alliance with England was carefully explored. Great Britain would not wish France's position on the Continent to be so absolutely assured—owing to the dismemberment of the rest of Europe—that she would be 'not only able to resume a French world-policy on great lines but would even find herself compelled to do so'. The necessary interests of England no longer demanded the destruction of Germany: on the contrary, she tended more and more towards curbing France's unbridled lust after hegemony. In the past 'England did not want Germany to be a world power. France desired that there should be no power called Germany.' Germany was not now fighting for her existence as a world power but only for the existence of the country, for national unity and the daily bread of her children. In another place he admitted that Germany would ultimately have to become a 'world power', but he was evidently prepared to relegate this development to the more or less distant future.

Since his accession to supreme power Hitler has led the Reich through six stormy years of domestic and foreign policy, and it is not surprising that circumstances have compelled him to modify in many ways the plan of campaign elaborated in the 'twenties. Russia did not, after all, obligingly collapse, and the execution of even the first stage of his programme—

the restoration of the old frontiers and the incorporation of the German-speaking peoples of central and eastern Europe—aroused endless alarm and resentment elsewhere, and finally plunged him into war with France and England. Yet there was ample evidence that the winning of England's friendship and alliance remained one of the primary aims of his diplomacy, and that the final breach in 1939 was due, not to the development of plans for her destruction, but to the fundamental inability of British public opinion to condone his destruction of foes in central Europe, or to rid itself of the conviction that this phase of violence must ultimately be directed against Great Britain itself. As time goes on it is increasingly difficult to separate these two lines of popular hostility to the Hitler régime, and the repellent features of Nazi policy strengthened among the British people a conviction of danger which British ministers were not always able to share.

The policy of the British Government in its dealings with Germany was certainly vacillating and ineffective before the spring of 1939; it hovered indecisively between threats, concessions, meekness, and rearmament, and was in part no doubt the mere product of mediocrity in Downing Street. But it must also be admitted that it was exceptionally difficult to know what either Hitler or the British public really wanted: until one at least of these gave a clearer indication of its purpose, the Government was almost bound to limit itself to a hand-to-mouth policy. The British public had not lost its memory of Germany as a hostile power before 1919; it was anxious to forget, rather than to love, the Germans, and while it was prepared to acquiesce in the abrogation of those parts of the Versailles treaty which were blatantly unfair or absurd, its suspicions were soon aroused by the violence of the

German demands on points of less obvious injustice. In such circumstances it expected firm language from the Government, although it continued to demand disarmament and 'sacrifices for peace', and was not, at any rate before 1938, prepared for permanent commitments beyond the Rhine. On the other hand the Führer's policy before the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 consisted in little more than an extremely noisy glorification of comparatively minor triumphs; this habit of beating the big drum to celebrate successes which were due in considerable measure to the reasonableness of other powers was irritating, but seemed to suggest a repetition of the Duce's tactics of making fighting speeches for internal Fascist consumption. Before 1938 the Führer had not commenced to carry out the ambitions of the Third Reich even at the expense of his smaller neighbours, and had given sufficient indication of his desire to avoid war, at any rate for the time being, with any first-class European military power. Did he aim at a Bismarckian policy of limited risk and limited objectives, or at a Napoleonic policy of perpetual expansion? No one knew: perhaps not even the Führer himself.

From March 1933 to March 1935 Germany's armaments, and her demand for 'equality' with the other great powers, formed the main problem of British foreign policy. The three powers most directly affected by the revival of German militarism were France, Italy, and the U.S.S.R. Italy was determined to prevent the incorporation of Austria in the Reich, but realized more clearly than the other powers the necessity of accepting promptly and with a good grace the return of Germany to the status and conditions of a great power; Mussolini was indeed quite prepared to separate from the other powers and strike any bargain with Germany which would best serve Italy's interests.

The French Government, on the other hand, could not visualize any type of bargaining with Germany which could benefit France, and it hoped, by maintaining its existing military superiority and its diplomatic instruments—the League and the Little Entente —to perpetuate its previous security. The U.S.S.R. was forced, by the violence of German hostility, to associate itself with the French system. The British Government was able to understand both the French and the Italian theses; it was apprehensive, and also conscious of the need for concession. Its official aim was still to pacify Germany and the rest of Europe by all-round disarmament; France was determined to avoid substantial reduction of armaments pending promises of military support from Great Britain and other quarters. But as British public opinion would never have accepted anything in the nature of an Anglo-German alliance or axis it was impossible for the Government to proceed from conciliation to complete reconciliation.

THE FOUR-POWER PACT

The need for a timely settlement with Germany formed perhaps the most important element in the proposals for a four-power pact, which Mussolini presented to MacDonald and Simon on 18 March 1933, and communicated at the same time to the French and German Governments. The draft proposed that the four powers should co-ordinate their policy in European, extra-European, and colonial questions, and should consider a revision of the peace treaties; they should if necessary take steps to secure the adoption of their policy by other powers as well, and, if the Disarmament Conference proved abortive, they should recognize Germany's right to rearm by stages. The proposal foreshadowed the supersession of

the League; revision would clearly affect Poland and the Little Entente states. The pact can be interpreted either as a statesmanlike attempt by Mussolini to appease Germany, or as a bid for German friendship, or as an ingenious plan for raising Germany to equality of strength and status with France and England, thereby increasing Italy's relative strength and importance as the mediator between them. The British ministers, who had no desire to throw Germany and Italy together, did not reject the scheme outright, although they insisted that the proposals were wholly unacceptable in their original form. France made a similar reply.

The Little Entente states began to show their increased interest in the already existing plans for a *rapprochement* with Poland, who objected both to treaty revision and to the fact that her own status as a great power had been ignored by the pact. She alone had taken prompt action in reply to the violent campaign which the Nazis had launched against her as part of the election campaign of February. After a military demonstration at Vilna on 21 April the Polish Government had sent an inquiry to Hitler through the Polish ambassador in Berlin as to whether Germany preferred peace or war; at the same time it asked whether the French were ready to join the Poles in a march into Germany. The French Government declined, realizing no doubt that an over-hasty intervention would antagonize opinion on both sides of the Rhine, and defeat its own ends. But Poland's attitude produced widespread sympathy. Sir Austen Chamberlain, hitherto the most prominent advocate in England of conciliation towards Germany, spoke strongly in the House of Commons against the savagery, racial pride, and exclusiveness of the new German Nationalism, and exclaimed, 'Are you going to discuss with such a

government the Polish Corridor? The Polish Corridor is inhabited by Poles; do you dare to put another Pole under the heel of such a government?'

Germany was not in a position at this stage to conduct a successful war even against the Poles, and her rearmament in its initial stages could not proceed without the acquiescence of foreign governments. Accordingly Hitler's reply to Poland was unexpectedly reassuring. A projected visit by Colonel Beck to the Little Entente capitals was postponed indefinitely; in a *communiqué* of 4 May 1933 the two powers undertook to treat common interests dispassionately, on the basis of existing treaties. This meant in effect the indefinite postponement of revision as far as Poland was concerned. On 17 May Hitler made to the Reichstag an emphatic and apparently unqualified declaration of peaceful intentions; he asserted Germany's need for equality of rights in armaments, but offered to agree to the realization of these rights over a period of years. Three days later Goering flew to Rome, and the Four-Power Pact was signed on 7 June.

French amendments had removed from the text everything that was directly obnoxious to her; revision was limited to a reference to Article 19 of the League Covenant, and the reference to the colonial question was removed altogether. The Little Entente powers accepted the final text, although with obvious misgivings. The pact certainly helped to sow suspicion between France and her allies, and to emphasize the isolation of the U.S.S.R. To the British ministers, however, it probably seemed merely an innocuous supplement to the Locarno agreement, with little cause for alarm after the removal of the colonial references.

HITLER AND AUSTRIA

Thus Hitler's advent to power passed off rather more quietly than was at first anticipated. For the time being Austria became the main object of Hitler's attention: it probably interested him far more than Poland, and in any case was too small and feeble to threaten reprisals. Effective power in Austria had passed into the hands of the private army of the Heimwehr, under the leadership of Prince Stahremberg, and on 7 March the Prime Minister, Dollfuss, assumed dictatorial powers and entered into an alliance with the Heimwehr which necessitated opposition to the Austrian Social Democrats. Stahremberg relied on Mussolini for financial and political support, and for ideological inspiration: but the Dollfuss–Stahremberg combination was weakened throughout by its defiance of the Socialists, still powerful among Vienna's vast population, and by its association with the unpopular Italians. In this situation the hitherto negligible Austrian National Socialists could hope to make headway, and their self-confidence and numbers were greatly increased by the Nazi victory in Germany. The whole propaganda machine of the Reich was now turned against the Austrian Government; the German tourist traffic to Austria was virtually stopped, and Austrian Nazi refugees were collected in German camps and armed for a descent on their native country.

France was not slow in denouncing this campaign, and persuaded Great Britain and Italy that a protest to Berlin must be made. Italy, however, refused to take part in a joint *démarche*; instead, on 5 August 1933, the Italian Ambassador drew the attention of the German Foreign Office 'in a friendly manner' to the situation. The German reply was conciliatory: the French

Government nevertheless decided to add its protest, and the British agreed, although they would not take part in joint representations. The effect of this was to demonstrate as plainly as possible the lack of complete agreement between the three powers, and the German reply to both Governments was that 'no contractual infringements of any kind had taken place on the part of Germany, and that Germany, therefore, did not regard this interference in German-Austrian differences as permissible'.

GERMANY LEAVES THE LEAGUE

This snub was followed by more dramatic action. On the immediate issues in the disarmament question the German case was difficult to answer; it would have been impossible to mobilize British opinion in favour of a demand that Germany, alone among the seven great powers, should remain permanently disarmed. Yet the French demand that an adequate guarantee of her own security must precede German rearmament had once more brought the Disarmament Conference to a deadlock in May. Sympathy for the French attitude was shown in many quarters in England, and on 5 July Sir Austen Chamberlain in the House of Commons recommended to the Government caution in pressing other nations, 'nearer to the peril than ourselves', to lessen their armaments. He feared that Great Britain would thereby incur 'a moral obligation greater than any written obligation to go to their assistance if they were attacked'. It was hoped that the adjournment of the conference on 29 June would allow the essential difficulties to be solved through diplomatic channels. Hitler rejected a French suggestion for a probationary period of international supervision, although on 6 October he expressed to the British and Italian Governments his approval of the

original British plan for a five-year period of preliminary disarmament. The Bureau of the Conference met at Geneva on 9 October, and on the 14th Sir John Simon announced the British support of the French programme. This involved a preliminary period of four years, during which the continental armies would be transformed into short-service militias, and an adequate system of supervision through a permanent disarmament commission should be set up. In a second four-year period the actual limitation of armaments should be arranged. An essential condition of this programme was 'that the powers now under restriction of the Peace Treaties should not begin to increase their armaments forthwith'. The practical effect of the proposals was that substantial changes in the existing size of armies would be postponed for four years.

On the same day Germany's withdrawal from the conference and from the League was announced, on the ground that the conference could clearly not fulfil its sole object, general disarmament. A plebiscite in Germany on 12 November ratified this decision, giving the Government 92·2 per cent of the votes cast. There could be no doubt that the great majority of the voters approved the decision, particularly as Hitler had coupled his action with the most emphatic assertions of his desire for peace. It was not so clear at the time as it became later that the withdrawals were, in spite of the pacific protestations which accompanied them, a deliberate move to perpetuate the revolutionary atmosphere and technique; more peaceful and conciliatory methods, by which Germany could have obtained almost anything she wanted, would have made the Nazi party superfluous. A further advertisement of Hitler's peaceful intentions was supplied by the German-Polish agreement of 26 January 1934, by which the two powers renounced the use of force in

the settlement of their differences for a period of ten years.

THE END OF DISARMAMENT

The British Government still hoped to bring France and Germany together on the armaments question, and to intervene itself as a friendly mediator if a deadlock appeared threatened. It certainly seemed better to agree to the comparatively small German increases in question than to run the risk of a repudiation by Germany of all restrictions. 'You may have a disarmament of all countries to the level of existing German armaments; you may have a limitation of armaments at a point which excludes all large offensive weapons,' said Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons on 27 November 1933. 'The third alternative is competition in armaments. Those are three possibilities. What I say is that in no circumstances must that third alternative be reached.' By the end of December 1933 Germany had offered terms which included a formal recognition of her complete equality of rights, in return for which she would of her own free will show such moderation in availing herself of equality as to remove any fear of her using it as an offensive menace. Security could be guaranteed by the signature of ten-year pacts of non-aggression. Her specific terms were that the Reichswehr should be gradually transformed into an army of 300,000 men with a twelve-month's period of service, and with defensive weapons including tanks up to six tons, and guns up to 155 mm. in calibre. He was prepared to accept supervision, so that an international commission could decide whether the 'para-military' forces (the S.A., the S.S. and the Labour Corps) were really innocuous. The proposals in general gave Germany only 20 per cent of the effectiveness of France and her

allies. The French reply on 1 January 1934 took exception to the retention of para-military organizations, argued that the German scheme meant rearmament and not disarmament, and again insisted on the need for a preliminary period of supervision. It did, however, offer substantial reductions, including a 50 per cent decrease in the size of the French air force, during the second period. The German Government on 19 January again insisted on the need for equality, and declared that the figure of 300,000 was needed for German security.

France during this period had passed through weeks of serious internal crisis, with the Stavisky scandal in December, and the rioting, under Fascist influences, of 6 February 1934. Chautemps fell on 27 January; Édouard Daladier, his successor, on 7 February. There were indications that Daladier desired agreement with Germany, but on the 9th a new and stronger ministry took office, led by Gaston Doumergue, with a capable foreign minister in Louis Barthou, who much resembled Poincaré in outlook, and even in appearance. The internal condition of France provided the new Government with a partly genuine excuse for delay, but it also found the idea of legalizing German rearmament extremely distasteful. With the Maginot Line, commenced in 1930, nearly completed, and a strong and well-equipped French Army still in existence, a rupture could be contemplated with considerable confidence; the still profound dislike of war on the part of the mass of Frenchmen struggled with the growing conviction that no pledge of Hitler's could ever be accepted, and that if a decision could be postponed a little longer the Nazi system would collapse.

The next phase of British policy was therefore without result. A White Paper of 29 January 1934 made further attempts to reconcile the French and

German viewpoints, and Eden visited in turn Paris, Berlin, and Rome between 16 February and 1 March. The Germans now asked for immediate possession of air defence forces, but were willing for them to be limited to 30 per cent of the combined forces of Germany's neighbours, or 50 per cent of the French military aircraft, whichever was less. The French, in a statement on 19 March, while not entirely rejecting the German proposals, virtually refused acceptance without specific 'guarantees' from Great Britain to meet possible infraction of the disarmament convention. The British Government appears to have been prepared to discuss the extension of the British guarantee, although only in return for substantial French disarmament. Unfortunately the opportunity had already passed. On 28 March the German Government published estimates for the coming year which included an increase of over RM.350,000,000 for defence, and on 17 April the French Government announced that it considered the negotiations at an end. The French attitude was maintained at a further meeting of the Disarmament Conference on 29 May, when Barthou displayed extreme irritation at the British attitude. A complete breakdown was avoided, but for practical purposes disarmament and the Disarmament Conference were now dead: the few relevant exchanges between the Governments during the second half of 1934 served only to establish this fact.

DOLLFUSS

The failure of the British disarmament policy made inevitable the search for newer guarantees of security; from this was to emerge almost immediately the scheme of an Eastern Locarno, and, later on, British rearmament. By reviving British memories of the Poincaré policy it also helped to retard the full

acceptance by the British Government of the French thesis concerning Germany. France's views of the new Germany were largely based on her earlier experiences, and she had, after all, cried 'Wolf' very often before. On 30 June 1934 Hitler's 'purge' of the Nazi party removed at least seventy-seven enemies or suspected enemies of the régime, and a *Putsch* by the Austrian Nazi party on 25 July led to the murder of Dollfuss. These and many other hardly less spectacular deeds of violence left no doubt as to the murderous intolerance of the Nazi handling of internal policy, but there was always the example of Italy and the U.S.S.R. to suggest that such domestic methods could be reconciled with a pacific foreign policy, and even with the doctrines of world revolution or empire which the other two totalitarian states professed.

The Austrian problem was particularly confusing. Officially Great Britain continued to support Austrian independence. The emphasis laid in the Four-Power Pact of June 1933 on Article 10 of the Covenant, and the representations made to the German Government in August, were followed on 21 December by Sir John Simon's statement in the House of Commons that 'the independence and safety of Austria are an essential object to which British policy is directed'. On 17 February 1934 the British, French, and Italian Governments announced that they took a common view of the necessity for maintaining Austria's independence. But these declarations did not imply any particular sympathy for the Austrian régime, whose real character was revealed in the massacre of the Austrian Socialists by the Heimwehr between 12 and 15 February; Mussolini had apparently inspired the suppression of the Austrian Socialist party, and in so doing had allowed his dislike and possible fear of Socialism to destroy the possibility of a strong Austrian front against

Nazi influence. The assassination of Dollfuss on 25 July was part of a revolution which miscarried; Mussolini moved 100,000 men to the Austrian frontier, Hitler did not intervene, and the Austrian Government, under its new leader Kurt Schuschnigg, was able to suppress the insurrection in the provinces. On 26 July Sir John Simon condemned the murder in the House of Commons, and on 27 September the British, Italian, and French Governments reaffirmed the declaration of 17 February. But to many Englishmen the Clerical Fascism of Austria, with its machine guns and concentration camps, was no more attractive than the Nazi Fascism of Germany, which at least had the noisy support of large sections of the population.

THE EASTERN LOCARNO

The same unenthusiastic acceptance of political realities characterized the British attitude towards the French plans for bringing the U.S.S.R. into the League and into an 'Eastern Locarno'. Barthou planned in the spring of 1934 a comprehensive scheme of security which would be deprived of any features offensive to the dignity of a peaceful Germany by provision for her participation. The French plan aimed ultimately, however, at agreement between the U.S.S.R., Poland, and the Little Entente for joint resistance to Nazi aggression, based on the use of the League machinery of collective security and sanctions. The Little Entente powers (Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia) had on 16 February 1933 signed a 'pact of organization' at Geneva, which established a permanent council of their respective foreign ministers and registered their opposition to revision; on 9 February 1934 Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Rumania signed at Athens a treaty creating a 'Balkan Entente'. Fear of Nazi policy played a large part in these two

combinations, which promised, therefore, to be drawn without difficulty into Barthou's scheme; Poland was less enthusiastic, but the U.S.S.R. proved decidedly favourable to the new plans.

To the British Government Soviet internal policy certainly appeared no more attractive than that of Germany; the horrors of timber camps, liquidation of Kulaks, and mass starvation of peasants as an incentive to collectivization, supplied evidence of state barbarism which, if authentic, almost justified Hitler's denunciations. The trial of the Metropolitan-Vickers employees momentarily revived diplomatic tension between Moscow and London in April 1933. The British Government was, however, quite prepared to adhere to the nineteenth-century principle that it should not interfere with the internal politics of foreign states, however obnoxious these might appear to the British onlooker. By now the pacific foreign policy which had accompanied the Russian Five-Year Plan had produced pacts of non-aggression with Poland and the Baltic states in 1932; a pact was signed with France in November 1932, and there was even a pact with Germany in May 1933. After the Nazi triumph Soviet foreign policy entered a more positive phase, and sought the development of agreements for mutual defence with any powers which would give support against the two potential enemies, Germany and Japan. The British Government had welcomed these new tendencies in Russian policy since 1928 both because of its desire for general appeasement and because of the useful commercial contacts which were developing between the two countries. In 1934 they were quite ready for Soviet co-operation in measures to neutralize possible German aggression.

In pursuance of his plan for an Eastern Locarno, Barthou visited Warsaw, on 22–24 April 1934, and

Prague, on 26–27 April; he had conferences in Paris with the Yugoslav Foreign Minister from 10–13 June, and visited Bucarest for the session of the Little Entente Council on 20 June. He met Litvinov in Geneva on 18 May. The plans were laid before the British Government by Barthou during a visit to London on 8–9 July, as both the French and Russian Governments desired British support, or at least British approval. They accepted the British Government's view that an Eastern pact which excluded Germany would lead rapidly to the division of Europe into rival camps and so precipitate a repetition of the 1914 situation, and on this basis the scheme received the British Government's blessing. It was not prepared to give a military guarantee of the Versailles settlement in eastern Europe, but it reaffirmed its obligations to France under the Locarno agreement. On 19 July Mr. Baldwin announced that the Government had decided on rearmament in the air, and on the 30th remarked, 'When you think of the defence of England you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover; you think of the Rhine. This is where our frontier lies.'

The British action was not confined to a merely passive acceptance of Barthou's plans. The British ambassadors in Rome, Berlin, and Warsaw were instructed on 12 July to explain and commend the plans to the Governments concerned. The British proposals were based on three draft treaties: (1) A pact of mutual assistance between Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the U.S.S.R., and the Baltic states; (2) a bilateral agreement between France and Russia, which Germany might join; (3) a convention linking the Eastern Pact with the Locarno Pact and the League Covenant. Italy, which had at first been hostile to Barthou's scheme on the ground that it attempted to isolate Germany, expressed approval of the new

arrangements. Poland and Germany, however, held back. Both feared that they might be called on to allow the passage of foreign troops; Poland had territorial claims against Lithuania and Czechoslovakia, and disliked any strengthening of the U.S.S.R. Germany had also no desire to abandon indefinitely her revisionist plans, and had a more immediate objective in the fact that the formal recognition of her equality of rights had not been granted. Sir John Simon on 13 July said that Barthou had agreed that equality should accompany the conclusion of the pact, but two days later Barthou denied that any connexion between the two could be established. This provided Germany's ground for refusing her signature on 10 September; Poland virtually rejected the pact on the 27th. On the other hand the U.S.S.R. was elected on the 17th to a permanent seat on the League Council, opposed only by Ireland, Switzerland, and Portugal. Poland did not oppose, but secured a promise from the Soviet Government not to support any petitions to the League from the Russian minority in Poland; at the same time she announced that she no longer recognized the right of the League to concern itself with Polish minority questions.

After this the British Government could hardly condemn a direct Franco-Soviet agreement, but further negotiations were interrupted by the assassination of Barthou and King Alexander of Yugoslavia at Marseilles on 9 October. The Saar plebiscite in January 1935 caused a further postponement. The Saar had been placed under League administration at Versailles, and it was obvious by this time that there would be a majority in favour of a return to Germany. On 3 December the German Government agreed to pay France 900,000,000 francs for the coal mines, and the problem of holding a plebiscite under League supervision was

solved by the British Government's offer to the League, to co-operate in the formation of an international force. This force, under a British general, duly arrived, and, in the plebiscite on 13 January, 90·35 per cent of the votes were for union with Germany.

GERMANY REARMS: THE STRESA FRONT

The final defeat of the attempts to bring Hitler's Germany into satisfactory treaty relations with the rest of Europe came in the spring of 1935. On 7 January 1935 Laval, the new French Foreign Minister, and Mussolini signed the Franco-Italian agreement which, like the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, was designed to settle amicably the colonial differences between the two countries, and so make possible a united front against Germany. To meet the problem of Austria it proposed pacts of non-intervention to be signed between Austria and various 'particularly interested states'. On 31 January Laval and Flandin, the French Prime Minister, visited London, and an Anglo-French *communiqué* on 3 February expressed the hope that Germany would co-operate in the Eastern and Danubian Pacts, and would also join an Air Pact as a supplement to the Locarno agreement. By this each of the signatories would undertake to give support to whichever of them might be a victim of aerial aggression by one of the contracting powers. Germany at once welcomed the Air Pact, but would only promise 'exhaustive examination' of the other two pacts.

Her reply revealed the pride and sensitiveness which formed a genuine ingredient in the German attitude, even though it was used so remorselessly as a debating weapon in justifying the German rearmament programme. There can be no doubt that the German Government was determined to rearm: Hitler had shown no difficulty in mastering the 'capitalist'

interests represented by the Nationalist party under Hugenberg and Papen, but he could not secure the indispensable support of the Reichswehr for his internal policy without promising rearmament, and this in any case formed an essential part of his Greater-Germany programme. Yet the endless delay in the formal recognition of equality was a blunder, and may possibly have prevented very different developments. It gave the German Government an argument which certainly influenced British and French opinion; and it gave it a grievance which could be flaunted at home to the confusion of German pacifists. Moreover, it enabled Germany to complete her rearmament unhampered by paper agreements which might have been particularly effective if the provisions for inspection had been included.

Now, however, Germany took the final steps. A British White Paper on 4 March 1935 referred to the illegal rearmament of Germany as the chief reason for proposed increases in the British estimates. Germany expressed strong resentment; on the following day an excuse was made for postponing visits by Simon and Eden to discuss the proposals of 3 February. As there is no doubt that Germany was already rearming the outburst of anger at the British publication presented a curious psychological problem. On 9 March the German Government announced that the German Air Force had come into existence again on 1 March; on the 16th Hitler, in a proclamation to the German people, announced that Germany would resume complete freedom in providing for her defence; a law at the same time reintroduced conscription and established an army of thirty-six divisions. Simon had his postponed conversations with Hitler on the 25th and 26th; he learned once again the Führer's objections to the Eastern and Danubian Pacts, and the large scale

of her existing and future armaments. Eden had an almost effusive reception in Moscow on 28 and 29 March, although the Soviet Press had continued its attacks on British foreign policy up to the eve of his visit.

Europe could only accept the accomplished facts. At the Stresa Conference (11–14 April 1935) France, Italy, and Great Britain reaffirmed their approval of the Eastern and Danubian Pacts, and drafted a resolution condemning Germany's repudiation of her obligations under the Versailles treaty. The resolution was carried unanimously by the League Council next day. A Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance was signed on 2 May 1935; on 18 June an Anglo-German naval agreement was announced, on lines which had been proposed by Hitler to Simon in March. It limited Germany's aggregate naval tonnage to 35 per cent of that of the British Commonwealth; she had, however, the right to equal submarine tonnage with the Commonwealth, although she undertook not to exceed 45 per cent without giving notice. To the French protest that the agreement condoned Germany's unilateral rearmament immediately after the League condemnation, the British ministers replied, not very happily, that it was a realist contribution to peace similar to the Franco-Soviet pact.

CHAPTER X

CRISES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, 1935–8

FOR nearly three years after the early summer of 1935 the international scene was dominated by Mussolini in a manner singularly disconcerting to the British Government, which had every possible reason for desiring to avoid a quarrel with Italy at this stage. The French felt even stronger reluctance to involve themselves in any activities which would take their attention off Germany. This Anglo-French aversion to trouble in the Mediterranean was undoubtedly one of the main reasons why the astute and adventurous Duce chose just this moment for action.

The decision was, however, influenced by many other considerations. Italy, like Germany and Japan, was tempted to seek escape or distraction from economic distress by a bold foreign policy. She was very much the weakest of the great powers in natural resources, and the effectiveness of her vigorous attempts to increase prosperity through the machinery of the corporate state was frequently hampered by considerations of national prestige. The lira had, for example, been over-valued in 1927, probably in rivalry with the franc; the drive for self-sufficiency in cereal production coincided with a world wheat surplus when wheat could have been purchased abroad at very much less than its cost of production at home. The world economic crisis hit the country very severely; there was a heavy fall in exports, and in such invisible imports as emigrant remittances and tourist traffic. After 1931 popular discontent began to express itself far more openly than had seemed possible since the early days of the régime.

Even before the March on Rome, Mussolini had proclaimed the future of Italy as a world power, whose imperialism would dominate the Mediterranean and beyond. Although his foreign policy was, at first, cautious enough, he left the other powers in no doubt as to his belief in the necessity for revision of the peace treaties, and for colonial concessions from the victorious powers to rectify what were considered the inadequate gains of Italy in the peace settlement. He continued obstinately to demand parity with France in naval armaments, and announced a large naval building programme in April 1930. The increasing economic gloom of the early 'thirties was countered by robust expressions of contempt for Italy's not very clearly defined enemies: 'harsh to our enemies, we shall march to the end with our friends'. A struggle between two worlds was foreshadowed. 'Either we or they. Either our ideas or theirs. Either our state or theirs!' There can be no doubt that this exaltation of national might and self-importance found an enthusiastic response among the Duce's party followers, and in many sections of the public, even if the cowed liberal elements secretly deplored its forceful crudity and ominous promises of bloodshed.

Abyssinia was for many reasons the predestined victim of Fascist imperialism. Its size, high altitudes, and reputed mineral wealth suggested a profitable field for white settlement and exploitation. It had formed the objective of Italian colonial ambitions in the treaty of Ucciali of 1889, and the complete defeat of an Italian army at Adowa in 1896 had preserved Abyssinian independence for a generation, but had dealt a humiliating blow to Italy's prestige. Her continued interest in the area was shown in the provision, in the secret treaty of London of 1915, that if Britain and France should acquire German colonies

in Africa they would grant Italy territorial compensation along the borders of Eritrea, Somaliland, and Libya. In accordance with this treaty, Britain ceded Jubaland in 1924, and France in the agreement of 7 January 1935 ceded some 44,000 square miles of the Tibesti region in Libya, Doumeirah, and other islands, and some shares in the Jibuti–Addis Ababa railway. More important perhaps from the Italian point of view was the fact that a series of Anglo-Italian agreements had appeared to indicate that Great Britain did not resent Italian influence. Three agreements in 1891 and 1894 had recognized almost the whole of Abyssinia as belonging to the Italian sphere; there was a tripartite treaty (France, Italy, and Great Britain) in 1906, and in 1925, after the Jubaland settlement, Anglo-Italian correspondence recognized an exclusive Italian sphere of economic influence in western Abyssinia. The last two agreements, however, made Italian concessions specifically dependent on Abyssinian consent. Similarly in the Franco-Italian agreement of January 1935 France recognized Italy's right to seek concessions throughout Abyssinia. Abyssinia had been admitted to the League of Nations in 1923, and in a treaty of August 1928 had allowed Italy to construct and monopolize a motor road through her territory.

We may, then, conclude that Mussolini not only regarded Abyssinia as a profitable and popular acquisition, but had also convinced himself that in conquering it he would not be encroaching on any French or British sphere of interest. He no doubt calculated that they were in any case too preoccupied with Germany to wish to interfere with his plans, and would even be disposed to facilitate them in order that he could resume his active interest in Austrian independence. Personal relations between the British and

Italian Governments had generally been friendly since the war; Sir Austen Chamberlain had made a practice of paying 'holiday visits' to Mussolini when cruising with Sir Warden Chilcott in the Mediterranean. The Wal-Wal dispute, from which the war originated, had been brought before the League in December 1934; there was no 'formal' mention of African affairs at the Stresa conference in April, but France and Great Britain had no desire to encourage aggressive Italian action. When on 1 May the Italian Government invited Great Britain to begin friendly discussions on the co-ordination of their interests in Abyssinia, the reply was not encouraging. Sir Austen Chamberlain, now a very influential back-bencher, was asked by Sir John Simon to bring his great personal influence to bear on the Italian Government. On 11 May he told Count Grandi, the Italian Ambassador, that it was impossible to have one law for Germany and another for Italy, and that a solution of the Abyssinian question by force would have a 'deplorable' effect on British opinion. Grandi could hold out no hope that Mussolini could be deflected from his purpose. At the end of May an anti-British campaign was opened in the Italian Press. Throughout the next twelve months the Italians did their best to represent the whole League action as an Anglo-Italian quarrel, inspired by British imperialism.

This it was not; Great Britain had no designs on Abyssinia herself, and her interest in it was limited to guaranteeing and improving the water-supply from Lake Tana to the Blue Nile. She had, indeed, grievances against the Abyssinian Government, owing to its continued postponement of permission to undertake irrigation works at Lake Tana, and to the constant raiding by Abyssinian tribes into British territory. But a Foreign Office commission under Sir John

Maffey, appointed in February, reported in June that no local British interests would be involved in an Italian conquest of the country. In fact the interests of British imperialism strongly favoured the avoidance of a breach with Italy. Britain's primary concern in the Mediterranean was to maintain and protect the steamship route to the Far East by the Suez Canal. Her whole strategical position in the nineteenth century had been built up on the assumption that a threat to the canal could come only from Russia; she had occupied Cyprus in 1878, and promised to defend Anatolia from Russian attack, in order to be on the spot if a sudden swoop by Russia was contemplated. This eastern Mediterranean front against Russia had been served by the line of communication from England passing through Gibraltar and Malta; ever since the mid-nineteenth century friendly relations with the relatively weak Spanish and Italian states had excluded the possibility of any threat to this route in the western Mediterranean. The British Government had become so habituated to the idea that Italy would always remain friendly to the strongest naval power that it was quite at a loss for a policy when an unfriendly Italy threatened to cut the route in two.

Great Britain's obligations under the League Covenant demanded, however, participation in the defence of Abyssinia by the imposition of sanctions. It would appear that among some of the senior members of the Cabinet there was great misgiving on the point: many of the now familiar objections to the guarantee functions of the League applied with particular force here. A sanctions policy might involve the country in exertions which, if not beyond its strength, would at least weaken its resources very dangerously: a Mediterranean war would probably leave France, Italy, and Great Britain too exhausted to make effective resistance to

future German, or perhaps Japanese, aggression, although there seemed little chance that Italy could win. Moreover, although a rearmament programme had been announced in the spring it had not been very enthusiastically received, and it was clear that the advocates of 'strong League action' were to some extent shirking the conclusion that economic sanctions might produce war. The results of the Peace Ballot, which were announced on 27 June, gave an overwhelming majority (over ten million votes) for all-round reduction of armaments, and for economic and non-military sanctions; 6,784,368 votes were in favour of military sanctions and 2,351,891 against, while as many were undecided. There was thus a decided majority in favour even of military sanctions, and it was of course certain that in a specific case in which opinion was strongly aroused the support would be greater, although on the other hand the imminence of war might damp the ardour of many. It soon became evident that the Italian threat to Abyssinia was arousing much stronger feeling in the country than the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, although there was outspoken opposition to sanctions in certain influential London papers. These considerations led the Government to decide in favour of collective League action, although it was careful to insist that there was no individual quarrel with Italy, and that Great Britain would only go as far as the other League members. How far the Government was influenced by the imminence of a general election (in November) is difficult to say.

On 1 August Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons gave an indication that Great Britain would support League action; this he reaffirmed specifically on 11 September. On 3 October the anticipated act of Italian aggression took place, and on the 7th the Council,

with the solitary exception of Italy, recorded the fact. Owing largely to the initiative of Mr. Eden economic sanctions were decided upon; a ban on the export of certain raw materials, and on imports from Italy, came into existence on 18 November. Italy, protesting furiously, went ahead with her military operations.

France—or her Foreign Minister—must bear the primary responsibility for this failure in collective action. M. Laval, although he denied later that he had given Italy a free hand in January 1935, was not prepared to risk a war with Italy, and so lose irrevocably an ally against Germany. It was a curious and unfortunate coincidence, as General Temperley has observed, that on the one occasion on which France's devotion to the League was put to the test, she was represented by the only French Foreign Minister since the war who did not believe in the League. It soon became clear that the only effective economic sanction would be a ban on the export of oil to Italy: but the imposition of this ban was delayed, primarily through French action, until the success of Italy made it ineffective. It is true that the oil embargo presented many technical difficulties. An embargo would be useless unless American supplies could be cut off; and although President Roosevelt had appealed to the oil industry to limit its exports to the average of the past three years, the export of American controlled oil had trebled by the end of November. Knowing that such an oil embargo might stampede Italy into some form of retaliation which would mean war, Laval endeavoured to postpone a decision until a settlement by mediation had been arrived at. The meeting of the relevant League committee was postponed until 12 December, and was then postponed again while the Hoare–Laval plan was under discussion.

In the previous June Great Britain had offered to

cede to Abyssinia a strip of land in British Somaliland, including the port of Zeila, to facilitate territorial and economic concessions by Abyssinia to Italy. This offer Mussolini had rejected, but on 2 November a proposal was made to the Co-ordination Committee of the League that Great Britain and France should seek a settlement of the dispute. Sir Samuel Hoare, the new Foreign Secretary, was certainly influenced by the conviction, which he had arrived at before leaving London on 7 December to meet Laval, that there was little hope that Roosevelt would be able to bring American oil interests to heel. The basis of the Hoare–Laval plan was that the Emperor of Abyssinia should cede to Italy the eastern Tigre province, the Danakil country, and a large part of the Ogaden province. Italy would cede a narrow strip of territory in southern Eritrea, giving Abyssinia access to the sea. At this moment there seemed no immediate prospect of Italian victory, and although the plan might be justified on the ground that it would save Abyssinia from losing all her territory later, it was undoubtedly due primarily to the desire to avoid all the disastrous international complications which Laval in particular anticipated. Nevertheless, the announcement of the plan was, quite apart from the question of political morality, a bad blunder in political tactics; it showed a strange inability to realize how strongly opinion had been aroused in favour of the salvation of Abyssinia by League action. Hoare was overworked, and the eagerness of Baldwin and Laval for a settlement seems to have stampeded him to some extent. After a storm from the British Press, and widespread criticism from the Conservative rank and file under the leadership of Sir Austen Chamberlain, the British Government repudiated the plan, and Hoare resigned. Mr. Anthony Eden, his successor, informed the Council on 18

December that the Government did not wish to pursue the proposals further.

The League's committee of experts then turned once again to the question of oil sanctions, and reported on 12 February 1936 that if American supplies were reduced to the normal figure, Italy could continue the war for not more than 3½ months. On 2 March, when the Committee of Eighteen was once more on the point of a decision, M. Flandin, who had succeeded Laval, carried a proposal for a further postponement while a supreme appeal was made to the belligerents. In allowing this proposal to be accepted without a short and specific time-limit Eden suffered a diplomatic defeat quite as serious for the British policy as Laval's imposition of his peace plan on Hoare. On 7 March German troops reoccupied the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland, and this new crisis led to the inevitable postponement of the oil sanctions question; within a few weeks, by the judicious use of poison gas, the Italians succeeded in breaking the resistance of their brave, but ill-equipped opponents, and the war was virtually over by the end of April. British irritation at France's recent policy, and a strong undercurrent of popular sympathy for Germany, prevented British support at this decisive moment for the French plan, which appears to have been seriously contemplated in Paris, of a countermarch into the Rhineland. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the French Government's policy during the previous six months had done much to prevent the joint action against Germany to which all its efforts had been directed; on the other hand, if oil sanctions had been vigorously imposed in December the powers would almost certainly have been involved by March in a Mediterranean crisis which would have been even more detrimental to the prospect of joint action in other spheres.

The outcome of the Abyssinian dispute was, however one viewed the matter, a serious blow to British prestige; but it was achieved under conditions which created in many quarters abroad and at home a very erroneous conception of Great Britain's real attitude to foreign affairs. In 1935 there were still strong and diverse currents of opinion in England hostile to war; there was also a healthy capacity for resentment at the brutality of Italian power politics, and an acquiescence in the Government's big rearmament programme which would have been inconceivable a few years before. Opinion was, in fact, in a transitional state; the sense of responsibility for the safety of the small nation struggled with desire for peace, and many still tried to believe that in some way or other the League of Nations could produce international justice without international war. The Government did not believe this; it knew that liberal and pacifist sentiment to which the League must appeal had little chance of influencing policy where the organs of publicity were effectively controlled by the propaganda machinery of the totalitarian states, and that in these states power politics of a very ruthless and unscrupulous type were being followed. In the case of Abyssinia popular loyalty to the League made it impossible for the British Government to adopt a completely neutral attitude like that of the United States; on the other hand the Government's own conception of Britain's strength and weakness forced it to seek means of avoiding war. It compromised with a policy of limited responsibility, and thus gave Italy an opportunity for a noisy triumph when she represented her Abyssinian adventure as a victory at Great Britain's expense.

These conditions could not, however, continue indefinitely. It was tempting to Hitler and Mussolini to make the British or French look ridiculous by

repudiating treaties, defying their representations, and proclaiming the decadence of democracy, but it was also extremely unwise. Its result was to stimulate war feeling in England, increase British armaments, and produce ultimately counter-defiance, necessitating a surrender by the totalitarian power in question, or war. Mussolini and Hitler both seem to have believed in their ability to avoid an irrevocable step, and in Mussolini's case this confidence was, perhaps, justified. His opportunistic policy kept the Balkan and Mediterranean countries in a state of apprehension for several years, but he found means of accepting the German annexation of Austria, and of remaining neutral in 1939, without loss of face.

The Spanish civil war involved the powers in a fresh Mediterranean crisis almost immediately after the close of the Abyssinian war. The British Government again showed to considerable disadvantage, and although there were some sensational accusations of pro-Fascist sympathies the real explanation seems to be that its policy was essentially hand-to-mouth, governed by the immediate objectives of keeping pace with the disconcerting moves of the German and Italian Governments, and at the same time of keeping out of war. Here, as in Abyssinia, it was anxious to stop Italian aggression without fighting, and received a number of rebuffs in the process. It does not, however, appear to have made the mistake of overrating Italy's strength: Italy's comparatively weak economic position, and her absolute dependence on overseas supplies, meant that an Anglo-Italian naval war in the Mediterranean would be fatal to her. It was recognized in England, in discussions between what was called the 'Cape' and the 'Mediterranean' schools, that in such a war Great Britain would be unable to use the Mediterranean, but her vital communications with

the Far East, and even with the Middle East, could still be served by the Cape route. Moreover the war led directly to an improvement in British relations with Turkey and Egypt. In June 1936 Turkey secured at the Montreux Conference the re-establishment of her sovereignty over the Straits, and the right to re-militarize them; Great Britain's support of this, and the visit of King Edward VIII to Turkey in August, inaugurated an Anglo-Turkish *rapprochement*, greatly stimulated by the unnecessarily large Italian forces on the island of Rhodes. Egypt was similarly alarmed at Italian policy, and at the massing of Italian troops in Libya; nevertheless the naval and military measures taken by Great Britain in Egypt to meet the possibility of war caused a revival of national resentment against the British occupation. The British Government was at first inclined to consider the moment inopportune for a reduction of its privileges, but some remarks on these lines by Sir Samuel Hoare in November and December 1935 caused so much indignation in Egypt that negotiations for a new treaty were started in March. In July a treaty was signed, based on the draft treaty of 1930; it provided for Egyptian independence, a close alliance between the two countries, unrestricted immigration (under normal conditions) of Egyptians into the Sudan, and the continuation of a British force in the neighbourhood of Alexandria for eight years.

Great Britain's position at the third outlet to the Mediterranean, by the Straits of Gibraltar, now appeared to be endangered by Italian intervention in the Spanish war. Hitherto the unstable internal politics of Spain had been allowed to pursue their sad, dramatic course without noticeable help from the outer world. The liberals had secured a partial success with the abolition of the monarchy in 1931,

but were beaten by the 'Right' in the election of November 1933; the People's Front, a coalition of Left Republicans, the Catalan Left, Socialists and Communists, secured 265 seats in the elections of February 1936, while the Right only secured 144. A third group, the Centrists, secured 64 seats. No Socialists or Communists were included in the People's Front Government between February and July 1936; there were indeed only fourteen Communist deputies, and the Anarcho-Socialists, though sympathetic to the régime, would not take part in the parliamentary proceedings. The Right, however, had the support of 3,783,601 voters, as against 4,206,156 cast for the Popular Front, figures which showed that the conservative elements, the Church, the landed aristocracy, and the industrial magnates, had at least the passive support of large classes (particularly among the peasants). It was, in fact, as absurd to represent the Right as merely a small reactionary clique as to represent the Left as entirely Communist or 'Red': foreign political labels had indeed a very limited application to the Spanish situation. The Communists were more moderate in their immediate aims than the Socialists under Caballero, but there was no prospect of any early move by the Government to disestablish the Church, divide up the great estates, or socialize industry. There was, however, a certain amount of unorganized violence, with strikes, seizure of estates, and attacks on churches and monasteries. The conservative elements retaliated; on 18 July 1936 a military revolt broke out in Spain and Spanish Morocco, and an attempt was made to seize the government by a *coup d'état*. The blow miscarried, and the Government succeeded in raising forces sufficient to involve the country in a long civil war.

German and Italian help was received by the rebels

under General Franco from the start and had clearly been promised long before the outbreak. The first German 'planes reached Morocco on 21 July. A success for Franco would be followed by a Fascist Spain, which might be expected to be sympathetic to similar régimes elsewhere, and it would have the negative result of preventing a liberal or democratic government in Spain which would in turn be unsympathetic to Fascism. What alarmed many people in France and Great Britain was that Italy might acquire a sufficiently tight hold on Spain or the Spanish islands to threaten France's lines of communication with North Africa, to make Gibraltar untenable, and to turn Spain into a base of operations by air, land, and sea against France in the event of a war with Germany. The British Government refused, however, to act on the assumption that the situation was necessarily as serious as this. Sympathy among the English governing classes with the conservative elements in Spain helped to strengthen the view that Mussolini's professed alarm at the effect of Bolshevism in Spain might not be entirely hypocritical or self-interested; it was, also, obvious enough that his help to France was, in part at least, due to the desire to utilize his accumulations of war material to secure an inexpensive success in foreign policy, and had not necessarily any more far-reaching ends. The British Government accordingly announced its neutrality, and made it clear that it wished to avoid taking sides either in the Spanish civil struggle, or in the European conflict of ideologies which might easily develop into a European war. At the same time it left no doubt that it could not tolerate annexations of Spanish territory—by the Germans in Spanish Morocco, or the Italians in Majorca—after the war.

The German Government had made the conclusion

of a Franco-Soviet pact on 27 February 1936 its excuse for reoccupying the Rhineland and withdrawing from the Locarno system. The British Government had replied that it did not consider that its own obligations to France and Belgium had lapsed. After a plebiscite on 29 March, the German Government published a proposal for a European settlement to include a twenty-five years' security pact between Germany and her western neighbours, a Franco-German agreement on 'moral disarmament', and a German re-entry into the League. A questionnaire by the British Government on 6 May was considered, however, to throw doubt on Germany's intentions, and no reply was given. When a proposal was made in July for a meeting of the Locarno powers other than Germany, Italy refused, and thereby gave the first sign of the existence of the Rome-Berlin Axis. It was publicly proclaimed by Mussolini in a speech at Milan on 1 November; on 18 November the two powers issued identical statements recognizing Franco's organization as the government of Spain; the Anti-Comintern pact between Germany and Japan was concluded on 21 November, and joined by Italy a year later (6 November 1937).

But in Spain events took an awkward turn for the Axis powers. The recognition of Franco at a moment when Madrid seemed about to fall was apparently due to a belief that the end of the war was in sight. Russian supplies at this critical moment helped to save the capital, and the war dragged on and on throughout 1937 and 1938 after the Axis powers had committed themselves. For all his bluster Mussolini could not fail to realize that this long and doubtful struggle was damaging both to Italy's pocket and her prestige, and his willingness to accept the pretence of non-intervention as long as possible was evidence of considerable concern as to how much the British would stand.

In the 'Gentleman's Agreement' of 2 January 1937 England and Italy disclaimed any desire 'to see modified the *status quo* as regards national sovereignty of territories in the Mediterranean region'. During the succeeding months there were repeated attacks on neutral shipping, often it seemed by Italian aeroplanes and submarines in Franco's service, in various parts of the Mediterranean, and vessels attacked even included four British warships. An international committee, including Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and the U.S.S.R., had been meeting in London since 9 September 1936 to discover means of making effective the principle of non-intervention, and these attacks were a significant measure of its failure. A conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea powers was accordingly convened at Nyon to deal with this further crisis; Germany, who had been invited, and Italy, made the participation of the Soviet Union an excuse for refusing attendance. Nevertheless an agreement was signed on 14 September 1937, by which the participating powers made arrangements for counter-attacks, and for the defence of shipping routes. Italy found it expedient to accept and participate in the arrangements, which led to a rapid improvement in the position; the countermeasures of the British fleet showed, indeed, that the democracies were not incapable of conducting a 'white war' to their own advantage.

Germany by this stage had adopted a much more restrained attitude; her warships withdrew from the Mediterranean, and her troops and experts in Spain, which had never been so numerous as the Italian, appear to have received orders to act as unostentatiously as possible. Although the Italian Government finally abandoned any pretence of indifference to the result, and made it clear that it would not withdraw its troops until Franco was victorious, the British Government

decided to make the best of a bad job, and to assume that Mussolini would be glad to bring the Anglo-Italian tension to an end of he could do so without loss of prestige at home and abroad. The Anglo-Italian agreement of April 1938 was the result. The agreement was a comprehensive one; its essential basis was a promise by Great Britain to facilitate the recognition of the Italian position in Abyssinia, and an Italian promise to adhere to the British plan for the withdrawal of 'volunteers' from Spain. Great Britain stipulated that the agreement should not come into force until the Spanish question was settled. Italy disclaimed any intention of seeking a political, economic, or territorial foothold in Spain. The final victory of Franco and withdrawal of the Italian troops in 1939 showed that Italy had gained little advantage from all her efforts.

Throughout Great Britain had, in following the policy of non-intervention, based herself on the hope that Spanish national pride would, after the war, prevent any permanent control or occupation of Spanish territory by foreign powers, and that, in the long run, the Spanish people might be most grateful to those who interfered least. If this assumption was sound a victory for either side would have more or less the same result as far as British interests were concerned. But in practice neutrality, or non-intervention, would mean the victory of Franco, who could continue to draw support from Italy and Germany as long as he needed it, and the recognition that its policy of neutrality made Franco's success inevitable undoubtedly influenced the attitude of the Government in its negotiations with Italy after 1937.

CHAPTER XI

THE FAR EAST, 1933–9

AFTER the Japanese notice of withdrawal from the League in March, and the Tangku truce in May 1933, there was a temporary and partial improvement in Far Eastern relations. But all too soon signs began to multiply that Japan would not be content with her already considerable gains, and was embarking on a phase of military and economic imperialism at the expense both of China and of Great Britain herself. By 1935 the policy of freezing out foreign (non-Japanese) interests had already gone far in Manchukuo; the Open Door was in theory maintained, but secret discrimination in favour of Japanese goods was believed to be widespread. In one important instance, the setting up of an oil monopoly in November 1934, the Open Door policy was openly flouted. This measure, which came into force in April 1935, made the sale and distribution of oil a government monopoly, and eliminated foreign companies from the profitable field of distribution. British interests suffered considerably from this move. In general British capital investments appear to have fallen by about half between 1930 and 1936; but even in the former year they formed only 1·7 per cent of the total foreign investments in Manchukuo. On the other hand the British-American Tobacco Company, which seemed to have some understanding with the Japanese authorities, was able to extend its activities from North China into Manchukuo in 1936.

Up to this stage the monopolistic tendencies of the Japanese were important to Great Britain rather as a symptom than because of her direct loss of trade. They

accompanied the enunciation in Tokyo of Japan's 'Asiatic Monroe Doctrine', and the extension of Japanese military control into North China in 1935. Statements by M. Hirota, the Foreign Minister, on 23 January 1934, and by subsequent Government spokesmen, indicated that Japan claimed a special and exclusive responsibility for the maintenance of peace in Eastern Asia; she interpreted this as giving her the right to go to war if necessary in order to maintain and extend her own political and economic hold over China, and to prevent that of other powers. In May 1935 the Japanese military authorities took advantage of an incident in Peiping (Peking) to demand the abolition of the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist) headquarters in North China, and the withdrawal of the governor of Hopei and his troops from Peiping. The Chinese complied, and on 6 June agreed to the further Japanese demand that all Chinese Nationalist troops should be withdrawn from northern China. From this point the five northern provinces of China passed under the political and military control of the Japanese army commanders. The economic penetration of the area was restricted by the relative shortage of available capital in Japan, but it was quite sufficient during the next two years to cause considerable damage to British interests.

In these circumstances the growing incompatibility between British and Japanese policy could no longer be concealed. Three courses were, in effect, open to Great Britain. She could, recognizing that a life-and-death struggle between China and Japan was imminent, and that her old position and privileges in the Far East could no longer be maintained, cut her losses and withdraw more or less completely from the field. Or she could, more or less cautiously, throw in her lot with one or other of the two combatants. It had

certainly not become necessary for her to adopt the first course in 1937, and all circumstances made it more and more clear that her own position was bound up with the existence of a peaceful, independent, and prosperous China. This had, in the first place, been the object of her Far Eastern policy for the last hundred years; now, as in the nineteenth century, she had every reason to desire the 'Open Door', and to oppose foreign intervention which would reduce the prosperity and accessibility of the Chinese market. In the second place a pact with Japan for the joint exploitation of the Chinese market, even if it could have been made acceptable to public opinion in Japan and Great Britain, would have entailed unpleasant consequences; if successful Japan, as the dominant partner, would probably have swallowed the lion's share of the spoils; if unsuccessful, the British would have received short shrift from the triumphant Chinese nationalists. In the third place the 'ideological' factors in the international situation ruled out any revival of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Great Britain had made her choice between Japan and the United States in 1921; popular British and American sympathy for the Chinese as victims of Japanese aggression had been stimulated by events since 1931, while Japan's association with Germany and Italy, and her defiance of the League of Nations, had associated her irrevocably with the 'anti-democratic' front. The translation into English and wide publicity of a book like Commander Tota Ishimaru's *Japan Must Fight Britain*, published in 1934, had widened the breach by revealing both the widespread resentment in Japan at British policy since the Washington Conference, and the existence of a 'naval' school of thought which regarded the British Empire, rather than China or the U.S.S.R., as the most desirable object of Japanese attack.

The last thing, however, that the British Government could desire was any breach of the *status quo*, and the Government was accordingly anxious to preserve Chinese independence and her own position by a Far Eastern policy of 'appeasement', that is, by finding some means of reconciling China and Japan. While assisting Chiang Kai-shek's plans for economic development and for political and military reorganization, the British were prepared to recognize 'legitimate' Japanese participation. On 11 July 1935 Sir Samuel Hoare defined the general aim of British policy as 'the maintenance of the principle of the "Open Door" coupled with full recognition of China's right to control her own destinies'. In the financial sphere there was an open challenge to the Amau Statement of April 1934, which had indicated clearly Japan's attempt to have the deciding voice in the granting of loans to China. The statement had been the direct result of reports that a British banking group was about to provide a loan of £1,500,000 to the Chinese Government, and of other schemes in which Japan would play little part. An official British mission visited China in the autumn of 1935, and in 1936, under Sir Frederick Leith-Ross; its purpose was to give the Chinese Government advice on problems of finance and currency, and it was able to assist in the important financial reforms which substituted a managed paper currency for silver. Sir Frederick paid two visits to Japan, and invited the Japanese Government and Japanese financiers to participate in an international scheme for the financial rehabilitation of China. There appears to have been some interest in the proposals in business circles, but the official world and army leaders insisted on regarding the mission as hostile to Japanese interests. British help to China in the financial sphere nevertheless continued. The provision of British capital for railway

construction and similar enterprises was encouraged; the sale of British goods was facilitated by the visit of a representative of the Export Credits department.

The plain fact was that Japanese policy was under the control of elements who had no intention of accepting the limited advantages assigned to them by the British and Chinese programmes. To these elements the U.S.S.R. was, as Mr. W. H. Chamberlin has remarked, 'public enemy number one', and this helped to curb anti-British activities; there were, however, many signs of rivalry. A direct result of this tension was the final extinction of any hopes of naval limitation. At the end of 1934 Japan gave notice of her intention to denounce the Washington naval agreements, and this became effective on 31 December 1936, at the end of the necessary two-year period. The London naval conference (December 1935–January 1936), was concerned primarily with the Japanese demand for the abolition of the 5–5–3 ratio of 1922, and for her own absolute parity with Great Britain and the United States. This demand met with an equally absolute refusal from the two other powers, and Japan left the conference. Even the decision to limit guns to a maximum calibre of 14 inches, arrived at after Japan's withdrawal, failed through her refusal to accept it. Reasons of prestige played a large part in this decision, for Japan's resentment in 1922 at the apparent inferiority implied by the earlier ratio had played some part in her present glorification of her role as 'only corner-stone for the edifice of the peace of East Asia'. It was also argued that technical advances in the cruising range of submarines and aircraft reduced the value to Japan of the demilitarization of the western Pacific which she had secured in 1922. The fact remained that the uneasy balance of forces of the Washington Conference was destroyed, and a direct

competition in armaments between Japan and Great Britain foreshadowed. On the British side the development of the Singapore base advanced steadily.

Anglo-Japanese rivalry became increasingly marked in 1936 and 1937. Since the summer of 1935 Japan's efforts to dominate the economic life of northern China had not met with the success expected, owing to the very considerable powers of passive resistance developed by local Chinese officials, newspapers, business interests, and so on, and the inability of the Japanese to find sufficient capital to overcome this non-co-operation by taking over the direct exploitation of the region. By 1937 Japan had acquired control of about 50 per cent of the total cotton industry of China, and the local Chinese industry had been practically ruined. Capital for investment in other large-scale industrial enterprises was, however, not very abundant, and the Chinese capitalists were too wary to put their resources into the hands of the enemy. A more effective means of penetration was the facilitation of smuggling on the coasts under Japanese control; the Japanese objected both to the diversion of customs revenues to Nanking and to the existence of the duties themselves. The intense rationalization that had been carried out in Japanese industry since 1931 had already placed Japan in a highly favourable position as a competitor with the white industrial powers, and had practically eliminated British textiles from the Chinese market. The advantage for Japan would obviously be even greater if she could get her goods into China free of the duty which other powers had to pay. At Shanhaikwan, Peitaiho, and other ports north of Peiping the local customs officials were forbidden to carry revolvers, or maintain armed revenue cutters, and were accordingly helpless to resist the landing of goods by armed Japanese and Korean smugglers.

Great Britain was also affected, as the customs revenues were security for certain foreign loans. The detention and ill-treatment of three British sailors by Japanese police in the port of Keelung in Formosa supplied an incident of the type which was bound to occur in such circumstances. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the affair it helped considerably, in the autumn of 1936, to increase the existing tension. The elaborate manœuvres at Singapore in February 1937 called attention to the growing strength of this new British base of operations in the Far East.

The Sino-Japanese hostilities commenced with the Lukowkiao incident of July 1937. After the failure of local efforts at settlement fighting became more general, and by the end of the month the Japanese were in complete control of Peiping and Tientsin. The resistance of the Chinese nationalists probably surprised them; a full-scale war between the two countries nevertheless followed. The decision of Chiang Kai-shek's Government to make its stand at this point had been foreshadowed by several recent developments. The plans for national reorganization had made rapid progress since 1933; the Communists, after a decisive defeat in 1934, had been forced into the poorer north-western provinces, and had been ready by the summer of 1936 to accept Chiang Kai-shek's leadership in war against the Japanese. The new tactics of the Comintern, and the fact that China had in many ways proved an unsatisfactory field for communism of the Moscow type, facilitated this reconciliation. The curious incident in December 1936, when Chiang Kai-shek was kidnapped by the young Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang, had demonstrated the existence of widespread loyalty to the Nanking Government, and a strong desire for war against the Japanese, rather than against the Communists. During

the first half of 1937 the Chinese Government had shown a decidedly more resistant attitude towards Japanese demands. Nevertheless, the war began without any very definite plan of campaign, and it was only after heavy losses among the best Chinese troops in the fighting around Shanghai and Nanking that the policy of strategic retreat into the interior was adopted. The Japanese hoped that the fall of Nanking on 13 December 1937 would end the war. On 16 December Chiang Kai-shek announced that there would be no surrender, and the Japanese in reply declared in effect that they would continue the war until the Nationalist Government had been overthrown. There was a serious reverse for the Japanese at Taierchwang in April 1938, and although they succeeded in capturing Suchow on 19 May the main body of the Chinese forces escaped. In the same way, although the Wuhan cities fell to the Japanese in October, the bulk of the Chinese forces made a further orderly retreat towards Chungking.

The war did not bring any modification in the general direction of British policy, although her commitments in Europe, and the danger of Japanese retaliation on the isolated British interests and concessions, made it necessary to exercise great caution in the execution of any pro-Chinese policy. Public opinion in Great Britain expressed strong sympathy with China as the victim of Japanese aggression. In the autumn of 1937 a general wave of popular protest against the bombing of Chinese towns culminated in a public meeting on 5 October at the Albert Hall under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Labour and Liberal Oppositions in Parliament were in favour of economic pressure being put on Japan, although they did not make an unqualified demand for the imposition of economic sanctions. The Government,

however, soon discovered that, as in 1932, the other League powers and the United States had no intention of going beyond formal condemnation of the fact of Japanese aggression, and had no desire to undertake any more practical form of coercion: in spite of this prudent, though unheroic, policy they still seemed inclined, in some cases, to consider that Great Britain had some moral obligation to take up a more decided attitude of resistance.

The League Assembly on 28 September 1937 condemned the aerial bombardment of open Chinese towns, and on 6 October condemned Japan's general policy in conducting military operations in China. It also proposed a conference of members of the League who were signatories of the Nine-Power treaty, but, as this would have excluded Japan, the Belgian Government, after conversations between Washington and London, invited the original nine powers and later signatories to a conference at Brussels. The conference, nevertheless, met (on 3 November) without Japan, who had declined the invitation. It issued a final appeal for Japanese participation, but this was again refused, and on 15 November it drafted a declaration condemning Japan's aim 'to change by armed force the policy of China', and refusing to accept Japan's view that its action did not fall within the scope of the treaty. No further steps were taken; after China in September 1938 had asked for the application of Article 17 of the Covenant, Article 16 (the sanctions article) came theoretically into operation, but on 22 September Great Britain submitted proposals to the Council based on the growing practice of regarding the sanctions obligation as optional. Accordingly on 30 September the Council adopted a resolution which recognized that China was entitled to the sympathy of other members of the League, whose duty it was to

consider how far they could individually extend aid to her.

The French Government was determined not to provoke any Japanese attack on French Indo-China, and in October 1937 decided to prohibit the passage of munitions through that region by the Yunnan railway to the Chinese armies, although this prohibition does not appear to have been completely applied. Down to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 the United States continued to express moral condemnation of Japan's war policy, to sell war material to Japan, to maintain the doctrine of non-recognition with regard to Manchuria, and to refuse either to create a first-rate naval base in the western Pacific or to join with other powers in pressing on Japan any programme which might lead to war. But while 'isolationist' ideas predominated in her China policy the possibility of a more active policy was not entirely excluded. The Neutrality Act of May 1937 was, in spite of strong isolationist pressure, not invoked; President Roosevelt stated on 6 September 1937 that he felt the Act to be on a different basis in the Far East than in Europe. A week later Government-owned ships were forbidden to transport arms or munitions to the two belligerents, although others might do so. The British Government's aim, as it had been since 1935, was to proceed 'step by step' with other powers, and particularly the United States, and a somewhat more open support of China by the latter led to similar action by the British after the end of 1938.

By the end of 1938 it had also become only too evident that the loss and disturbance to British interests in China was not due merely to unavoidable war conditions, but to the deliberate policy of the Japanese authorities. Owing mainly perhaps to her innumerable direct contacts with the Japanese army authorities in

the ports she had become the chief object of Japanese resentment against the white powers who were more or less openly hampering the Japanese operations, although her direct assistance to Chiang Kai-shek's Government was comparatively small. Little help in the form of munitions could be sent by Great Britain to either China or Japan, for the very good reason that her own rearmament programme was absorbing the bulk of her domestic output; the United States seems to have been throughout the main source of supply of both belligerents. Imports of raw and finished materials from the United States represented 56 per cent of Japan's total imports in 1938; a further 20 per cent came from parts of the British Empire outside Europe. It has been estimated that in that year Japan obtained 85 per cent of her essential war materials from the United States, the British Empire, and the Dutch East Indies, and only 8 per cent from her two Axis partners. China, in fact, received considerable supplies of munitions, arms, and aeroplanes from Italy and Germany, and this aid certainly greatly exceeded the supplies that she received from Great Britain. At the end of the first year of war the U.S.S.R. was said by Japan to have supplied China with 500 aeroplanes, 200 pilots, and other help. Germany maintained officially an attitude of neutrality; she was reluctant to see Japan, a potential ally against Russia, weaken herself; she hoped also to share in the future exploitation of the Chinese markets. On 5 July 1938 the German experts who had been organizing the Chinese armies left Hankow as a result of pressure from Berlin; but the supply of munitions continued. Great Britain's part in all this traffic lay in the fact that after the opening stages of the struggle the main source of supply lay through Hong Kong and so to the Chinese headquarters by the Canton-Hankow railway. This route she refused to

close, in spite of Japanese pressure; she was under no obligation in the matter in international law as Japan and China had not technically declared war.

Japan was able to retaliate by severing the connexions between the British entrepôt coastal centres and the interior. A competent American study (*Far Eastern Survey*, 27 September 1939) shows that at Tientsin the vast trading connexions and business organizations built up by British firms in the eighty years since the opening of the city have been threatened with extinction by the Japanese use of the railways to squeeze British interests out of North China. To these measures must be added 'the establishment of monopolies, export prohibitions, exchange control regulations, tariff revisions favourable to Japanese products, and inefficient telegraph services'. By the end of 1938 the position at Tientsin was serious, in spite of a temporary increase in trade resulting from the diversion of business from other ports, and the tolerance shown by the Japanese to the Kailan Mining Administration and the British-American Tobacco Company, which were supplying commodities of which Japan was in need.

The same difficulties, on a vaster scale, were found in Shanghai. In the city were to be found about 60 per cent of the total British investments in China, estimated at about £250,000,000 in 1937. Shanghai as the chief port of the Yangtze commanded the great lines of communication by rail and river to the centre of China, and before the war this trade was practically a Sino-British monopoly. These communications were necessarily interrupted during the fighting around Shanghai, but during the course of 1938 it became increasingly evident that although the river remained closed on the grounds of military necessity to British vessels, a large trade was being done by the Japanese, and that Japan was endeavouring to maintain a

monopoly of this vast market. Access to the raw materials of the interior had also been interrupted, and rail communication greatly restricted. As at Tientsin there has been a temporary war boom which has only partially disguised the basic gravity of the situation. In October 1938 it was estimated that there had been a decline of over £120,000,000 in the value of British investments throughout China.

Meanwhile the British Government, in the throes of the Austrian and Czechoslovak crises in Europe, was forced to adopt a cautious attitude, and received no satisfaction from conversations in the summer of 1938 between the British ambassador and General Ugaki, the Foreign Minister. At the beginning of October Japan informed the League that if any League member resorted to sanctions against her she would adopt counter-measures. On 11 October Japanese troops landed at Bias Bay, and on 21 October, after a rapid advance, entered Canton. This move had been anticipated since the beginning of 1938, and was said to have been delayed owing to the Japanese fear of trouble with Great Britain. The Munich agreement, and the failure of the Soviet forces to continue fighting after the Chang-kufeng crisis on the Manchukuoan border, appear to have convinced the Japanese that they could move troops out of Manchukuo to Canton, and that Great Britain would not interfere. The effect of the move was finally to cut off Hong Kong and Canton from the interior. During the first eight months of 1938 Hong Kong had actually had a considerable increase in business as compared with the pre-war period, but this had been due to the munitions traffic, the diversion of some of the trade that had previously gone through Shanghai, the influx of well-to-do refugees, and other transitory causes.

In the Speech from the Throne on 8 November 1938

the British Government emphasized its readiness to mediate at any favourable opportunity, and for a time it showed considerable anxiety not to push the differences with Japan any further. Already, however, a substantial reorientation of British Far Eastern policy was in progress, and the Government showed its hand a little more openly after the end of the year.

The basis of the new policy was the development of a fourth great route of supply for Chiang Kai-shek and his armies by a long series of road and rail communications from Rangoon to Chungking. The opening of this route, which had hitherto been quite out of the reach of Japanese attack, would help to supply both the war needs of China and to further the plans for the development of its vast and backward south-western area. It would enable the Nationalist armies to equip and prepare themselves for future campaigns against the invader, and at the same time provide a vast field for capital investment and for the supply of British capital goods. It would supply a valuable compensation for the loss of business in the coastal region, and at the same time prepare for the ultimate emancipation of that region by a successful Chinese offensive. The route follows the railway north from Rangoon to the railhead at Lashio; from Lashio there is a good all-weather road to the Burma-Yunnan frontier at Wanting. The road from this point through desolate country to Chungking had been surveyed and partly built before the war. Work was recommenced seriously by the Chinese in December 1937, and the completion of the road, in face of heart-breaking geographical and engineering difficulties, is undoubtedly an amazing achievement. At the height of the operations more than 120,000 labourers were engaged, and a vast amount of work has still to be put into the enterprise. But Rangoon, far beyond the

reach of Japanese armies, and adequately protected by the Singapore base, cannot be closed by any one except Great Britain.

The Nationalist Government has repeatedly invited foreign investments which would not infringe Chinese sovereignty, and welcomed them not merely for war purposes, but for the economic rehabilitation which must follow peace. On 19 December 1938 the British Government, encouraged by the recent American decision to authorize a loan of £5,000,000 for the financing of American exports to China, announced its intention to consider the grant of a credit of about £500,000 to facilitate British exports, mainly in the form of lorries to be used by China on the new Burma road. In March 1939 it took a much bigger step by providing £5,000,000 to help establish a currency stabilization fund which would facilitate China's trade with the outside world, and therefore with Great Britain. Other schemes included the commencement of a Sino-British undertaking to connect Kunming by rail with Rangoon, and the use of the remitted British Boxer Indemnity funds for the purchase of railway, telegraph, and telephone equipment.

By the spring of 1939 it was evident that in entering the war Japan had gravely miscalculated her chances, and that her military effort had not been sufficient to destroy Chiang Kai-shek's army and Government. Growing exasperation among the army leaders at this continued frustration of their efforts produced a serious and open attack on foreign interests, particularly the British, and in July and August 1939 this crisis attained proportions which almost overshadowed the Danzig problem in Europe. The basis of these attacks was the Japanese belief that the help which the Chinese forces were still receiving from the foreign concessions was the major factor in their continued resistance.

Attempts to destroy the financial position of the Chinese yen by the institution in March 1938 of a new currency based on the Federal Reserve Bank had hitherto failed: the failure was due in part to the lack of sufficient reserve of specie, in part to the Chinese exchange stabilization fund, by which with British financial help the Chinese Government had been able to keep up confidence in the national dollar. The Chinese authorities had deposited silver valued at 57 million Chinese dollars for safe keeping in the British and French concessions at Tientsin. In addition the concessions were regarded as a refuge for active anti-Japanese and Communist elements. In May 1939 there were a number of incidents which indicated growing hostility to the foreigner. Early in the month the Japanese naval authorities issued a manifesto demanding greater Japanese representation on the Shanghai Municipal Council; this was followed by anti-British demonstrations, and on 12 May Japanese marines landed at the International Settlement of Kulangsu, near Amoy. British, French, and American warships went to Amoy, and the three countries made representations locally and in Tokyo against these attacks on foreign 'rights'. On 14 June the Japanese instituted a blockade of the British concession at Tientsin. The ostensible reason was that the British authorities had, on the grounds of insufficient evidence, refused to hand over four Chinese, alleged to have assassinated Dr. S. G. Cheng on 9 April. The blockade was accompanied by a partial stoppage of food supplies, and various unpleasant incidents, when British men and women were searched, slapped, and otherwise insulted at the barriers. While the Japanese Government maintained that the issue was a purely local one, army spokesmen and the Press, and on 23 June the Peiping provisional Government, indicated further

demands, such as the immediate handing over of terrorists and Communists, immediate delivery of the silver deposited in the settlement by the Chinese National Government, and full co-operation with the régime's currency policy. It soon became clear that the Japanese were relying on British distractions in Europe to secure effective control of the concession; they had no desire to get into trouble with the U.S.A., but had persuaded themselves that the latter would not intervene.

At the end of June Anglo-Japanese discussions in Tokyo were announced, and the Tientsin tension relaxed somewhat. Throughout the first half of July the Japanese were trying to avoid trouble with the other powers by representing the discussions as an exploration of the 'background of the Tientsin situation'. On 24 July Mr. Chamberlain announced that conversations between the Japanese Foreign Minister and the British ambassador had produced a formula by which Great Britain recognized that during the war 'Japanese forces have special requirements' in protecting themselves and maintaining public order, and that the British Government would not countenance acts or measures prejudicial to these Japanese objectives. In many quarters this was taken to signify Great Britain's surrender, and in the United States there was also a tendency to grumble at the betrayal of white man's rights. On 25 July, however, the *New York Herald Tribune* pointed out the difficulties of the European situation and the fact that the U.S.A. had 'given Great Britain absolutely no encouragement to defend those treaty rights with which ours are bound up'. On the following day the United States Government came dramatically into the foreground by announcing the denunciation of the Trade Treaty with Japan of February 1911.

From this point the Tientsin crisis began to lose something of its previous acuteness. The American action was a genuine shock to Japan, who could not continue the war without American supplies, and who had apparently convinced herself of American sympathy. When early in August the Japanese authorities demanded that the British should prohibit the circulation of the Chinese national currency in Tientsin the British Government replied that it must consult other governments—particularly France and the United States—before deciding. This led to the postponement of the discussions; on 13 August it was announced that the Japanese army representatives were returning to their duties in China. In spite of a good deal of grumbling at Great Britain's 'insincere' attitude it was evident that the Japanese authorities did not wish to involve themselves in further complications with the United States. The announcement of the German-Soviet pact caused a great revulsion of feeling against Germany; Baron Hiranuma's Government resigned on 28 August, on the grounds that the pact had destroyed the basis of its foreign policy, and General Abe came into office with the policy of a 'clean slate'. Although Japan was determined to bring the Chinese war to a successful end there was a noticeable tendency to abandon the more extreme talk of an Asiatic Monroe doctrine, and Great Britain was allowed to conduct the war in Europe without serious distractions in Asia. There was considerable reason to hope that the United States, while remaining neutral in Europe, would undertake the protection of legitimate white interests in the Far East.

CHAPTER XII

GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY, 1938

THE PROBLEM

A NEW phase of Hitler's foreign policy commenced in February 1938. Up to the summer of 1936 he had been concerned with the restoration of Germany's position as a great power; from then until the end of 1937 with the consolidation of the new position by the completion of rearmament and the testing of some of the new men and equipment in the Spanish war. At the beginning of 1938, as he told an audience at Saarbrücken on 9 October, he had decided to bring back to the Reich the ten million Germans outside it, and he was fully aware that only by the Reich's own strength could this be achieved. This policy was followed for the next eighteen months in spite of ominous signs of increasing hostility in western Europe, and with a striking deterioration in the capacity for the accurate computation of risks which had seemed to characterize his earlier career.

In England also a distinctive new phase of foreign policy, under the Prime Minister's personal direction, commenced in February 1938. Since his accession to office in May 1937 Mr. Neville Chamberlain had shown his anxiety to grapple with the increasingly serious condition of foreign affairs, and from the start took an active and intelligent interest in rearmament and the modernization of the army. The aim of his foreign policy was 'appeasement', although, as he himself pointed out in March 1939, the word and the policy were to be given many meanings contrary to the Government's real intentions. The execution of this policy was to lead to several resignations from the

Government during the course of the year, but there appears to have been little difference of opinion as to the gravity of the situation facing the country and the necessity for an early solution of at least some of the outstanding differences with foreign powers. The problem may be stated in its simplest terms by saying that at the beginning of 1938 Great Britain had to face more or less direct challenges to the Empire from three great powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—at a moment when her existing political, military, and economic resources were not sufficient to allow her to fight, with reasonable hope of success, more than one of these powers at a time. It was on these lines that the Prime Minister defended his policy in reply to the Labour vote of censure on 19 December 1938, moved by Mr. Dalton. 'I say that his policy would have involved us in war simultaneously with Japan, with Germany, and with Italy.' An early attempt to simplify the problem by coming to terms with at least one of these opponents was imperative, and it was in Europe, rather than in Asia, that the Government hoped for a settlement. Japan remained the greatest direct danger to the Empire: with her there was no real hope of a settlement, and in spite of the increasing seriousness of the European situation during 1938 and 1939 cautious support of the Chinese Nationalists continued. On the other hand the weak strategical and economic position of Italy, the unprofitable nature of her Abyssinian and Spanish adventures, and her secret alarm at Germany's Danubian and Balkan policy, justified the hope that the Anglo-Italian treaty of April 1938, with the recognition of the Abyssinian conquest as the main British concession, might be genuinely welcomed by the Duce as a means of extricating himself from the quarrel with England without loss of face.

The crux of the situation was clearly Germany, and here the problem seemed almost to be one of morbid psychology rather than of politics. In essentials British policy was still what it had been for many years before 1933. It was recognized that the German people as a whole had grievances arising from the Versailles treaty which, rightly or wrongly, they regarded as legitimate; it was recognized also that there were political elements in the Nazi party which intended to exploit this sense of grievance for more ambitious ends. Would the removal of the more specific grievances (mainly territorial) have a sufficiently calming effect on public opinion in Germany, and on the more moderate elements in the Nazi party, to make it expedient for the governing clique to abandon the vaguer and wilder plans of conquest? Or would success produce ever bolder demands for more? Many people in western Europe and the United States would have liked to see a policy of resistance applied as early as the time of the reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936; but nothing would probably have done more to convince the German people of the necessity for the Nazi régime. It was certain that neither a policy of unqualified concession nor one of unqualified resistance by foreign powers after 1933 would have removed the Nazi question from European politics: the real problem was to discover the point at which a policy of 'appeasement' by concession would, by creating new ambitions, begin to defeat its own purpose. Germany's demands in 1938 were for the return of the colonies, and the incorporation in the Reich of the ten million or so Germans in Austria and the western districts of Czechoslovakia; in the background were her claims to further German-speaking minorities in districts adjacent to the Reich frontiers—in Memel, Danzig, perhaps in Silesia, Eupen and

Malmédy, Slesvig, Switzerland, and Luxembourg. More remote still at the moment appeared to be the claim to *Lebensraum*: for the right to control and exploit the territory of non-German peoples for the benefit of the Reich. There was little likelihood that British opinion would acquiesce in the execution of more than a fraction of this programme; on the other hand the Führer had been noticeably cautious in pressing his claims on England, and had made it clear enough in *Mein Kampf*, in the Naval Agreement of 1935, and in his various references to the return of the colonies, that, for the time being at any rate, he desired the friendship, and even the alliance, of Great Britain.

How far the British Government acted on the belief that, by acquiescence in Germany's plans in central and eastern Europe, it would postpone trouble over the colonial question, is difficult to say. In fact the ultimate aims of the Chamberlain policy are decidedly obscure. There was no categorical refusal (until November 1938) to consider the return of the colonies, and British Governments since 1919 had given so many examples—as in India, Egypt, and Irak —of their willingness to reduce or abandon their control over colonial areas that a surrender of the not very valuable German African colonies was not at all a remote possibility. Nor does the view that the Government was 'building up' Germany to attack Russia appear very plausible: it was unlikely that Germany would ever attempt so rash a policy, and if she did her preparations and increased armaments would help to perpetuate the economic crisis which the Government would certainly have preferred to end. Nor does it appear that in temperament and political outlook there was really much in common between the English Tory-Democratic traditions of the Chamberlain Cabinet and the strong-arm lower

bourgeois totalitarianism of Berlin, although many of the Prime Minister's opponents took pleasure in calling him *Gauleiter* Chamberlain. On the whole it seems safest to conclude that the Government really did desire 'appeasement': that is, it hoped by satisfying the more immediate and more legitimate German demands to end the sinister fermentations in German opinion which were driving Europe and the Reich to dangerous extremes of economic and military nationalism. It recognized the existence of abnormality in the German political mentality, and sought by inexpensive kindness to remove it. As it conceived the position the real problem was to satisfy a genuine, though exaggerated, German grievance by means which would prevent, and not encourage, further aggression. It recognized, though not sufficiently clearly, that mere acceptance of the right of might would not produce peace.

As the Sudeten crisis developed it was not altogether easy for the Government to know what the country really demanded. British public opinion has always been ready enough to express sympathy for the small state threatened by a powerful neighbour, but it may be doubted whether that feeling has ever been in itself strong enough to drive the Government into war. The withdrawal by the Government of the day of any form of approval or support of the aggressor has normally been enough to satisfy the common man's sense of responsibility, and it was noticeable in the autumn of 1938 that the Prime Minister's critics seemed far more indignant at his alleged connivance in the annexation of the Sudetenland than at his failure to go to war to stop it. It must be added that aggressive action on the continent of Europe by a great power against a smaller power has very readily excited fears, sometimes exaggerated, in the Englishman's mind concerning his own security, and Hitler was probably

genuinely bewildered at the tendency of the British public to discover in his central European policy a German threat to Great Britain.

AUSTRIA

The new course in Germany was heralded by a peaceful purge of German high officers on 4 February; fifteen generals, including General von Fritsch, the Commander-in-Chief, were retired, others were promoted, and von Ribbentrop, the ambassador to London, replaced the more staid von Neurath as Foreign Secretary. The effect of these changes was to remove the chief army and civilian critics of a forward policy; Hitler himself took over the Ministry of War, and Goering was made a field-marshal. The arrest in Vienna on 26 January of Dr. Tavs, a leading Austrian Nazi, had already indicated the possibility of a fresh German campaign against Austria: it was perhaps no mere coincidence that on 10 February the Italian ambassador informed the British Foreign Office that his Government was ready to discuss with Great Britain a comprehensive settlement of outstanding differences.

The Prime Minister's willingness to embark on the discussions, which led to the Anglo-Italian agreement of 16 April (see p. 199), resulted in Mr. Eden's resignation on 20 February. By an unfortunate chance the resignation crisis coincided with, and helped to obscure the significance of, Hitler's speech of the same day. In his letter to the Prime Minister, and in the Commons debate on the 21st, Eden made it clear that he did not object to European appeasement, but considered that concessions to Italy at this stage, when so many previous pledges concerning the Mediterranean remained unfulfilled, would merely encourage further aggression. Viscount Cranborne, who resigned with him, said that conversations with Italy at this moment

would be merely 'surrender to blackmail'. A reference by Eden to other points of difference seemed to indicate disagreement concerning German policy. In his reply in the Commons Chamberlain asked if any one there thought 'that they can ever obtain peace by continuing a vendetta and even refusing to talk about their differences'? As events turned out his belief that Italy would respond favourably to a British attempt at reconciliation appears to have been justified.

The Austrian drama developed rapidly. Dr. Schuschnigg visited Berchtesgaden on the 12th, and the outcome of stormy scenes with the Führer was his agreement to surrender the Ministry of the Interior to a prominent Austrian Nazi, to an unrestricted amnesty for the Nazis, and to their inclusion in the *Vaterländische Front*. Eight other demands he was said to have refused, on the grounds that they could only be granted by President Miklas. Hitler in return promised that his forthcoming Reichstag speech should give his personal guarantee of Austrian independence, and that the Reich would no longer countenance and support illegal Nazi activities. Even so the terms meant the end of Austrian independence. Hitler had treated his visitor to one of his exhibitions of simulated frenzy, had called him 'Jesuit's spawn', spoken with sobs of 'My people—my dear, dear tortured German people', and shouted, 'I am the greatest of all Germans—the greatest German who has ever lived, do you hear?' Schuschnigg made a last-minute attempt to save his country by negotiations with the Austrian socialist leaders, and on 9 March announced a plebiscite to be held on the 13th to answer the question: 'Are you for a free and German, independent and social, Christian and united Austria?' Germany demanded on the 11th that the plebiscite should be called off; Schuschnigg resigned, and his

successor, Seyss-Inquart, at once invited Hitler to send German troops into Austria to preserve order. Overwhelming forces of German troops, 'planes, and tanks at once crossed the frontiers; the result was certainly to prevent the bloodshed of a war, but thousands of leaders and followers of the *Vaterländische Front* were imprisoned, shot, thrown into concentration camps, or publicly humiliated in the streets of Vienna.

The idea that Austria must be 'written off' was already familiar in political circles in England. On 21 February Sir John Simon reminded the House of Commons that Great Britain had given no special guarantee of Austrian independence. On 3 March Sir Nevile Henderson had an interview with Hitler and Ribbentrop concerning Anglo-German relations, and Ribbentrop visited London immediately after, but the discussions made little progress, and were broken off as a result of the Austrian crisis. On 14 March Mr. Chamberlain made in Parliament a strong protest against the German action; he denied that the Government had ever given assent or encouragement to the effective absorption of Austria into the Reich. He referred to the pledge at the Stresa conference of April 1935 to consult with France and Italy concerning Austrian independence, and said that the Government had fully discharged that pledge. The hard fact was 'that nothing could have arrested this action by Germany unless we and others with us had been prepared to use force to prevent it'. Nevertheless the sense of uncertainty and insecurity in Europe had been intensified, and the Government intended to review their defence programmes in the light of the new developments.

It was certainly true that no opposition to German action came from the powers most immediately concerned. Mussolini, who had made himself the chief

defender of Austria in the past, had given no support, or even a reply to Schuschnigg's last-minute appeals. Hitler sent a telegram of thanks, but Italian alarm at the *Anschluss* could not easily be concealed. In France Chautemps and his Cabinet resigned on 10 March, and the internal crisis lasted until the 13th, when M. Blum formed a government of Socialists and Radicals. This crisis did not in itself cause the German invasion, or prevent French intervention, but it obviously increased the practical difficulties which had for some months past led French official opinion to consider the abandonment of the former central European policy. In France, as in England, there remained the widest difference of opinion as to the value of Soviet co-operation with the western powers. In a three-days debate in the Chamber, 25–27 February, the Communists had demanded that the Franco-Soviet pact should be strengthened by a military alliance, while Flandin had argued that the sanctions policy had completely upset the Stresa agreements and their provision for joint Franco-Italian action concerning Austria and the Rhineland, and that France should recognize realities and seek a *rapprochement* with Germany and Italy. The result was really inconclusive; the debate ended in a vote of confidence in the Government, which proposed to steer a middle course. The Moscow Press condemned the *Anschluss*, but its most drastic criticisms were hurled at Great Britain, who was stated to have known of, and authorized, the German action. On the other hand Russia's own capacity for effective action was once more brought into question by the opening on 2 March of sensational fresh trials, involving Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda, Rakovsky, and seventeen others, the majority being highly placed members of the Political Bureau, Communist Party, or Government service. Rakovsky, a

former ambassador in London, said that he had been a member of the British Secret Service from 1924–36. Voluble confessions implicating the accused of wrecking activities, and of secret intrigues in conjunction with the German, British, and Japanese Secret Services, showed once again that there was either spontaneous and widespread hostility to Stalin's régime, or else a state of persecution mania in Stalin and his immediate supporters which was producing such hostility.

GREAT BRITAIN AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The fate of Austria at once turned attention to the problem of Czechoslovakia. The defence of this country against German attack was a treaty obligation of France and the U.S.S.R. France's obligations to Czechoslovakia were contained in the treaties of 25 January 1924 and 16 October 1925. A Czech-Soviet pact of Mutual Assistance had been signed on 16 May 1935; by this the U.S.S.R. undertook to defend Czechoslovakia against aggression, providing that France did the same. On 14 March 1938 M. Paul-Boncour, the new French Foreign Minister, assured M. Osusky, the Czechoslovak minister, that France would honour her engagements towards Czechoslovakia. On the following day the Soviet Government gave similar assurances, subject to the willingness of France to act.

Great Britain had no treaty obligation to defend Czechoslovakia, and her attitude ever since 1925 had been that her interests and military strength did not allow her to undertake the maintenance by force of Germany's eastern frontiers. It was equally clear that she could not remain indifferent to the problem created by the probable German threat to Czechoslovakia. Such a threat might affect British policy in three ways: (1) if, as was only too probable, the German Government acted with its usual screaming

propaganda and ostentatious brutality, British public opinion might compel the Government to adopt a policy of unqualified resistance; (2) if France became involved in war Great Britain would certainly come to her support if her defeat seemed possible; (3) the annexation of a part, or all, of Czechoslovakia might increase Germany's military and economic strength, stimulate the self-confidence of her 'wild men' and strengthen her for further adventures directly hostile to British interests.

The chief difficulties of the position were suggested by the last point. On the one hand it was argued that the annexation of those areas of western Czechoslovakia with a predominantly German population would necessitate the abandonment of the elaborately fortified mountain barrier forming her western frontier; industrially much of Czechoslovakia's industrial plant and raw material was situated dangerously near to her western frontier; she was the last democratic state to survive east of the Rhine, and her fall would probably lead, in Dr. Seton-Watson's words, to 'a stampede of the lesser Powers to make their terms with the rising star of Hitlerism'. Against this had to be urged the fact that the annexation of Austria had already turned the flank of the Czech position, and that, if Germany wished for military or economic expansion down the Danube valley, the way now lay open; Czechoslovakia's chance of conducting a successful war against Germany had passed when the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and the dissolution of the Stresa front, had made a rapid French advance into Germany impossible. Up to that point Czechoslovakia had adhered to the plan of taking the offensive from the Egerland by an advance west to join hands with the French. Fortifications similar to the Maginot line were planned in 1933, but were not pushed rapidly until 1936, and were not

completed in March 1938; the fact that they would be completed in 1939 was no doubt one reason for the acceleration of German action in the summer of 1938. It was, then, probable that in a general European war Czechoslovakia would not be able to defend itself against German attack for more than a limited period, and that in a strictly military and economic sense Germany had secured by the annexation of Austria the neutralization of Czechoslovakia's capacity to form an effective permanent check on Germany's strength. But while it could be argued that the real strength of an independent Czechoslovakia was over-estimated both in Germany and in western Europe it was also true that this exaggeration introduced the question of prestige, and that the Nazi politician was bound to assume that his country's strength had been increased, and his opponents' weakness demonstrated, by any dramatic success in this question.

The view was generally accepted in England that the German minority in Czechoslovakia was better treated than any other in Europe, and that its grievances were due to sentimental causes or economic depression rather than to the oppression or maladministration of Prague. Nevertheless, it was not easy to question the existence of a case for secession. The large German element had acquiesced in the state sullenly and from necessity, the predominant feeling amongst them seemed to favour annexation by Germany, and with the restored and powerful Reich as their neighbour it appeared hopeless to expect that they would ever agree to live amicably with the Czechs, or that a refusal of their demands could provide more than a temporary solution. *The Times* on 22 March said that if Great Britain were to be involved in war to keep the Sudeten Germans under Czech sovereignty against their wishes she would be fighting against the principle of self-determination.

The best remedy would be an international plebiscite. The *Observer* and the Conservative Press in general used similar language. The Government's policy was defined in the Prime Minister's speech on 24 March, which contained, in addition to specific references to the Czech problem, an indication of Mr. Chamberlain's outlook on foreign affairs.

'The fundamental basis of British policy was,' he said, 'the maintenance and preservation of peace and the establishment of a sense of confidence that peace will, in fact, be maintained.' This did not mean that nothing would make them fight; they had treaty obligations to defend France and Belgium (under the Locarno treaty), Portugal, Irak, and Egypt; they would fight to defend the territory of Great Britain and the Empire, 'and the communications which are vital to our national existence'. He indicated as plainly as possible his belief that the League in its present form could not be regarded as an effective instrument for preserving peace: for collective security it was not necessary to have the co-operation of all the fifty-eight nations, provided that they had the support of enough of the more powerful ones; such combinations, however, would not really differ from the old alliances of pre-war days, and would depend entirely on their strength and size, their military efficiency, and the distribution of their forces in relation to the area in which they might have to be employed. The remarks indicated that, whatever the Covenant might be held to prescribe, the Prime Minister believed that with her existing allies, resources, and commitments Great Britain was not strong enough to undertake the defence of interests much in excess of those already indicated, although such action was not altogether excluded. There was a vague reference to 'other cases' in which 'we might fight, if we were clear that either

we must fight or else abandon, once and for all, the hope of averting the destruction of those things we hold most dear'.

With regard to Czechoslovakia the Government was not, he said, prepared to promise to support France in implementing French obligations under the Franco-Czech treaty, or to give a direct guarantee of Czech independence and integrity. This would involve her in war, through circumstances over which she had no control; she could not accept this position in relation to an area in which her vital interests were not concerned to the same degree as they were in the case of France and Belgium. Nevertheless if war broke out 'the inexorable pressure of facts might well prove more powerful than formal pronouncements' and other countries would almost immediately become involved. He had clearly in mind the fact that Great Britain would be compelled, in almost any circumstances, to support France if she were seriously threatened by a German invasion.

In view of this explicit public statement it would seem that the remarks which Mr. Chamberlain made on the Czech problem to a group of American and Canadian journalists at Lord Astor's house in the second week of May have been given more prominence than they really deserve. The remarks were quoted at length in the *Montreal Daily Star* of 14 May. The Prime Minister appears to have expressed the view that the Czechs should 'accede to the German demands, if reasonable', and even to have stated that frontier revision might be advisable. He also suggested that for geographical reasons neither France nor Russia could send military aid to Czechoslovakia. The general tone of the remarks seems to indicate a conviction that the German case against Czechoslovakia was a strong one, and throughout the next four months his public

speeches showed little sympathy for the Czech case. The speech of 24 March had, however, already indicated that the British Government did not propose to go to war on the question, and the remarks to the journalists did not exclude opposition to the employment of force by Germany: Prague should accede only to 'reasonable' German demands. Throughout the summer, while urging the Czechs to do all in their power to reach an agreement, the Government made clear its opposition to any German attempt to secure a settlement by force. This was a genuine attempt to achieve a constructive policy of appeasement, although the execution was woefully inadequate.

THE MAY CRISIS

A manifesto issued by Herr Henlein and the *Sudetendeutsche Partei* (SdP) on 16 March opened the Sudeten propaganda campaign. The Prague Government reaffirmed its desire for an understanding, and on 24 April Henlein presented to the SdP congress at Karlsbad an eight-point programme. The basic demands were for the determination, legal recognition, and full self-government of the German areas, removal of injustices inflicted since 1918, and full liberty to profess German nationality and political philosophy (*Volkstum* and *Weltanschauung*). He declared also that their policy was inspired by the principles and ideas of National Socialism, and demanded that Czechoslovakia should completely revise her foreign policy, and cease to associate herself with the enemies of the Reich. The Czech Government did its best to avoid a complete breach, and continued the policy of seeking agreement with the minorities, although the Karlsbad programme was scarcely compatible with the maintenance of the independent sovereignty of the state. The problem was discussed when Daladier and Bonnet visited London

on 27–29 April; the British ministers emphasized their interest in peace, and the French Prime Minister reaffirmed his promise of French aid if Czechoslovakia were attacked. The two powers agreed to do all in their power to find a programme which could be accepted peacefully by all parties. On 7 May the British and French ministers informed M. Krofta that they expected him to go to the utmost limit of possible concession; the Prague Government at once expressed its willingness to do so, and on the 13th announced that it was prepared to enter into negotiations with the Sudeten Germans. Henlein visited London on 13–14 May; he was not received by any Cabinet Minister, but met Sir Robert Vansittart, Winston Churchill, Sir Archibald Sinclair, and others, and seems to have given an impression of moderation.

During the following week the German Press conducted against Czechoslovakia a campaign of exceptional violence. Sir Nevile Henderson on 11 May told von Ribbentrop of the Franco-British *démarche* at Prague; but on the 19th the German Government complained of the slow progress made by Prague in drawing up the Nationalities Statute, and of its apparently unsatisfactory character. On the same day Henlein left for Germany, and Hitler summoned a meeting of his advisers at Munich. Municipal elections were to be held in Czechoslovakia on 22 May, 29 May, and 12 June; the election campaigns had already led to clashes between the parties, and a more serious riot took place at Brünn, also on the 19th. There were already reports of the mobilization of several German divisions; nevertheless in the evening, when Henderson made inquiries at the German Foreign Office, he was told that only routine movements had taken place. The Czech Government, suspecting that a German invasion was imminent, moved large bodies of troops

into the Sudeten area; on the 21st two Sudetens were shot dead on the frontier by Czech guards, and Henlein's party announced its refusal to negotiate with the Prime Minister, M. Hodža. Henderson continued to press the German Government for information, and a sensation was caused by a report that on the morning of the 22nd the British ambassador had ordered special railway accommodation to take away British women and children. Bonnet on the 21st assured the Czech Government that France would fulfil her obligations. Whatever the original German intentions the meeting of Hitler and his advisers at Munich on the 22nd was evidently in favour of peace; and for some weeks after the Nazi Press continued to insist that there had been no mobilization, and that the crisis was due to misrepresentation of the facts by Great Britain.

The most generally accepted explanation outside Germany was that for once Hitler had been outbluffed, and the very dangerous view, that he had always given way to a display of force, began to find favour. The crisis of May 1938 may have been due to a deliberate attempt to test the reactions of other countries to a threatened attack on Czechoslovakia, or to a genuine mis-reading of Germany's immediate intentions by Prague: the German Government's bearing for weeks had been so alarming that a scare on the other side of the frontier would not be surprising. Perhaps the most important result in the international sphere was to place the British Government in the German mind in the forefront of the apparent defenders of Czechoslovakia, a position which should really have been held by France.

On Monday, 23 May, Henlein consented after all to meet Hodža, and had detailed discussions with the Prime Minister in Prague; a further meeting took place on the 28th, and the negotiations continued through

June. On 7 June Herr Kundt, chairman of the parliamentary Sudeten party, presented an elaborate programme of fourteen points based on the Karlsbad demands, and, if anything, extending them. Hodža handed the draft of the Nationalities Statute to the SdP on 30 June. No spirit of compromise was shown by the Sudeten leaders, although the Government was prepared to concede much. They would not, however, accept the final implication of the Sudetic proposals, which would have given the Germans almost complete autonomy within the nominal boundaries of the state. The local government bill of 28 July proposed a system of four provincial diets to control all details of provincial government; the Germans would have a proportional share of executive offices in the central government. This did not satisfy the SdP, and by the beginning of August it appeared that a complete deadlock was inevitable. During July the German Government made it increasingly clear that it supported and encouraged the most extreme demands of Henlein, while the German Press carried on a systematic campaign of abuse, and denunciation of the alleged terrorism under which the Sudeten Germans were groaning.

THE RUNCIMAN MISSION

A further British attempt to solve the problem was made at the end of July. On the 26th Mr. Chamberlain announced that Lord Runciman had been invited by the Czech Government to act as mediator between themselves and their minorities, and had accepted. He would be quite independent of all Governments, and would act in his personal capacity, and his mission would, the Prime Minister added, serve to inform public opinion generally, and make possible the reconciliation of hitherto intractable issues. On the 27th

Herr Kundt agreed to Runciman's appointment; the German Press expressed relief that the mission was a private one. Halifax on the same day was careful to emphasize the same point: Runciman had said to him, 'I quite understand: you are setting me adrift in a small boat in mid-Atlantic.' The appointment was in accordance with the general role of mediator which the British Government had assigned itself; as Chamberlain said later, 'Either we could have threatened to go to war with Germany if she attacked Czechoslovakia, or we could have stood aside and allowed matters to take their course, or, finally, we could attempt to find a peaceful settlement by means of mediation.'

The Government's action led, nevertheless, to some misunderstanding, and helped to confuse the issues not merely in central Europe but also in Downing Street. In the first place its assertion of a desire to mediate, and its close personal and political relations with Runciman, made it impossible for him to be accepted as a completely neutral arbiter; if this had been desired an American or other non-European mission would have been preferable. Any conclusions he arrived at were bound therefore to be regarded as to some extent coloured by the political interests and outlook of London. In the second place the fact that both sides had agreed to discuss matters with a 'mediator' appears to have given the Government a very exaggerated idea of the possibility of an agreed solution. On 26 July Mr. Chamberlain actually told the Commons that the atmosphere was lighter than at the beginning of the year, and that throughout the Continent there was a relaxation of the sense of tension present six months before. He may have intended to inaugurate the mission by creating a 'good atmosphere', but subsequent events seem to suggest that this optimism was genuine. Certainly no opportunity of mediation had

existed in the Austrian crisis in March, and the mysterious visit of Hitler's personal friend and aide-de-camp, Captain Fritz Wiedemann, to Halifax on 18 July may well have persuaded the British Government that Germany had hitherto been putting forward extreme demands for bargaining purposes, and would now accept a compromise solution devised by Runciman. It was announced that Wiedemann had expressed Hitler's desire for a 'non-violent' solution of the Sudeten problem.

If this were so the events of August proved disillusioning. Runciman succeeded in keeping the Czech and Sudeten leaders in contact, but successive offers from Prague were all rejected as unsatisfactory by the other side; the last Czech offer, the 'fourth plan' of 5 September, which introduced a system of cantons, state assistance to industrial areas hit by the depression, and guarantees concerning proportional employment and representation, was almost immediately submerged in the flood of denunciation released by the German Government and Press after Hitler's Nuremberg speech of 12 September. By the middle of August it had become clear that Henlein was receiving and taking his instructions from Berlin, and that he was manœuvring for the incorporation of the Sudetenland in the German Reich. Kundt was believed, on the other hand, to be ready to accept autonomy within the Czechoslovak state, and the German Social Democratic party in Czechoslovakia emphatically opposed surrender to Germany. On four occasions between 26 July and 1 September Henderson represented to the German Foreign Office that Germany's military preparations might threaten both the Runciman mission and the peace of Europe. The German Press continued to denounce the alleged ill-treatment of the German minority; thus on 30 August the *Angriff*

talked of the plundering and torturing of the German villages by Czech workmen on the fortifications, while the *Börsen Zeitung* said that the British attitude permitted the Prague authorities to look on while Czech mobs besieged and terrorized German villages, and the Czech papers made filthy attacks on Germany. This was typical of the German distortion of the character of the Runciman mission and of the tendency to exaggerate and resent the intervention of the British Government. On 27 August Sir John Simon in a speech at Lanark said that the Government was pursuing in foreign affairs 'a positive policy of peace'; its attitude towards Czechoslovakia had been defined by the Prime Minister on 24 March. The Government recognized the existence there of a real and urgent problem, but it should be possible to find a solution which was just to all legitimate interests; war might be limited at the start, but no one could say how far it would spread. This point was reaffirmed in the official statement of 11 September, which made it clear that the British Government could not remain neutral if a threat to French territory resulted from a Franco-German war over Czechoslovakia.

The following day produced Hitler's Nuremberg speech, which introduced the final stages of the crisis. The Press campaign against the Czechs in August had been accompanied by extremely ostentatious German military preparations, on both the Czech and French frontiers. Early in the month various frontier areas in the Rhineland and elsewhere were declared prohibited zones, and at the same time 200,000 labourers were set to work on the 'Siegfried Line', fortifications similar to the French Maginot Line on the other side of the frontier. The number of these conscript labourers had increased to probably half a million by the end of August; another million men were under

arms in a gigantic 'trial mobilization'. In these circumstances the Nuremberg speech served mainly to confirm anticipations, although it was still believed in many quarters during August that Hitler's aim was to secure the Sudeten demands for autonomy, rather than for annexation by the Reich.

The probability that Europe might have to choose between the acceptance of the latter alternative or war had, however, clearly to be visualized, and *The Times* leader of 7 September, which suggested that in the circumstances the Czechoslovak Government should consider whether it might not be wise to allow the secession of its 'fringe of alien populations', may quite well have been a Foreign Office feeler. The Cabinet was certainly aware by this stage that the choice for Czechoslovakia lay between war and the cession of territory, and the endorsement of the Czech 'fourth plan', coupled with a warning that Great Britain would fight with France if Germany attacked, appears to have been advocated by one section of the Cabinet. On 7 September the Trade Union Congress and the Labour party demanded the defence of Czechoslovak integrity; the Beaverbrook and Rothermere Presses appeared, however, to support the idea of secession. The Cabinet's decision was finally to maintain the attitude of 24 March, but the statement of 11 September was intended as a clear intimation to both France and Germany that Great Britain would be compelled to support her ally in a war over Czechoslovakia. The intimation made obviously no impression in Germany.

Hitler's speeches in the opening days of the Nuremberg Conference made frequent reference to Germany's impregnable position in the event of war; Goering spoke in the same strain on the 10th. On the 12th Hitler talked at length of the oppressed Sudetens 'chased and

harried like helpless game for every expression of their national life', and demanded that the oppression 'shall cease and be replaced by the free right of self-determination'. At times his voice rose to a scream to denounce 'the liar Beneš', and an audience of 100,000 responded with hysterical applause. This meant the end of negotiations; Henlein immediately after tried to bring about a general rising of the Sudetens which was suppressed without difficulty by Czech troops; his followers fled in thousands to Germany and were received as refugees from Czech terrorism. On 15 September he issued a proclamation demanding union with Germany, and a German advance seemed imminent.

There can be little doubt that Hitler was determined to go ahead, and to accept the risk of war with Czechoslovakia, France, and her allies. It has been argued that the German military preparations of August were deliberately publicized in order to test French and British intentions, and that it was only when the response proved virtually nil that the irrevocable step was taken in the speech of 12 September. It has even been argued that there was no genuine 'crisis'; that the entire chain of events since the spring was due to agreement between Hitler and Chamberlain to stage a long period of panic in order to frighten British and French opinion into acquiescence in the German plans. This theory is supported by the merest guesswork, and is too grotesque to merit consideration in the absence of positive evidence. That the military preparations and propaganda campaign were intended by Germany as a war of nerves, and a means of testing opinion, is more than probable, although it certainly had more orthodox objectives. The May crisis had shown that a surprise attack would not succeed: the Czech forces and defences were adequate for that purpose, and could give France plenty of time to mobilize and

advance. Hence a full German mobilization, and fortification of the Rhineland frontiers, were necessary precautions against a possible French attack, and the Herculean efforts of Dr. Todt's half-million labourers had produced adequate results by 12 September: no attempt was made to conceal these measures, for obviously they could not be kept secret. If the building of the Siegfried Line was a threat it was also a precaution, and we must conclude that Hitler proceeded on the assumption that a French attack was not impossible. Certainly after 12 September Hitler's prestige would not have allowed surrender.

BERCHTESGADEN

The final stage in British mediation commenced with Chamberlain's visit to Berchtesgaden on 15 September. Daladier on the 14th had proposed to London that 'some exceptional procedure' should be devised for friendly investigations with Germany. Hitler succeeded in convincing his visitor that a German invasion of Czechoslovakia was not merely inevitable, but also imminent: when Chamberlain asked why, in that case, he had been brought there, Hitler replied that if the Prime Minister 'could give him there and then the assurance that the British Government accepted the principle of self-determination, he was quite ready to discuss ways and means of carrying it out'. He undertook to refrain from active hostilities until Mr. Chamberlain had had time to consult his colleagues on the question. On the following day Chamberlain returned to London to consult Lord Runciman and the Cabinet; there were Cabinet meetings on the 17th, and on Sunday the 18th. Daladier and Bonnet flew to London for further discussions. The final result was the Anglo-French proposals presented to the Czechoslovak Government on 19 September. The essential points

were four: (1) the two powers were now convinced that the further maintenance within the boundaries of the Czechoslovak state of districts inhabited by Sudeten Deutsch could not continue without imperilling the interests of Czechoslovakia herself and of European peace; (2) areas containing over 50 per cent of German inhabitants would probably have to be transferred; (3) 'some international body', including a Czech representative, should arrange for adjustment of frontiers, and of possible exchange of populations on the basis of the right to opt; (4) the British Government would be prepared to join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak state against unprovoked aggression. The earliest possible reply was asked for, as the Prime Minister had to resume conversations with Hitler not later than the 21st.

In clinging still, after 15 September, to the hope that good would still come of a Sudeten settlement by secession, Chamberlain showed courage in risking his own political future and that of his Cabinet; and bad judgment in his failure to grasp, even at this stage, the extent to which the international atmosphere had deteriorated. There is ample evidence, even to-day, of strong differences of opinion in the British and French Governments as to the wisdom of accepting Hitler's terms. We cannot, however, say whether the final decision owed more to French or British insistence. The British Cabinet held prolonged sittings on the 17th. Runciman on the evening of the 16th had recommended the cession of the Sudeten districts; Simon, Hoare, Kingsley Wood, and the Prime Minister were reported to favour adherence to the old policy of avoiding commitments beyond the Rhine, which meant in effect the acceptance of the plan of cession. Duff Cooper, Malcolm MacDonald, and possibly others

were believed to have opposed the plan. The Government was left in no doubt that many sections of public opinion strongly opposed cession; crowds in Whitehall cried 'No concessions to Hitler!' and a deputation from the National Council of Labour announced opposition to a Sudeten plebiscite.

The final word, however, was with France, who was assured, by the declarations of 24 March and 11 September, of British support. There is no evidence to suggest that this was withdrawn. Bonnet, the Foreign Minister, appears throughout the summer to have favoured cession as a last resource, and it has been claimed that his attitude strongly influenced Chamberlain in accepting. He seems mainly responsible for the fact that several assurances given by the Soviet Government in August and September were virtually ignored, and he appears to have omitted to report them to London. Certainly the view of Flandin, that France's obligation to Czechoslovakia had ceased with the collapse of the Locarno system, found strong support in influential French papers including *Le Matin*, and throughout the summer the section of the Press responsible to Bonnet's influence appeared to take seriously the view that there was at least some justification for the stories of Czech atrocities. Finally, then, the British and French Governments recommended cession on 19 September, well realizing that even with the provisions for international supervision and guarantee the proposals went almost further than public opinion could stand. The French Cabinet only endorsed the plan on the understanding that no pressure should be exercised on Prague, and that, if Prague refused, the Franco-Czech treaty should remain valid. In spite of this, the French minister in Prague appears, according to evidence subsequently published by Dr. Seton-Watson (*From Munich to Danzig*, pp. 65–72), to

have intimated, 'acting on verbal instructions', that France would not support Czechoslovakia if she refused the terms. The British minister gave a similar intimation. After agonized debate the Czech Government accepted the proposals on 21 September.

GODESBERG

The final stage of renewed crisis was due to a typical German display of unnecessary heavy-handedness of the type which had ruined so many of the German diplomatic adventures since Versailles; having secured substantial victory by the Czech surrender everything pointed to the expediency of a tactful and cautious handling of the final transactions. Instead, when Chamberlain met the Führer again at the Rhineland spa of Godesberg on the afternoon of 22 September, he was presented with a memorandum detailing plans for German occupation of the ceded areas which certainly removed completely any pretence of the 'self-determination' which Hitler had promised on the 15th. No agreement was reached on the 22nd, and after correspondence between the hotels on the 23rd the Prime Minister brought back to London a memorandum which he undertook to submit to Prague, without identifying himself with it.

The memorandum mentioned a time-limit (1 October) for the first time. By this date all Czech armed forces, police, customs officials, and so on were to be removed; German troops would occupy areas designated on an attached map 'without taking account as to whether in the plebiscite there may prove to be in this or that part of the area a Czech majority'; the territory was to be handed over intact, i.e. all military, commercial, or traffic establishments, wireless stations, railway rolling stock, gas-works, power stations, and all foodstuffs, goods, cattle, and raw materials were to be

handed over undamaged. Further areas, beyond those occupied, were to have, under an international commission, plebiscites in which a simple majority would be decisive. The Czech Government was to liberate all political prisoners of German race. No German or international guarantee of the remaining Czechoslovak state was included. 'I expected,' said Mr. Chamberlain later, 'that when I got back to Godesberg I had only to discuss quietly with him the proposals that I had brought with me; and it was a profound shock to me when I was told at the beginning of the conversation that these proposals were not acceptable, and that they were to be replaced by other proposals of a kind which I had not contemplated at all.' Hitler repeated what he had said at Berchtesgaden: that this was the last of his territorial ambitions in Europe.

The Czech reply to the German memorandum on the 25th stated that the new proposals went far beyond what had been agreed to in the Anglo-French memorandum; it was 'a *de facto* ultimatum of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation' and was absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable. The French Cabinet on the same day unanimously rejected the German memorandum; a statement from Downing Street on the 26th announced that if Germany should attack Czechoslovakia France would come to her assistance and Great Britain and Russia would certainly stand by France. In the evening, however, in a speech at the Berlin *Sportpalast*, Hitler denounced Beneš as a liar and a scoundrel, and demanded the surrender of the Sudetenland by 1 October. He was grateful to Mr. Chamberlain, but German patience was at an end. 'I emphasize it now, that when this problem is solved, Germany has no more territorial problems in Europe.' By this stage war seemed imminent. The British fleet was mobilized on the

same day; in France mobilization papers had been sent out on the 24th. On the 26th President Roosevelt sent telegrams direct to Hitler and Beneš appealing for a settlement by methods other than those of force; a long reply by Hitler on the 27th merely re-stated the now familiar German case for immediate action. A reply by Roosevelt on the 28th pointed out that agreement had already been reached in principle but added the cautious reminder that the United States Government had no political involvements in Europe and would assume no obligations in the conduct of the present negotiations.

MUNICH

The ridiculous lengths to which Hitler's astonishing diplomatic methods had dragged the crisis produced corresponding though momentary relief when it was at last announced on the 28th that, after appeals by Chamberlain to Hitler and Mussolini, an invitation had been sent by the Führer to a meeting between these three and Daladier at Munich on the 29th. The German people, who had given the clearest indication by their uneasy silence of lack of anything approaching enthusiasm for the threatened war, showed by a repetition of the demonstrative welcome given to Chamberlain on the 15th that they regarded him as a possible saviour from unnecessary disaster. The Munich discussions proceeded smoothly, and the crisis ended with the inevitable paper compromise, which certainly modified the more extreme German requirements, but did not prevent the cession of the Sudeten districts, which had in fact never been in doubt. Some commentators have expressed surprise at the self-satisfaction which the Prime Minister apparently derived from the settlement. This was of course in part an attempt to put the best possible face on a

transaction of very questionable expediency, in part perhaps an exaggeration of the significance of the recent Anglo-French stand. There had certainly been a definite threat of war, and a partial retreat by the Führer afterwards. To Governments as anxious to avoid war as the British and French this stand probably appeared very much more dramatic and momentous than it did to the rest of the Continent.

Afterwards Chamberlain had to claim a success for British policy by arguing that a substantial modification of the Godesberg terms had been secured at Munich. In a statement in the House of Commons on 3 October he was able to show that the occupation of territory by Germany was to be carried out in five clearly defined stages between 1 and 10 October, and not completed by the 1st; the line up to which German troops would advance was not that of Godesberg, but would be fixed by an international commission; plebiscites would be held in areas on the German side of the line, in accordance with the commission's decision; while undertaking not to damage 'existing installations', the Czech Government was released from the objectionable Godesberg condition that no foodstuffs, cattle, or raw material should be removed; conditions of evacuation were not left to be settled by the Czechs alone, but would be laid down in detail by the international commission; a joint Anglo-French guarantee had been given, and Germany had also promised to give a guarantee when the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities had been settled. Chamberlain had accepted the view that the incorporation of the German-speaking areas in the Reich was in itself necessary in order to remove a permanent source of crisis; the real problem was 'to find an orderly instead of a violent method of carrying out an agreed solution', and he claimed that the difference between the two

documents proved that this had been achieved. In addition he no doubt hoped that the Anglo-French stand had been sufficiently forceful to persuade Hitler that Germany would not be allowed to proceed by force in future, and that the serious causes of friction between Germany and other powers had been removed. 'I have always had in mind,' he said immediately after the Munich discussions, 'that if we could find peace in Czechoslovakia it might open the way to appeasement in Europe.'

The obvious criticism that we must pass on British policy is that in the first place the developments since March did represent the triumph of German force at the expense of Austria and Czechoslovakia: the counter-threats of force by France and Great Britain at the last moment had concerned details of procedure which made no substantial difference to the German gains. The Anglo-French acceptance of the principle of cession did not appear as a spontaneous and voluntary attempt to solve a local frontier dispute, but as a deliberate and reluctant choice of this solution only after one of the parties had repudiated any other procedure than that of violence: for this reason their action was bound to invite rather than discourage the employment of threatened violence as a diplomatic bargaining weapon in future. In other words the crisis, if not a defeat for British interests, was certainly a defeat for the policy of appeasement through conciliation which Chamberlain advocated. The theory that the British Prime Minister deliberately planned and encouraged the Nazi campaign of violence during the summer in order to frighten the British public into acquiescence in the German intentions is obviously untenable: such a campaign, as the course of events in September showed, was certain to have the opposite effect. Moreover, if the Prime Minister had been capable of devising and

executing so elaborate a policy he would undoubtedly have shown greater diplomatic skill and a better sense of anticipation in the other international crises which preceded and followed Munich. There is, as we have already suggested, no adequate justification for the view that the Prime Minister's policy was other than what he stated it to be: namely, the solution by negotiation and not by force of the specific problems which appeared to be the cause of German aggressiveness. Unfortunately this diagnosis of the German complaint was wrong, and in any case Hitler's methods had rendered the success of the Chamberlain policy impossible even before it was applied.

These points suggest a second criticism. British diplomacy in the crisis had shown a depressing lack of initiative, foresight, and quick thinking. The Prime Minister was certainly a novice in diplomacy, and he can be forgiven for not displaying the bounding egoism, fits of screaming rage, and boastful aggressiveness which had distinguished the Führer during the previous six months. But the British Government seemed to have a curious knack of waiting until it had been manœuvred into humiliating positions from which it was forced to extricate itself by decidedly clumsy expedients. If the cession of the Sudeten district was really inevitable and the Franco-Czech alliance no longer effective, the Czechoslovak Government should have been encouraged to make its peace with Germany long before the Germans had made it a matter of power politics in the spring of 1938. No timely steps were taken to cut the losses on earlier policies, and the result was not merely to place the Prague Government in a hopeless position, but also to force on the British Government itself various maladroit last-minute moves. If it is argued that the responsibility for this lay primarily with France, this merely emphasizes the

fact that Great Britain had been manœuvred into the position of accepting most of the blame. The peremptory messages sent to the Czechs for prompt agreement to the terms of 19 September were probably due, not to intentional callousness, but to the fact that Chamberlain had been stampeded by the discovery that a German attack was imminent. Similarly, the Soviet Government was virtually ignored throughout, and the omission to invite it to Munich was resented in Moscow as a snub and manifestation of anti-Soviet feeling: the latter sentiment was probably not absent, but the real reason—as far as Munich was concerned—was no doubt that Hitler would have regarded the presence of a Soviet delegate as in itself a diplomatic defeat, and almost certainly have accepted the alternative of war.

But in defence of British policy it must be said that a European war to keep the Sudetenland under Czech government would not have commanded the unqualified support of British and neutral opinion; the attempt to solve the legitimate grievances of the German people was honourable and statesmanlike; and many of the difficulties in which the British Government found itself were due to the French Government's perplexities, and to the almost impossible position created by Hitler's inability to realize that his thirst for a dramatic victory was effectively and rapidly destroying the last hope of that Anglo-German co-operation which he still seemed to desire.

The next few weeks showed clearly Hitler's belief that a continuance of the tactics of mingled threats and promises would complete the demoralization and immobilization of the British Government and British opinion. Duff Cooper's protesting exit from the Government with the intimation that he had tried to swallow the Munich terms, but they had stuck in his

throat, no doubt helped to strengthen in Germany the impression of the Government's timidity and defeatism. The undoubted relief and enthusiasm with which the settlement was received in England suggested similar emotions among the general public. In reality the stiffening of the Government's attitude in the last days of September proved that it had become almost impossible to condone any further manifestations of Hitler's will to power. After the Munich conversations Hitler and Chamberlain signed an agreement which stated their resolve that the method of consultation should be the method adopted to deal with other questions that might concern the two countries, and which referred to the 'desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again'. But on 9 October, in a speech at Saarbrücken, after remarking that if an Eden, a Duff Cooper, or a Churchill came into power they would unleash immediately a world war against Germany, he said that it would be well 'if England would free herself from certain arrogances left over from the Versailles epoch', for 'this tutelage of foreign governesses is something that Germany cannot and will not stand'. This outburst was partly a proof that Chamberlain's intervention in September rankled, partly a veiled threat occasioned by the British rearmament plans. He displayed similar annoyance against Great Britain in a farewell audience with the retiring French ambassador, M. François-Poncet, at his 'eagle's nest' near Berchtesgaden on 18 October. The German Press took up the same theme, and although in general October was a quiet enough month after the events of September, there was little hope left by the end of it that the Reich considered itself genuinely 'appeased'. References to the colonial demands were frequent in the German Press and in public speeches; on 29 October Ritter von Epp

insisted that they must be handed back or compensation given elsewhere, and on 8 November Hitler said that Germany wished to negotiate, but 'if others decline to grant our rights we shall secure them in a different way'.

During October the execution of the Munich agreement proceeded on even more brutal lines than the terms had indicated, and further territorial demands, in excess of what had been accepted in September, were made. Poland and Hungary secured their share of the spoils; Poland occupied Bohumin on 9 October and ultimately annexed about 400 square miles of Czechoslovak territory. She was anxious for Hungary to annex Ruthenia in order to prevent the creation of an independent Ukrainian state which might, under Nazi inspiration, cause unrest among her own Ukrainian minority. Magyar claims on Prague were settled in the 'Vienna award' of 2 November, the result of 'arbitration' by Ribbentrop and Ciano which Czechoslovakia and Hungary were bound to accept. Hungary received parts of Slovakia and the lowlands of Ruthenia, but the mountainous strip of northern Ruthenia was left to Prague, and therefore provided a possible future channel of Nazi expansion eastward. These events were witnessed with increasing indignation in England; on top of them came the murder of Herr vom Rath in Paris, followed by the terrible anti-Jewish pogrom of November, with its wholesale burning and looting of shops and synagogues, its organized mob violence, and its astonishing fine of £86,000,000 levied on the Jewish community. The pogrom finally destroyed the possibility of further 'appeasement' in the shape of any Anglo-German agreement based on the concession of German demands.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COMING OF WAR

AFTER MUNICH

THE Prime Minister might have defended his policy of appeasement by quoting the words of Burke: 'It is no inconsiderable part of wisdom to know how much of an evil ought to be tolerated.' In November 1939 an old opponent, Winston Churchill, said of him: 'He is a man of very tough fibre, and I can tell you that he is going to fight as obstinately for victory as he did for peace.' In March Great Britain and France laid the foundations of a new system of collective security by giving specific guarantees of support to a limited number of states directly threatened by fresh manifestations of German and Italian hostility. The preference for this method rather than for the full Geneva system of collective security was evidence that the guarantees were intended to be taken seriously, and the promptitude with which the new policy was enunciated suggests that the British Government had made up its mind during the previous months that the older position of non-intervention east of the Rhine must be abandoned. It is difficult to say when exactly this transition took place. In the weeks following Munich the official tone was one of optimism, and members of the Government continued until the eve of the new German *coup* in March to talk hopefully of Hitler's peaceful intentions. No doubt this was due to the desire to avoid language which would increase the existing tension, and there had in practice been several indications since November that future attempts to exploit the Nazi technique of aggression would not be condoned. Chamberlain told Parliament on 14 November

that no British mandates would be returned to the Reich. On 4 December the President of the Board of Education said that there was a 'deep and growing feeling that there is nothing we can do that can satisfy Germany, that friendly words and friendly actions are mistaken for cowardice, and that only armaments can speak effectively'. On 7 December Malcolm MacDonald finally rejected any idea of returning the German colonies. 'We are not discussing this matter; we are not considering it. It is not now an issue in practical politics.' In his speech to the Press Association on 13 December the Prime Minister said he 'must deplore the present attitude of the German Press'; he condemned the recent attack on Earl Baldwin, denied that he favoured the system of Nazism or Fascism, and repeated a remark he had made on other occasions, that 'history teaches us that no form of government ever remains the same'. The reproof was mildly phrased, but he had always displayed a certain inability to express himself in really biting language.

Hitler's usual speech on 30 January 1939 did not appear to foreshadow any new territorial claims, and gave considerable space to the necessity for increasing German exports. The process of German unification was now practically ended: 'All the streams of German blood now flow together in this Reich.' Colonies were 'in no sense a problem which could cause a war'. Taken at its face value the speech was not alarming to Great Britain. An increase in Anglo-German trade would be only too welcome to the English business world, and on 3 February Halifax emphasized this fact in a speech at Hull, denying at the same time the contention that England had fought the last war to destroy German trade. Hitler's speech indicated that Germany's colonial demands were not, for the time being, to become a major issue between the two countries; the

main purpose of the hectoring tone of German references to Great Britain since Munich had probably been to warn her and France off future interference with German plans in central and eastern Europe.

Italy, like Germany, did not present her colonial demands to France in the form of an ultimatum; they were raised in a decidedly unconventional way early in December, and were emphatically rejected by the French Government. The Italian Press stormed, but the Government did not present its demands in a more official manner, and Chamberlain's visit to Rome (11–14 January) marked a further step towards an Anglo-Italian *détente*. The Franco-German declaration of 6 December 1938 had recognized that there was no territorial question outstanding between the two countries; afterwards the *Völkischer Beobachter* had argued that France's natural sphere was western Europe and her oversea possessions, while Germany's vital sphere was central Europe and the Near East. All these hints meant that Hitler intended to move eastward, and expected that the western powers would be only too pleased to leave him alone. The fact that the governing classes and masses in France and England had been driven by Hitlerism into such a state of exasperation that war, with all its inevitable material losses, would come to them almost as a relief, must have completely bewildered the Führer, although Mussolini was probably less surprised.

THE NEW ADVENTURE: BRITISH REACTIONS (MARCH–APRIL 1939)

After the Vienna award of 2 November, the German Press had described the solution of the Magyar claims as definitive, and had apparently accepted, for at least the time being, the view that Germany had no further demands to make on the three docile and helpless

fragments of the former Czechoslovak state. This praise of the superior qualities of Axis state-building ceased suddenly in December, and it may be conjectured that new plans were already afoot. Before the end of 1938 discussions were in progress between Germany and Poland concerning Danzig and the Corridor, and in January Poland rejected categorically a proposal to establish a 'corridor across the Corridor' in the form of a railway line or *autostrada* under German sovereignty. In mid-January the new Hungarian Foreign Minister, Count Csaky, was apparently given to understand that the Reich would no longer object to Hungarian annexation of the rest of Ruthenia. A British initiative in February may have precipitated a fresh phase of German aggression against the Czechs, and certainly indicated the real attitude of Germany.

During his conversations with Mussolini in January, Chamberlain raised the question of the guarantee of Czechoslovakia visualized by the Munich agreement, the first annex of which had provided that such a guarantee would be given by Germany and Italy when the Polish and Hungarian claims were disposed of. Mussolini was apparently willing to join in sounding the German Government, and inquiries as to Germany's attitude were made early in February by these two powers and France. The position was a somewhat awkward one for the Reich in view of the praise of the Vienna award by the Press. On 18 February the French minister in Prague reported new conditions that Germany was expected to demand in return for a guarantee; these included the complete neutralization of the state, adhesion to the anti-Comintern pact and the Nuremberg laws, cession to Germany of part of the Czech gold reserve, reduction of the army, and so on. Finally a German note of 28 February, refusing to give the guarantee, was presented to the French

and British ambassadors. It argued that there were, after all, still Czech-Magyar differences, and that the conditions visualized in the Munich agreement had therefore not been fulfilled. It also said bluntly that it considered that the intervention of the western powers in central Europe, under the form of the guarantee, would be harmful rather than beneficial.

The Czechoslovak republic came to an end in the middle of March. On 14 March Hungarian troops invaded Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine) and the Slovak state proclaimed its independence. On 15 March Father Tiso telegraphed to Hitler that the Slovak state placed itself under his protection, and he replied from Prague on the 16th taking over the protectorate. On the same day Hungary annexed Ruthenia. After Munich a new government under the Germanophil Rudolf Beran had been formed at Prague, and had done its best to satisfy the Nazi demands; Slovakia had also been linked with the Czech state by a federal tie which satisfied all the essential demands of the Slovak autonomists. In spite of this, Prague was attacked by every means under Nazi control, with anti-Czech propaganda from the Vienna radio station inciting the Slovaks to secede, and with repeated official demands to the Czech Government for concessions. On the 14th President Hacha was summoned to meet Hitler in Berlin; after a ceremonious reception he was subjected to five hours' pressure during the night by Hitler and his advisers, during which the sixty-seven-year-old President had a heart attack and fainted repeatedly. He was said finally to have agreed to the destruction of the republic at 4.30 a.m. on the 15th, after a threat that otherwise Prague and other large centres would be bombed at five o'clock. The German troops occupied Prague on the same day, and were followed promptly by the Gestapo, which at once took over local key

positions and interned Jews, Communists, and other political undesirables in concentration camps at Milovice and Saaz. The gold reserves of the National Bank were taken over, and, after the Bank of International Settlement and the National Bank of Switzerland had surrendered in May Czechoslovak gold reserves deposited abroad, the Reich gained control of nearly 400 million marks in gold and foreign exchange.

No German politician can take a positive step in foreign affairs without enunciating a political philosophy to justify his action, and the new policy provided the occasion for Hitler's official adoption of the principle of *Lebensraum*. 'Bohemia and Moravia have for thousands of years belonged to the living-space (*Lebensraum*) of the German people,' he said in his proclamation on 16 March. Thus the principle of self-determination, which, as interpreted by Hitler in the past, had implicitly or explicitly excluded the acquisition of the territory of non-German-speaking peoples, was thrown overboard. The meaning of the complete Nazi doctrine of *Lebensraum* was already well known; Germany must have absolute control—political, military, and economic—of an area, in Europe or overseas, sufficiently extensive to furnish the economic resources which would give her the complete freedom of action typical of a 'world power'. The execution of the complete scheme—which in *Mein Kampf* had involved German control of a large part of European Russia—had, however, always appeared so wildly impracticable that until a positive step in that direction had occurred it was difficult to take, or justify, direct action to prevent it; even to-day it is difficult to believe that those in control of German policy considered the complete programme to be attainable. Sir Nevile Henderson later suggested that the real reason for the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia may have been the pressure

of the German Higher Command, which desired to secure control of the resources of this area in preparation for a Polish war. The desire of the generals for a successful small war, and a restless pursuit of risky local triumphs by the Führer, may have been more compelling factors at this stage than the more elaborate and conventional official Nazi philosophy of expansion. *Lebensraum* was, however, clearly the inevitable explanation.

The British Government at once made clear its inability to condone Germany's new policy; the transactions in February concerning the international guarantee had no doubt prepared it for a fresh crisis. On 15 March Chamberlain condemned the new course as contrary to the Munich agreement; on 17 March the British ambassador was called from Berlin to report on the political situation. On the same day, in an address to the Birmingham Unionist Association, Chamberlain enumerated Hitler's specific assurances in September against any further territorial aggression, condemned the recent treatment of the Czech and Slovak states, pointed out that in the 'unpleasant surprises' hitherto sprung by the German régime there was at least 'something to be said, whether on account of racial affinity or of just claims too long resisted' for the 'necessity of a change in the existing situation', and demanded, 'is this the end of an old adventure, or is it the beginning of a new?' On 18 March the British and French Governments presented notes protesting sharply against the German action and refusing to recognize the situation thereby created; the German Government in turn declined to accept the notes, and recalled the ambassadors in London and Paris 'to report'.

A further shock came on the 17th with the announcement of what appeared to be a German ultimatum to

Rumania. The heads of the German economic mission which had been negotiating in Bucarest were reported to have made three proposals: (1) that Rumania should by stages cease to build up a national industry; (2) that her entire exports of grain, oil, lumber, cattle, and foodstuffs should go only to Germany; (3) that in return Germany should guarantee her integrity and independence. The request, it was reported, was rejected completely. This drew forth further hostile comments on German policy from the British Press, and both the Press and official condemnation of Germany's recent policy were furiously denounced in Germany. On 21 March it became known that the British Government had requested the French, Polish, and Soviet Governments to consider the advisability of joining them in a declaration of their common attitude to acts of aggression, and of preparing immediate plans for mutual defence. Hitler was, however, already launched on a further adventure. On the same day, following a German ultimatum, the Lithuanian Government agreed to return the Memel territory immediately to the Reich.

The eyes of Germany and the world were now turned on Poland, and there is much to support the view that the annexation of Danzig by the Reich had been planned to follow immediately after the acquisition of Memel. The Polish Government, however, showed no intention of acquiescing, and this, together with the stiffening of the British and French attitudes, led to the postponement of German steps in this direction. On 21 March a conversation took place between Ribbentrop and the Polish ambassador in Berlin, in which the Reich minister proposed the return of Danzig to the Reich, and an extra-territorial railway line and *autostrada* between the Reich and East Prussia; Germany in return was to recognize the Polish Corridor

and the whole of Poland's western frontier, conclude a non-aggression pact for twenty-five years, maintain Polish economic interests in Danzig, and 'respect Polish interests in ensuring the independence of Slovakia'. German proposals on these lines had been made on several occasions during the previous winter. The proposals were obviously one-sided: Germany only offered, in return for Danzig, to guarantee not to take what Poland would still possess. Ribbentrop emphasized on 21 March that a 'rapid settlement' was a condition of the Reich maintaining its proposals in force in their entirety. The Polish Government, according to Colonel Beck's later statement, considered the demands to be, in view of their form and the circumstances in which they were presented, unacceptable, but made counter-proposals on 26 March, namely, (1) a joint guarantee by Poland and Germany of the separate character of the Free City of Danzig; (2) the Polish Government would examine with the German Government the further simplification of transit arrangements in the Corridor. They were not prepared to surrender their sovereignty over the transit routes, and in effect the reply meant the rejection of the German demands. No German reply to this appears to have been given until 28 April. On 27 March, however, the German Press began to report attacks on Germans in the Corridor, and to talk of the 'intolerable terror' suffered by the German minority, and there were reports of large German troop movements towards the Polish frontiers.

The German-Rumanian trade treaty was signed on 23 March; it provided among other things for mixed German-Rumanian mining companies to exploit certain minerals, for industrial collaboration between the two states, and the supply of German import requirements and Rumanian armament requirements on a

barter basis. It did not exclude trade agreements between Rumania and other countries, but on 27 March the Prime Minister made the ominous statement that Rumania would fight with all her might to maintain her integrity.

These Polish and Rumanian developments produced decisive action in London. On 29 March a further rearmament step was taken by a decision to double the Territorial Force; after two emergency meetings of the Cabinet on the 30th, and one on the 31st, the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that the British and French Governments would lend the Polish Government all support in their power 'in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist'. He described this as 'a cover note issued in advance of a complete insurance policy', as consultations were proceeding. This announcement prevented an immediate German offensive, if such had been intended, and in spite of German pressure Colonel Beck left for London on 2 April. On the 6th Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that the two Governments were prepared to enter into an agreement of a permanent and reciprocal character to replace the temporary assurance given by the British Government.

The period of surprises was not over; Italian troops occupied Albanian ports on 6 and 7 April, and had overcome resistance throughout the state by the 10th. King Zog fled from Tirana on the 7th. The new aggression threatened directly both Yugoslavia and Greece; and it threatened almost as directly Rumania's communications with Salonika by the railway route through the Morava and Vardar valleys. The Italian occupation arose from differences of policy which had for some time separated King Zog and Mussolini, and

it could not be ignored by France and England, although they had no desire at this moment to drive Mussolini into complete co-operation with Hitler. The Duce's utterances had shown no great enthusiasm for Germany's recent policy; in a speech on 26 March he had said that 'although professional pacifists are particularly detestable individuals' Italy considered that 'a long period of peace is necessary to safeguard the development of European civilization'. Although, he added, 'we have been solicited, we shall not take any initiative before our sacrosanct rights have been recognized'. He then proceeded to refer in general terms to the colonial claims against France; on 29 March Daladier replied by expressing France's willingness to proceed to the 'complete and loyal execution' of the 1935 agreements. The occupation of Albania produced on 9 April a rumour that Italy was about to occupy Corfu; already on the previous evening the Italian *chargé* in London had disclaimed in advance any such intention, and on the 9th Mussolini sent fresh assurances to both Halifax and Perth that Italian troops, aeroplanes, and pilots would leave Spain immediately after the victory parade. Accordingly the Anglo-Italian agreement was not denounced, although it was announced on 13 April that Anglo-French guarantees against aggression had been offered and accepted by Rumania and Greece.

So totalitarian aggression had produced the inevitable reactions, and France and England, by their guarantees to three threatened states, had laid the foundations of a 'peace front' which would, it was hoped, allow the building-up of an adequate scheme of collective security. This meant, above all, the establishment of satisfactory agreement with the U.S.S.R. Germany on her side, disconcerted for the moment by the Anglo-French assurances to Poland, postponed her campaign

for Danzig, and set to work to discover means of destroying or immobilizing the coalition against her. These two lines of activity occupied the main attention of the powers for the next three months.

THE ANGLO-SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS (APRIL–AUGUST)

The British Government's first move in the building of the 'peace front' was an inquiry on 18 March as to what the Soviet Government would do if Rumania were subjected to an unprovoked attack. The Soviet Government evaded a direct reply by proposing an international conference to consider the question of German aggression; the British in turn declined this proposal on the ground that it was premature. The unwillingness of Poland and Rumania to accept Russian aid probably influenced both the Soviet proposal and the British reply. The visit to Moscow on 23 March of Mr. R. S. Hudson, Minister for Overseas Trade, was followed by amicable discussions on commercial matters, and the announcement in the House of Commons of the British and French pledge to Poland on 31 March was accompanied by an assurance from the Prime Minister that there were no 'ideological impediments' between themselves and Russia. Very close contact had been maintained between the leaders of the Labour Opposition in Parliament and the representatives of the Russian Government in London; the Labour leaders agreed to the Polish guarantee with the definite impression that it would expedite an Anglo-Russian understanding, and that for that reason the pact would be welcomed by the Russian Government. Nevertheless the Russian Press continued its attacks on the two western powers, arguing that their policy was still to entangle the U.S.S.R. in a war with Germany. On 4 April *Pravda* accused the two powers of using the Ruthenian question for this purpose: 'the threads of

espionage and intrigue which enmeshed Carpatho-Ukraine lead not only to Berlin, Warsaw, and Budapest'. The reserve shown by the Soviet Government towards the policy of guarantees was admitted in semi-official statements on 14 April, which ascribed it to the fact that neither Poland nor Rumania had sought Russian help in any form.

The Anglo-Soviet discussions commenced on 15 April and were only broken off after the announcement of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact on 21 August. By this effective piece of double-dealing the U.S.S.R. destroyed the possibility of building up a group of states probably strong enough to prevent Germany disturbing the peace, and instead secured peace for herself by despoiling several of Germany's potential victims. It is clear that the British negotiators had two serious handicaps from the start. The first was the ingrained Soviet suspicion of the British Government which had certainly been deepened by the events of 1938, but which had its origin in remoter causes. The second was the tactical disadvantage of seeking Soviet support after, and not before, the British Government had pledged itself irrevocably to the support of Poland.

It is only fair to both sides to admit that the Soviet and British Governments were mutually distrustful; each suspected that the other's interest in the League and in any form of collective security was a device to evade personal responsibility for resisting German aggression. Each was privately convinced of the fundamental immorality and inherent inefficiency of the social and economic system of the other. Each probably doubted the other's military strength, internal stability, and loyalty to public commitments. The British ministers still appear to have taken seriously the possibility of communist revolutions in western European countries, and to have disliked the prospect; the Soviet

ministers had little sympathy with the members of so typically 'capitalist' a government. But as Great Britain ultimately fought Germany, and Russia did not, we must assume that British suspicion of Russia's good faith was justified, and that Russian suspicion of British good faith was not justified. Certainly, there could be little doubt that the Soviet Government's *rapprochement* with France and other European powers since 1931, and its support of the League, had not been due to any particular zeal for the salvation of victims of Fascist aggression, but had been a deliberate attempt to save the Soviet Union from foreign attack during the execution of the programme of industrialization.

Litvinov, the official representative of this policy, had achieved a great personal triumph at Geneva, and had given many close observers the conviction that he was a sincere believer in the League system. But he was obviously less influential in Russia than outside: he was not a member of the *Politburo*, and did not even become a member of the central committee of the Communist party until 1934. One effect of the various purges of high civil and military officials between 1936 and 1938 had been to remove from Stalin's immediate circle practically every one who had lived in, or even had knowledge of, any foreign countries; wild suspicion of foreign intrigue had indeed played an important part in the accusations at the trials. The Munich settlement and the almost complete ignoring of the Soviet Government during the negotiations seemed to confirm all the worst suspicions of British policy: its alleged sympathy with Fascism, its defeatism, and its hostility to Russia were vigorously denounced in the Moscow Press. Accordingly the Anglo-French pledge to Poland was not at first taken very seriously in Moscow; when it was finally realized that the two powers had committed themselves irrevocably in

eastern Europe without securing explicit promises of support from other powers, the wily politicians of the Kremlin proceeded, no doubt with thoroughly good consciences, to take full advantage of the situation.

The Anglo-Soviet discussions opened with a British proposal on 15 April that the U.S.S.R. should give a promise of assistance to certain east European states similar to that given by Great Britain. A Soviet note on the 16th proposed (1) the conclusion between Great Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R. of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression, of an exclusively defensive character; and (2) a guarantee by the same three powers of the states of central and eastern Europe, including without exception all countries bordering on the U.S.S.R., against attack. These proposals suggest an attempt to bring France and England into a genuine and comprehensive scheme of collective security, and probably represent Litvinov's own ideas. They were referred to London by the British ambassador, Sir William Seeds, and before the British reply was received Litvinov was, on 3 May, released from the office of Foreign Commissar 'at his own request', and his duties were temporarily assumed by M. Molotov. On the following day the Moscow wireless announced that Molotov would carry on the policy of western security which had for years been Litvinov's expressed aim. In spite of this assurance there was considerable uneasiness in western Europe at the change. Subsequent events would suggest that it indicated that Stalin had decided to take the conduct of negotiations into his own hands, and that he had realized that with France and Great Britain virtually committed to the defence of the European frontiers of the U.S.S.R. he could demand almost what terms he liked by playing the western powers and Germany off against one another. It was probably considered that Litvinov's policy of seeking

security for Russia by a *rapprochement* with the democracies had brought the danger of war nearer; in any case, he was, as a Jew and the protagonist of the anti-German policy, not the best person to strike a bargain with Hitler, if that were now possible.

In the first stage of the negotiations Molotov soon made clear his intention of driving a hard bargain, using for the purpose the argument—which London must have found extremely irritating—that Great Britain was asking more of the U.S.S.R. than she was prepared to give in return. The British reply to the Soviet proposals was apparently presented on 8 May, after consultation with Paris. It argued that the Soviet proposals of 16 April would, by bringing about what would virtually be a triple alliance of the pre-war type, raise the very difficulties which the British proposals were designed to avoid; nevertheless, if the Soviet Government wished to make its intervention contingent on that of Great Britain and France, the British Government would have no objection. On 9 May Halifax gave M. Maisky a similar assurance. On 10 May the official *Izvestia* again stated that the British proposal made no mention of assistance to the Soviet Union in the event of its being involved in war in consequence of its obligations to any eastern European states. The argument appears quite untenable, as the two western powers would in such circumstances be simultaneously involved in war under their own pledges to Poland and Rumania. On 10 May the Prime Minister stated that the Government had simply proposed that the Soviet Government should give to Poland and Rumania a promise to lend assistance if desired, on the same lines as the British and French assurances. He repeated that they were quite willing for the Soviet intervention to be contingent on that of Great Britain and France. On the 11th the *Izvestia*

again stated that the British proposals were unfair to the U.S.S.R. The British reply of 8 May meant 'that the position of the U.S.S.R., in spite of equal obligations, would be one of inequality with regard to assistance'.

The announcement on 12 May, by simultaneous statements in Ankara and London, of a provisional Anglo-Turkish agreement, was expected to have a beneficial effect on the Moscow negotiations. The steady growth of friendly relations between England and Turkey since 1935 had been primarily the result of Turkish apprehension at Italy's aggressive policy; Germany's policy, had, however, been viewed with growing alarm by the Turkish Government, firstly, perhaps, because of her close relations with Italy, but more recently on her own account. There had been a marked increase in hostility towards German business men and mercantile shipping in Turkish ports since Munich, and that event had, on the other hand, finally convinced Turkey of Britain's peaceful intentions. Recent events had greatly increased the danger of German and Italian penetration of the Balkans, and Turkey's control of the Straits would enable her to say whether British and French aid could reach Rumania. On 8 April M. Gafencu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, visited Istanbul to discuss this question; an official statement afterwards announced that the two powers intended to maintain the policy of the Balkan Entente and Salonika Pact with resolution. By the agreement of 12 May Great Britain and Turkey undertook to co-operate effectively in the event of war in the Mediterranean area, and they recognized that it was 'also necessary to ensure the establishment of security in the Balkans'. A definite long-term agreement was to be concluded in due course.

Towards the end of May fresh British proposals were

sent to Moscow which, in Molotov's words, 'admitted the principle of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R. in the event of direct attack, on the principle of reciprocity'. The effect of this was to guarantee all the Soviet's European frontiers against direct attack, and to promise assistance to the three states, Poland, Rumania, and Greece, if they became victims of aggression. The Soviet Government was, however, in no hurry to act. On 31 May Molotov in a speech at the meeting of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. said that the Anglo-French proposal was 'so hedged in by reservations—including reservations concerning certain articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations—that it may prove a fictitious step forward'. He still argued that the proposals were more favourable to the western powers than to the U.S.S.R., as they contained no provision for the defence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which might not be able to defend themselves against aggression. He did not remark that the Russian proposals had contained no provision for the defence of Holland and Belgium. 'The Soviet Union cannot accept liabilities towards the above-mentioned five countries without obtaining a guarantee in relation to the three countries situated on its north-western frontier.' In the light of subsequent events the reference which immediately followed to the progress of commercial negotiations with Germany may be regarded as a further attempt to force the hands of the British and French.

Throughout June the negotiations continued to be held up over the question of the Baltic states. There was undoubtedly real ground for the Russian apprehension that these states might be forced to accept German political or military control and might not dare to appeal for help. They, however, like Poland and Rumania, were as much afraid of the U.S.S.R. as

of Germany, and had no desire to give either power any excuse for marching in troops which might very well remain there. On 7 June Chamberlain told the House of Commons that he had received several communications from Finland, Estonia, and Latvia indicating that 'in view of their intention to maintain strict neutrality they did not wish to receive a guarantee as a result of the present negotiation'. On 12 June, Mr. William Strang, chief of the central department of the Foreign Office, left for Moscow with new proposals. These were handed to Molotov on the 15th; the *Izvestia* on the following day described them as 'not entirely favourable'. Further proposals and counter-proposals were exchanged during the next six weeks, but without any escape being found from the deadlock.

The problem became narrowed down to a search for a formula for 'indirect aggression' which would enable protection to be afforded to the Baltic states without their participation. The Soviet Government continued to throw all the blame for delay on the British and French; on 29 June M. Zhdanov, the head of the Press Bureau, said in *Pravda* that the two western powers were entirely responsible for the delay, and he even accused them of seeking accommodations with the totalitarian powers. On 31 July Chamberlain told the House of Commons that it was no secret that the three powers were unable to agree on a definition of indirect aggression, though all three realized that indirect aggression might be as dangerous as direct; progress was held up because the Soviet formula appeared to carry the appearance of encroachment on the independence of other states. He added the significant comment that there might have been a provisional agreement at an early date, but that Russia preferred to initial nothing which was not complete. The Russian Government had, however, suggested that if staff talks

between military representatives of the three powers were begun the political difficulties should not prove insuperable, and the British and French Governments had agreed, although it was almost without precedent for staff talks to take place before a political agreement had been reached. By this stage it was known in London that Russo-German conversations had been taking place, but it was hoped that they had failed. It now seems evident that the Soviet authorities were deliberately marking time, and that the British and French Governments had to accept any proposal that would keep the negotiations going. Mr. Strang left Moscow on 7 August, and the French and British military missions arrived there on the 10th. The sending of the British military mission had necessitated the personal intervention of the Prime Minister, who had overridden the objections of the service departments. It was argued later that better results would have been achieved if some important political personage, such as Lord Halifax, had been sent to Moscow. It is true that Ribbentrop went to Moscow in August to sign the German-Soviet pact. But he went to sign after negotiations had been conducted by the German ambassador, and the British had a representative there of equal standing in the person of the British ambassador, Sir William Seeds.

GERMANY AND THE PEACE FRONT (APRIL–JUNE)

The German Government's reaction to the Anglo-French 'peace front' negotiations expressed irritation rather than fear; although a temporary halt was called to the advance into eastern Europe there was no indication of any serious inclination to abandon it. After the end of March German official and Press pronouncements expressed angry and threatening condemnation of the motives and intelligence of the critics

of Germany's recent foreign policy; this was, of course, in part a spontaneous expression of the Führer's sense of irritation, but it was clearly intended also as a means of frightening the two western powers into inaction, or at least of testing their resolution. The attacks were directed mainly against Great Britain. This 'war of nerves' was merely a continuation of the Press war of the previous winter, and the possibility that it would strengthen and consolidate anti-German feeling instead of terrorizing it into silence never seems to have been grasped in Berchtesgaden or Berlin.

On 21 March the German Press began to put forward the argument that the Munich agreement meant that Great Britain and France had recognized the priority of German interests in the Middle East of Europe and that it was in effect a *quid pro quo* for the Naval Agreement of 1935, by which Germany had tacitly recognized Great Britain's interests overseas. On 1 April, in a speech at Wilhelmshaven, Hitler claimed that he had made numerous attempts to solve every problem by discussion, and that all his offers had been rejected. Before 1914 'the encirclement of Germany was carried out by Britain systematically, because the annihilation of Germany would ensure a greater quantity of food for every British citizen'. Now there was a new plan of encirclement: recent anger abroad at German action in Czechoslovakia was perhaps 'rage over the lack of success of a carefully evolved plan aimed at creating a tactical state for the new policy of encirclement'. He glorified the Axis—the most natural political influence in the world, based on reason, justice, and idealism—and poured scorn on the 'transitory ties of heterogeneous bodies on the other side'. German Press comment and official speeches continued on these lines throughout April. The Italian occupation of Albania was warmly approved, and some

papers suggested that King Zog was in the pay of the British intelligence service.

On 15 April President Roosevelt addressed to Hitler and Mussolini a 'peace' appeal, the essential point of which was an inquiry as to whether each would guarantee not to attack certain states (all the European and Near Eastern states were named) for a period sufficiently long (ten years at least) to give every opportunity to work by peaceful methods for a more permanent peace. This somewhat disconcerting proposal was denounced in Germany as 'an infamous trick', and in Italy as outrageous, provocative, and impudent. On the 17th, however, it was announced that Hitler would give his reply in the Reichstag on 28 April. This long speech provided not merely a reply to the President, but also a public assertion of German claims concerning Danzig and the Corridor, together with a long discussion of England's attitude which was perhaps intended to lead to a bargain with her. Sir Nevile Henderson had been sent back to Berlin three days before, but was unable to see Ribbentrop; he informed the Secretary of State, Freiherr von Weiszaecker, of the British Government's decision to introduce conscription, and explained the general objects of British foreign policy, but all this had no apparent influence on the Führer. His references to England emphasized his desire for Anglo-German friendship and expressed sincere admiration for the 'immeasurable colonizing work' of the Anglo-Saxon people. He repeated his favourite argument that as he did not interfere with British policy in Palestine and elsewhere she should not interfere with Germany's policy in her own sphere of interest, and then referred to the Naval Agreement of 1935, which had been due to his conviction that war between the two countries would never again be possible. As this conviction no longer seemed to be shared

in London the basis for the Naval Agreement had been removed, and he had sent a communication to this effect to London. 'Should the British Government, however, wish to enter once more into negotiations with Germany on this problem, no one would be happier than I at the prospect of still being able to come to a clear and straightforward understanding.' With regard to Poland, he described the 'offer' of 21 March, and the Polish reply which he treated (quite correctly) as a rejection. This attitude was 'incomprehensible', but worse was that Poland, like Czechoslovakia a year ago, believed 'under the pressure of a lying international campaign that it must call up troops'. This led to the 'so-called guarantee offer'; Poland would now, in some circumstances, be compelled to take military action against Germany. This, he said, conflicted with the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact, which he therefore denounced. He replied to Roosevelt by saying that he was prepared to give assurances to each of the states named, on condition of absolute reciprocity. Already, however, 'all states bordering on Germany have received much more binding assurances . . . than Mr. Roosevelt asked from me in his curious telegram'.

Early in May Ribbentrop met Ciano at Lake Como, and it was announced that their two countries would sign a comprehensive military and economic pact. This treaty was duly signed by the two Foreign Ministers at Berlin on 22 May. On the face of it the treaty made formal provision for the military co-operation which had been implicit in their previous 'Axis' policy. The preamble referred to their determination to stand together 'for the securing of their sphere of living'. Article 3 provided that if 'one of them becomes involved in warlike complications with another power or powers, the other contracting party will immediately come to

its aid with all its military forces'. But Italy did not go to war in September, and it was then widely reported in the Press that the treaty contained secret clauses by which Italy was not to be called on to go to war for two or three years, or to fight against Poland. In a speech on 16 December Count Ciano said that Berlin and Rome had both agreed in May on the necessity for maintaining peace; Italy had estimated that she needed three years, and Germany four or five years, to complete internal reorganization and military preparations. The German Government had agreed that it was inadvisable to raise any seriously controversial questions for this period.

For the moment, however, the treaty was an effective demonstration of 'Axis' solidarity, and it was followed by some similar demonstrations, such as a series of consultations between the army, navy, and air chiefs of the two countries. The Anglo-Russian negotiations were apparently not taken too seriously; Litvinov's fall on 3 May was interpreted as opening the door for Russo-German *rapprochement*, and the German Press began to assure the Soviet Government that German *Lebensraum* (in spite of *Mein Kampf*) did not encroach on Russian territory. After the Ciano–Ribbentrop meeting the Italian Press had hinted at the existence of negotiations with representatives of other powers to check British encirclement policy. M. Coulondre, the French ambassador, reported on 22 May that Ribbentrop considered that Poland's rejection of the German proposals was 'unheard of'; the proposals had been drawn up by Hitler himself, and were much milder than Ribbentrop desired. He, in fact, was convinced that Poland must disappear in a Soviet-German partition; Hitler, however, was resisting this idea, owing to the difficulty of justifying a *rapprochement* with Russia. Non-aggression pacts were

offered by Germany to Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and the Scandinavian states; Norway, Sweden, and Finland refused, but pacts were signed with Denmark, on 31 May, and with Estonia and Latvia on 7 June. On 15 May Hitler commenced a tour of the western fortifications; on 6 June he addressed the Kondor Legion of Germans who had fought for General Franco in Spain, and admitted that he had decided to help Franco as early as July 1936. The speech, like that of 28 April, made no attack on Communism or Bolshevism. Goebbels during June conducted an anti-British campaign throughout the country; Dr. Ley described British defensive measures as 'childish bluff', a mixture of conscription and football; all the German leaders continued to denounce the British encirclement policy, war-mongering, and hypocrisy.

This campaign did not produce any signs of failing nerve in London; the Government was, however, convinced that Hitler had not realized that the British and French pledge to Poland must be taken seriously, and that he was therefore deliberately preparing a Polish crisis. On 5 May Beck replied in the Polish parliament to Hitler's action in repudiating the German-Polish agreement. He pointed out that the German proposals of 21 March demanded unilateral concessions from Poland, and that his reply of 26 March had remained unanswered. Peaceful intentions and peaceful methods of procedure were essential conditions of an agreement; if the Reich were really guided by these pre-conditions the Polish Government would undertake conversations with the utmost goodwill. A memorandum was sent to the German Government on the same day. It referred to the German 'suggestion' of 21 March, and the reply of the 26th, and pointed out that it was only in the speech of 28 April that the Polish Government learnt that their formulation

of counter-proposals instead of an acceptance of the verbal proposals was regarded as a refusal of discussions. These Polish indications of a willingness for discussions produced no response; the German ambassador, Herr von Moltke, returned to Warsaw on 5 May, but had no official meeting with Beck during the next two months. Ill-feeling between the two countries grew steadily; a general boycott of German newspapers and German films was accompanied by measures of retaliation against Polish travellers in Germany. The German papers repeatedly contained stories of Germans ill-treated and beaten to death; these stories appear to have been without foundation, and indeed the German minority in Poland was probably the most anti-Nazi group of non-Reich Germans in the world.

As a result of this increasing tension the British Government gave several warnings to Germany, but they do not seem at first to have had much effect. On 8 and 12 June Lord Halifax stated the British attitude in Parliament; on 16 June he told the German ambassador, Herr von Dirksen, that 'if anybody was encircling Germany it was herself by the policy she persisted in pursuing'; on 23 June a memorandum, replying to the German note of 27 April denouncing the Naval Agreement, reaffirmed the British Government's intention to support certain countries if attacked by Germany, but was at such pains to deny the justice of the German charges of encirclement, trade hostility, and so forth, that its tone must have seemed to the Germans defensive, and almost apologetic. The blockade of Tientsin, which began on 14 June, was triumphantly proclaimed by Dr. Goebbels to be a further proof of British impotence.

This phase of the German-Polish tension culminated in a sharp crisis at the end of June and this at last

seems to have convinced the German Government that the British might be in earnest. The trouble arose from the increasing hostility of the Danzig Senate towards Poland and the Polish customs and other officials in the Free City; the circumstances seemed to make it clear that provocation was deliberate, and that some *fait accompli* was being prepared. On 4 June the Senate sent a note to the Polish Government demanding—as it had done on previous occasions—the withdrawal of Polish officials; a second note complained of the numbers and attitude of the Polish customs officers. S.A. men continued to arrive in Danzig in large numbers; on 11 June the Gestapo, which really controlled the city, arrested a Polish customs inspector, M. Lipinski, whose friends stated that they had seen him pushed into a car and beaten by police and S.A. men. Other arrests were made by the Gestapo, and no Polish representative was allowed to see Lipinski. On 17 June Goebbels spoke in Danzig, and after accusing Poland of demanding East Prussia and Silesia from Germany, repeated Hitler's statement that 'Danzig is a German city and will come to Germany'. Herr Forster, the *Gauleiter* of Danzig, returned from Berlin on 23 June, and started to organize a 'Free Corps' of about 4,000 young men sent from East Prussia; it was also known that military defences were being prepared hurriedly round the city, workmen's dwellings were requisitioned for storing ammunition, and a variety of other preparations all helped to create the impression that some drastic action was imminent.

A full and unequivocal statement of British policy was made by Lord Halifax on 29 June, at the Annual Dinner of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Immediately before, the French Foreign Minister had urged Halifax to give a clear warning to the Reich that France and Great Britain intended to fulfil their

obligations to assist Poland. The whole speech provided a reasoned and much-needed statement of the case for Great Britain's present phase of foreign policy, and a challenge to totalitarian theories and criticism.

> 'To-day we are bound by new agreements for mutual defence with Poland and Turkey: we have guaranteed assistance to Greece and Rumania against aggression. . . . We know that, if the security and independence of other countries are to disappear, our own security and our own independence will be gravely threatened. We know that if international law and order are to be preserved, we must be prepared to fight in its defence.'

The country had made an immense effort, unparalleled in time of peace, to equip itself for this task: none of this formidable array of strength would be used except in defence against aggression. 'No blow will be struck, no shot fired.' Over a large part of the world the old standards of conduct and of human decency were being set aside. Our own standards must not deteriorate. 'We respect our fellow men. We know that without that there can be no real self-respect either for individuals, or in the long run for nations.' Great Britain's first resolve was to stop aggression: no more and no less. Germany was not being encircled, but was isolating herself, 'economically by her policy of autarky: politically by a policy that causes constant anxiety to other nations, and culturally by her policy of racialism'.

> 'It is noteworthy that this claim to "living space" is being put forward at a moment when Germany has become an immigration country, importing workers in large numbers from Czechoslovakia, from

Holland, and from Italy, to meet the needs of her industry and agriculture. How then can Germany claim to be over-populated? Belgium and Holland, and to a less extent our own islands, have already proved that what is called over-population can be prevented by productive work.'

After an excellent brief summary of British colonial aims, based on the recognition of the principle that self-government should be the ultimate goal of colonial policy, he asserted once more the belief that all outstanding international problems could find a solution 'once everybody has got the will to settle'. But 'it is impossible to negotiate with a country the leaders of which brand a friendly country as thieves and blackmailers and indulge in daily monstrous slanders on British policy in all parts of the world'.

The speech made a considerable impression both abroad and at home. It was excellently timed, and its statement of a democratic case had a valuable psychological effect in offering some positive challenge to the incessant enunciation of totalitarian theories and claims. On the following day (30 June) Halifax suggested to the Polish Government that a *fait accompli* was being prepared, and that the moment had come for consultation between the Polish, French, and British Governments in order that their plans might be co-ordinated in time. Beck in his reply on 1 July advised against any joint *démarche* at this stage, although he accepted the British view as to Germany's intentions. He was, however, 'determined not to be scared by any psychological terrorism into imprudent action'. This decision turned out to be wise; during the next few days the situation in Danzig eased sufficiently to show that Germany was not yet ready for action. On 1 July Bonnet presented to the German ambassador a note saying that France

would immediately come to Poland's assistance if an alteration in the *status quo* in Danzig drove Poland into war. On 10 July Chamberlain in the House of Commons reaffirmed the intention of the British Government to support Poland in resisting a 'unilateral solution' of the Danzig question imposed by Germany.

THE LAST PHASE (JULY–AUGUST)

The diplomacy of the last two months before the outbreak of war is necessarily very obscure on some points, although we know enough to be able to indicate with a fair degree of certainty the main course of events and the aims of the Governments concerned. In spite of a superficial improvement in the Danzig situation in July it was clear that Germany had no intention of dropping the question, and a renewal of the controversy early in August ushered in a final stage of furious polemics on lines strikingly similar to the German anti-Czech campaign of 1938. Now that it was becoming evident that the Anglo-French pledge to Poland must be taken seriously the German aim was to buy off Russia, so that the western powers would either be scared into abandoning the Poles, or would at least be able to attack only the heavily fortified Western Wall. We know virtually nothing to-day about the negotiations which preceded the announcement of the Soviet-German pact of non-aggression on 21 August: the complete secrecy maintained throughout represents one of the most successful aspects of the transaction. It has been noted earlier that there were indications of the possibility of agreement as early as April and May. On 28 April, in his Reichstag speech, Hitler refrained from attacking the Soviet Government; Litvinov's fall on 3 May caused rumours (scarcely surprising in the circumstances) of a complete reorientation of Soviet foreign policy, and during the next few weeks the

German Press concentrated its main attention on France and England. All this, however, amounts to very little, and there is no definite evidence of serious German-Soviet discussions at this stage. Press attacks on the U.S.S.R. certainly did not entirely disappear, and it may even be that the first step towards the *rapprochement* was taken by Moscow.

Certainly the first public hint was Molotov's speech on 31 May. He quoted Stalin's precept, 'to be cautious and not let our country be drawn into conflict by warmongers who are accustomed to allow others to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them', as a comment on the Anglo-French proposals; later in the speech he said that while carrying on negotiations with England and France, the Soviet Government did not in the least consider it necessary to renounce business ties with such countries as Germany and Italy. Trade negotiations had been initiated by the German Government at the beginning of 1938, with the German offer of a credit of 200 million marks. They had been interrupted, but 'there were signs that the resumption of these negotiations is not excluded'. German proposals for a political agreement were believed to have been made in the middle of June, without success. Early in July there were rumours, which were emphatically denied in Germany, that von Papen had gone on a special mission to Moscow; unofficial trade talk in Moscow can be assumed from the fact that on 21 July it was announced that official negotiations had begun there. At the end of the month there were further reports in Berlin and abroad of a Soviet-German agreement to side-track the Anglo-French plans, but these were officially denied in Germany. On 19 August the trade and credit agreement was signed in Berlin; it provided for a German credit to Russia of 200 million marks, for seven years at five per cent interest, for buying German goods

within a period of two years. Germany was to purchase from Russia, within the same period, goods to the value of 180 million marks. On the evening of 21 August it was announced that the two countries had negotiated a non-aggression pact, and that von Ribbentrop would fly to Moscow on the 23rd to sign it.

The Danzig situation took a turn for the worse on 4 August, when the Polish Senate was understood to have informed customs inspectors at four posts in Danzig that henceforth they would not be allowed to carry out their duties. This clearly suggested the opening of the frontier between East Prussia and the Free City. A Polish ultimatum demanded that the customs officials should be allowed to function without molestation, and threatened reprisals; on 5 August the Senate informed the Polish High Commissioner, M. Chodacki, by telephone that the order would not be applied. A Senate note on the 7th denied that it was responsible for the alleged ban. On 8 August a *note verbale* from the German Government expressed 'lively surprise' at the Polish ultimatum to the Senate of 4 August, and its threat of reprisals on the basis of 'incorrect rumours', and said that the repetition of such demands 'would lead to an aggravation of Polish-German relations, for the consequences of which responsibility will fall exclusively on the Polish Government'. The Polish reply expressed in turn 'liveliest surprise' at the German action, as it could 'perceive no juridical basis capable of justifying intervention of Germany in these relations'. Colonel Beck told the British ambassador on 10 August that his Government took a very serious view of the German *démarche*, as it was the first time the Reich had directly intervened in the dispute between Poland and the Danzig Senate. He claimed to have documentary proof that the orders to the customs officials had been signed by the Danzig authorities. The British

ambassador told Halifax on the 9th that the recent Polish attitude over the customs dispute had been 'firm but studiously moderate'.

After these exchanges on 4 August the Senate had suggested the possibility of peaceful negotiations, and it was actually arranged on 10 August that negotiations should begin on the 14th. On the 13th, however, the discussions were postponed to allow M. Chodacki to take a short rest, and on the same day two more Polish customs officials were arrested. Dr. Burckhardt, the League High Commissioner, visited Berchtesgaden on 11 August; it was generally believed that the discussions concerned only the local issues in Danzig, and that Hitler did most of the talking, expressing his indignation at Polish conduct. Later Dr. Burckhardt said that a settlement had become impossible by this stage, but might have been achieved if Hitler had attempted it earlier.

On the broader Polish-German issues there can be no question where responsibility lies. The British Government, which had the best of reasons for desiring Polish restraint, appears to have been satisfied that the Government and Press in Poland had done their best to avoid language which could be construed as provocative. The German Press conducted a violent campaign against both Great Britain and Poland, its general line of argument being that the British 'blank cheque' had emboldened Poland to refuse reasonable demands, to inaugurate a reign of terror against the German minority, and to plan a military attack on Danzig and even on the Reich itself. An article in a Polish Conservative paper, *Czas*, on 7 August, which stated that if the rulers of Danzig attempted to face Poland with an accomplished fact, Polish guns were certain to shell Danzig, produced violent counter-attacks in the Danzig and German Presses. From this point the German

Press attacks on Poland became wilder every day; on 18 August it was stated that 76,000 refugees had fled from Poland into Germany up to the middle of August. After a series of violent speeches Herr Forster said on 20 August that Poland had rejected friendly overtures made by the Führer, and had replied by threatening to destroy Germany and invade the Reich.

With these developments in mind it is possible to follow the main movements of German policy. By the beginning of August there was probably reasonable certainty in Berlin that the negotiations with Moscow would succeed, and the Danzig customs incident of 4 August was either staged or deliberately utilized to hurry on a definite breach. The text of the paragraph of the Polish reply of 9 August to the German *note verbale*, ending with the statement that the Government would 'consider any future intervention by the German Government to the detriment of these (Polish) rights and interests as an act of aggression', was not in Hitler's hands at the time of his interview with Dr. Burckhardt, but it made completely unavailing the attempt of Count Ciano immediately after to smooth over the differences. Ciano and Ribbentrop had met at Salzburg on 11 August during Dr. Burckhardt's visit to Berchtesgaden, and although a German Foreign Office spokesman stated on 13 August that 100 per cent unity had been achieved in all the policies and actions affecting the past, present, and future problems of the Axis, there was, in practice, no agreement at all between the two powers on the Danzig question. After meetings with Hitler on 12 and 13 August, Ciano returned to Rome, whence Signor Attolico, the Italian ambassador in Berlin, was hurriedly summoned a day or two later.

The German Government's attitude was made quite clear when the British ambassador visited the Secretary

of State on 15 August. Baron von Weiszaecker said at once that the situation had gravely deteriorated since 4 August, owing to the Polish ultimatum of that date, the last sentence of Beck's note of 10 August, and the unmistakable set policy of persecution and extermination of the German minority in Poland. Later in the conversation he said that a German initiative could hardly have been possible since Colonel Beck's speech of 5 May, and was certainly quite out of the question after 5 August. His Government 'did not, would not, and could not believe that Britain would fight under all circumstances whatever folly the Poles might commit'. Sir Nevile Henderson made it quite clear that his Government could not accept the German interpretation of Polish conduct, nor could there be any doubt that it would go to war if Poland were attacked: all this was, however, received by the State Secretary with 'detachment and calm'. 'He seemed very confident, and professed to believe that Russian assistance to the Poles would not only be entirely negligible, but that the U.S.S.R. would even in the end join in sharing the Polish spoils. Nor did my insistence on the inevitability of British intervention seem to move him.' The German Press had also adopted for the most part a completely uncompromising attitude.

The announcement, late in the evening of 21 August, of the forthcoming signature of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact left little doubt that a German attack on Poland was imminent. Information reached Sir Nevile Henderson on the same day that the German military preparations for this were already in progress, and would be completed by 24 August. Would France and England fight? The announcement of the pact produced a sense of immense relief in Berlin; the constant denunciation of 'encirclement' had created a widespread impression that Britain and France would

not act independently of Russia. It is difficult to believe that at this stage the German Government shared these illusions; Baron von Weiszaecker's remarks on 15 August, and the fact that the attack on Poland was apparently to be staged immediately after Ribbentrop's signature of the pact in Moscow on 23 August, rather suggests that the German Government had decided that it would be a waste of time to invite, or wait for, a change in the British attitude. However this may be, the matter was quickly settled. The British Cabinet met on 22 August, and decided to summon Parliament for the 24th, when the Houses would be asked to pass the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill in all its stages. Preliminary measures of mobilization were also decided upon. At 9 p.m. on the same evening Sir Nevile Henderson was instructed to convey without delay a personal letter to Hitler. He flew to Salzburg on the morning of the 23rd, and had an interview with Hitler at Berchtesgaden at one o'clock in the afternoon. The letter referred to the British measures which had been taken on the 22nd, and said that they had been rendered necessary by the reported German military movements, and by the fact that in some quarters in Berlin the announcement of the Soviet-German pact had been taken to indicate that intervention by Great Britain on behalf of Poland was no longer a contingency that need be reckoned with. 'No greater mistake could be made.' It went on to say that the difficulties of the Polish-German situation could be mitigated, if not removed, if there could be for an initial period 'a truce of both sides—and indeed on all sides—to Press polemics and to all incitement'. After this period steps could be taken to examine and deal with complaints by either side as to the treatment of minorities.

Henderson had a stormy conversation with Hitler,

who made no long speeches but whose language 'was violent and exaggerated both as regards England and Poland'. The ambassador 'contested every point and kept calling his statements inaccurate, but the only effect was to launch him on some fresh tirade'. Hitler asserted that the Polish question would have been settled on the most generous terms (those of 21 March) if it had not been for England's unwarranted support: when the ambassador replied that the Polish answer had been given on 26 March, while the British guarantee was only offered on 31 March, Hitler retorted that the Polish reply had been inspired by a British Press campaign. He violently attacked the Poles, and talked of their systematic persecution of the German minority, 100,000 of whom had, he said, fled to Germany. (The German Press had said 76,000; Sir Howard Kennard thought 17,000 was the absolute maximum, and that many of these had left voluntarily in May in order to be on the German side in the event of war, and for other reasons.) The British proposal of a truce was not referred to at all and apparently did not interest Hitler. The Führer's anger at the Prime Minister's letter may be evidence that the British attitude had proved an unpleasant shock to him, but was more probably due to pent-up irritation caused by the general nervous strain of the crisis.

Later in the afternoon, when he handed the ambassador his reply, he had recovered his calm. 'Though he spoke of his artistic tastes and his longing to satisfy them, I derived the impression that the corporal of the last war was even more anxious to prove what he could do as a conquering Generalissimo in the next.' The reply stated in general terms that Germany had never sought conflict with England and for years had endeavoured—although unfortunately in vain—to win England's friendship; the Reich, however, possessed

certain definite interests which it was impossible to renounce, such as the German city of Danzig and the connected problem of the Corridor. The reported British and French measures of mobilization could only be directed against Germany: 'I therefore inform your Excellency that, in the event of these military announcements being carried into effect, I shall order immediate mobilization of the German forces.' This sentence was underlined, and when the ambassador suggested that a general German mobilization was equivalent to war the reply he got was confused. He believed the sentence was intended to indicate that Germany could not be intimidated, and to serve as an excuse for general mobilization.

The Soviet-German pact of non-aggression, dated 23 August, provided that the two powers should refrain from any act of force against one another, should consult together, and that each should refrain from participating in any grouping of powers directed against the other. Article 2 said that in the event of one of the parties becoming the object of warlike action on the part of a third power, the other should in no manner support the third power. This covered the case of Poland, and the wording of the article probably supplied one reason for the Reich's subsequent insistence that Poland had started the war. Sir Nevile Henderson has since stated that there is some reason to believe that the order for the German army to advance into Poland was actually issued for the night of 25–26 August. If this is the case it would appear that the Prime Minister's letter caused Hitler to have 'one last hesitation' and to countermand the orders to his army, although other arrangements were allowed to proceed. On 23 August the *Gauleiter* Herr Forster was declared by the Danzig Senate to be Head of the State of Danzig; on the 24th the Polish Government said that there

appeared no provision whatever for this appointment in the Constitution of the Free City, and again warned the Senate against the policy of *fait accompli*. On the same day the Polish ambassador in Berlin was instructed to seek an immediate interview with the Secretary of State; as the latter was in Berchtesgaden he saw Goering, who was very cordial in manner but could only express regret that 'his policy of maintaining friendly relations with Poland should have come to naught'. In London Parliament listened to speeches, by Chamberlain and Halifax, which elaborated the statement of the British attitude given to Hitler; the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill was then passed through all its stages, and received the Royal Assent.

Hitler's 'one last hesitation' which may have postponed the war for nearly a week, took the form of a final attempt to detach England from Poland. At 1.30 p.m. on the afternoon of 25 August he received the British ambassador at the Chancellery in Berlin and made proposals which would, he hoped, lead to a settlement with England as decisive as his recent agreement with Russia. With regard to Poland there must be the settlement that Germany desired: the 'Macedonian' conditions on her eastern frontier must end, the problem of Danzig and the Corridor must be solved. After that he was prepared and determined to approach England with a large, comprehensive offer. 'He is a man of great decisions, and in this case also he will be capable of being great in his action.' The offer amounted to very little: he accepted the British Empire and was ready 'to pledge himself personally for its continued existence', but only on condition that his colonial demands were fulfilled; all that could be regarded as an 'offer' was his vague promise 'to fix the longest time-limit' for a settlement of the colonial question. Henderson made it quite clear that there

was no chance that the offer would be considered by the British Government unless it meant a negotiated settlement of the Polish question; nevertheless, in accordance with Hitler's own proposal, he flew to London on the morning of 26 August in a 'plane placed at his disposal by the German Government. At 5.30 on the afternoon of the 25th Hitler gave the French ambassador a message assuring Daladier that he had no hostility towards France. On the afternoon of 28 August Henderson flew back with the British reply.

In London there had been no sort of panic or even of hesitation by the Government, Parliament, and the general public; the 'war of nerves' had reached a stage at which there was almost universal relief in Great Britain at unequivocal resistance to the German technique of aggression. On 25 August the Anglo-Polish agreement, providing that each party should furnish the other full support and assistance in the event of aggression by a third power, was signed in London. Hess in a broadcast on the same day described Chamberlain as 'a blind old idiot bound to an impossible policy and led by the nose by Jewish financiers'. The British Government's aim was still to provide some form of truce between Poland and Germany, in order to give time for what seemed imaginary or comparatively trivial differences to be adjusted. They continued, in co-operation with the French, to urge the Polish Government to avoid provocation and fresh incidents, and late on 25 August proposed the formation of a corps of neutral observers; on 26 August they suggested that the Polish Government should offer Germany an exchange of populations as a means of meeting the more permanent problem. The latter proposal would be a pledge that the Polish Government was genuinely seeking to overcome the difficulty, and would give them some definite and new point of departure on which to

open up negotiations. On 27 August Beck showed that he was inclined to consider both proposals favourably, but the situation was now developing too rapidly for them to be carried any further.

The British reply to Hitler's verbal proposals was handed to the Führer late on 28 August; he appeared to be not unfavourably impressed, and was 'again friendly and reasonable' in manner towards the ambassador. The reply echoed his desire for complete and lasting friendship, and agreed that there must first be a settlement of the differences between Poland and Germany. Great Britain could not acquiesce in any settlement which would jeopardize Poland's independence. Hence any settlement arrived at would have to be guaranteed by other powers, and the Government suggested the initiation of direct discussions between the German and Polish Governments, on a basis which would include the safeguarding of Poland's essential interests and the securing of the settlement by an international guarantee. The Polish Government had already agreed to enter discussions on this basis. Hitler promised to give his reply next day.

The object of the British reply was to distinguish clearly between the method of negotiating a solution and the nature of the solution itself: it was felt that if the former problem could be satisfactorily solved the real difficulties would be found to be comparatively slight. This, however, involved the whole question of Germany's honesty of purpose: had she a real case against Poland, claims which would stand examination in the light of day? 'Self-determination', decided by a plebiscite, would give her Danzig but not the Corridor; exchanges of population would remove the possibility of the persecution of minorities but would not give her increased territory. The German midday Press on the 29th reported the alleged murder of six

Germans in Poland; when Sir Nevile Henderson visited the Chancellery again at 7.15 in the evening he found Hitler in 'a far less reasonable mood'. Henderson suspected that the story of the six murders had been fabricated by the Nazi extremists to prevent any weakening on the Führer's part. It may be added that it supplied an excellent last-minute excuse for insisting on an immediate settlement. The German reply accepted the mediation of Great Britain with a view to the visit to Berlin of some Polish plenipotentiary, but counted on the arrival of such a plenipotentiary the next day, 30 August. Proposals for a solution would be drawn up at once and if possible placed at the disposal of the British Government before the arrival of the Polish emissary. The ambassador said that the demand for a plenipotentiary next day sounded very much like an ultimatum: this drew prompt and angry denials from Hitler and Ribbentrop, who said that Henderson 'did not care how many Germans were being slaughtered in Poland'. The remainder of the interview was stormy.

The German proposals left little hope of a peaceful settlement. A message from Halifax at 4 a.m. on 30 August described the demand for a Polish representative within twenty-four hours as unreasonable; Henderson nevertheless recommended that the Polish Government should take advantage of this eleventh-hour effort to establish direct contact with Hitler if only to convince the world that they were prepared to make their own sacrifice for the preservation of peace. But Sir Howard Kennard telegraphed in the morning that it would be, in his opinion, impossible to induce the Polish Government to send a representative immediately to Berlin on the basis proposed by Hitler, and the British Government did not even ask the Poles to consider the proposal. Instead, they sent a reply

which was handed by Henderson to Ribbentrop at midnight of 30 August, that is, at the end of the day on which the Polish representative was to arrive, if the German demand were taken literally. The British note stated that they were informing the Polish Government of the German proposals of the 29th, but that in their view it would be impracticable to establish contact as early as the 30th. The Government noted the German willingness to enter into discussions with the Poles, agreed that the method of contact and arrangements for discussion should be arranged with all urgency, strongly urged a German-Polish agreement to refrain from aggressive military movements, and suggested the arrangement of a temporary *modus vivendi* for Danzig. Ribbentrop made it clear that the German Government regarded the failure of a Polish plenipotentiary to appear as the final end of the negotiations.

Sir Nevile Henderson has given a graphic account of this interview: Hitler's mood at this decisive moment can hardly have been amiable, and this was reflected in Ribbentrop, whose reception of the ambassador was 'one of intense hostility', which increased in violence as the interview progressed. 'He kept leaping from his chair in a state of great excitement, and asking if I had anything more to say.' To the suggestion that he should open discussions with Warsaw through the Polish ambassador he replied that such a course would be 'utterly unthinkable and intolerable'. Finally he 'produced a lengthy document which he read out to me in German, or rather gabbled through to me as fast as he could, in a tone of the utmost annoyance'. The ambassador was only able to gather the gist of six or seven of the sixteen articles of the proposals for a German-Polish settlement. Ribbentrop refused categorically to give a copy of the text, saying that the document was now out of date since no Polish emissary

had arrived at Berlin by midnight. Henderson was handed a copy of the proposals next day at 9.15 in the evening; at 9 o'clock the proposals had been broadcast with a statement that the German Government regarded them as having been rejected. They had, of course, never been communicated to the Polish Government. The proposals would certainly have formed an excellent basis for negotiation, assuming a genuine spirit of compromise on both sides: although they provided that Danzig should return to the Reich, they also proposed a plebiscite under international supervision in the Corridor, left Gdynia to Poland, provided for an international committee of inquiry to hear complaints by German and Polish minorities, and stipulated that the two countries should give the most binding guarantees of the rights of their respective minorities.

It seems obvious that the appearance of reasonableness, combined with the completely unreasonable procedure proposed, indicate that the Poles were not to have a chance of accepting terms which would have given Germany far less than she intended to gain by conquest. The British Government continued on the 31st its efforts to procure the opening of negotiations through the Polish ambassador in Berlin, but the German news agency published a message stating that the wireless station at Gleiwitz had been attacked that evening by Poles, and that this had apparently been the signal for a general attack by armed Poles at two further points on the German frontier. These reports, which were absolutely denied by the Polish Government, formed the excuse for the opening of hostilities by the Germans on 1 September at 5.30 a.m. The British and French ambassadors were instructed to warn the German Government that unless its forces were promptly withdrawn, the two countries would

fulfil their obligations to Poland. In Rome the Council of Ministers announced that Italy would 'take no initiative in military operations'; the enigmatical policy of Moscow was discovered to mean that Soviet troops would not move for at least the time being. On Sunday, 3 September, at nine in the morning, the British ambassador informed the German Government that unless satisfactory assurances were received by 11 a.m. Great Britain would be at war with Germany. The coming of war was announced by the Prime Minister at 11.15. In the afternoon similar action was taken by France.

CONCLUSION

WAR GUILT IN 1939

THE British people entered the second Great War soberly, convinced of the impossibility of avoiding a course which they nevertheless detested. They had assumed responsibility for the independence of Poland; they had, as a result of the Czech crisis, reached a frame of mind in which Nazi aggression presented itself to them as a direct challenge to their own courage and standards of international conduct, and they could make only one response when the challenge appeared to be deliberately repeated. Germany entered the war without a single genuine friend or active ally; the Axis partner was shocked by the pact with Russia, and the greatest neutral, the United States, was overwhelmingly and frankly anti-German. An American professor exclaimed to the writer on 3 September, 'There will be no question of war guilt this time!'

The British Government and public thought this in 1914, and even secured the armed support of the United States in 1917; this did not prevent the enunciation of very elaborate theories of Allied war guilt by European and transatlantic scholars after 1919. It is impossible to discuss so controversial a matter as a 1939 war-guilt question in the present stage of our knowledge and of our emotions: a few tentative comments, as a summary of British policy, may, however, be attempted. The historian of the future will have to ask himself several questions. Was war inevitable? Was there a German danger to England—immediate or delayed? Had Great Britain any greater obligation than other powers to defend smaller countries, such as Poland, against German attack? Could England be blamed for the

peculiarly ferocious methods of Nazi foreign policy? Were Germany's aims as far-reaching as the violence of her methods appeared to suggest?

The answer to some of these questions would take one back to Versailles, and even to the nineteenth century. Germany's more obvious, and more legitimate, grievances under the Versailles treaty had been removed before the Nazi party secured power in 1933. Reparation demands were scaled down, and then cancelled, between 1925 and 1932; her status and independence as a great power were recognized by the withdrawal of Allied troops, the right to rearm (recognized in principle in 1932), and admission to the League. After 1933 she recovered the Saar, and completed her rearmament. The loss of colonies was a grievance which neither the German people nor the German Government wished to make a cause of war. The immediate cause of war was the line of events associated with her successive attacks on Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland in 1938 and 1939. Here her case against the Versailles treaty was certainly more questionable; she lost no territory in 1919 to the first two states, and there were strong arguments, on historical and linguistic grounds, for the new Polish-German frontiers, although it was never denied in England that Germany had counterclaims of considerable strength in the same areas. The Versailles settlement, and the dark years that followed it, called into being the irreconcilable right-wing groups, and ruined the chance of a general acceptance of Weimar republicanism; nevertheless it was the economic distress of 1929–32, and not the events of the early 'twenties, which brought the Nazis to power. The development of Fascist parties in many other countries also suggests that it is over-simplifying the German problem to attribute Nazism merely to the Versailles settlement.

The real cause of the war was the mismanagement of power-policy by Germany. Armaments form, in the atmosphere of modern international politics, a necessary and legitimate supplement to the more peaceful forms of bargaining. Whatever the ultimate aims and vaguer dreams of Hitler there seems no evidence to support the view that he had any precise objective after March 1939 except the destruction of Poland. It was probable that if Poland had surrendered Danzig in March a further quarrel would have been picked with her later; after large Polish provinces had been assimilated further attacks might have been made on other small states—such as Rumania; ultimately a deliberate attack might, or might not, have been launched against the Soviet Union, or France and England. His failure to push his colonial demands after the hints of October and the British refusal of December 1938 showed his unwillingness to hurry into an open quarrel with England at this stage. The army was ready for a *Blitzkrieg*, and it had selected Poland as the victim. The task of German diplomacy was to secure the isolation of the victim: and diplomacy failed.

Hitler is said to have remarked to a foreign diplomatist in 1938, 'If you wish to obtain your objectives by force, you must be strong; if you wish to obtain them by negotiation, you must be stronger still.' As a matter of fact his earlier tactics, with their great emphasis on propaganda, had shown that the mere threat of force was by no means the only psychological weapon that he found of value, and this remark suggests the over-confidence which had produced the unnecessary and ostentatious forcefulness of the September crisis. The constant attacks on the justice of the Versailles settlement had scored a series of bloodless victories for Germany before 1938; the democracies had shown themselves more susceptible to appeals to

their sense of justice than to their sense of self-preservation. 'It would be best to delay the revocation of the war-guilt paragraph to the last,' wrote Professor Eibl in 1932, 'using it in the meantime as a lever to throw out one article after the other from the treaty.' Hitler after the summer of 1938 preferred a 'war of nerves': he was confident that German armaments had reached a point at which other powers would be willing enough to leave Germany alone if her arms were not directed against them. This view appears to have been consistently urged by Ribbentrop, and more accurate information concerning the frame of mind of the western powers was impossible after the dropping of the Führer's more moderate and experienced advisers in February 1938. The result was the deliberate creation of an emotional crisis which finally produced counter-threats of force from France and England, and a deadlock which could be ended only by war.

It is difficult to see how a different policy on Great Britain's part during 1938 and 1939 could have secured peace on honourable terms. Hitler had deliberately inaugurated the revolutionary course of German foreign policy by his withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and League in 1933; the revolution had to retain its momentum by a series of dramatic, though inexpensive, victories. The means were in some senses more important than the ends: a success such as, for example, the retrocession of Danzig, would not have been greatly valued if it had been secured through some peaceful method such as arbitration. A 'pact' on equal terms with other great powers was, however, a proof of strength; if Great Britain had, like Italy in 1936, and the Soviet Union in 1939, chosen at the decisive moment to come to terms with the Reich, Hitler would no doubt have welcomed the bargain. Such a *volte-face* could be made only by an autocratic

government with a muzzled Press; there is no evidence that the British Government desired such a course, and it would certainly never have been accepted by British public opinion. In 1938 the Prime Minister had tried to follow the alternative path to peace. He had endeavoured to avoid the provocative language which would introduce the factor of prestige, and had sought to satisfy by negotiation what could be regarded as the more reasonable German aims. Hitler at the decisive moment—on 12 September—had deliberately rejected this possibility, as he had rejected it in 1933. From that moment war was inevitable.

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